

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Who is the constituency?

The number of Black elected officials in the United States has increased by 6.6 per cent between July 1979 and July 1980. Yet Blacks are grossly under represented in elective offices throughout the country. Blacks now hold one per cent of all elected offices, twice the per cent of 1976; Blacks make up eleven per cent of the total population.

There are only nineteen Black officials for every 100,000 Black persons, while there are 252 non-Black elected officials for every 100,000 non-Blacks.

Blacks in Congress increased to 18 this November, making them 3 per cent of the 97th Congress. Forty per cent of the Black elected officials are on the municipal level; twenty-five per cent are in education positions. The third largest group is in judicial and law enforcement positions.

The leading states are Mississippi, Louisiana, Illinois, Michigan, and the District of Columbia. Women constitute about 20 per cent of the Black office holders.

This dearth of Black elected officials continues while the Voting Rights Act that made gains in the South possible is in danger of extinction, and while the nation is becoming increasingly conservative.

On the local level, there are few Blacks elected in Oregon. Currently Gladys and Bill McCoy, Charles Jordan and Herb Cawthorne in the Portland area and few on the horizon.

What is the alternative? In the two upcoming elections -- for the School Board position now held by Wally Priestley and in the Newhall/Beeman race, and in the contest for City Council -- the deciding factor will have to be which candidate is the most sensitive and responsive to the Black community. What is the past record? What are the person's interests and how do they relate to the community? Where are the ties -- political, economic and personal?

After election will the channels of communication be open? Will the new electees return to the communities where he sought votes, ask for advice, explain opinions, and attempt to represent the interests of those who most need representation.

Elected officials -- whether Black or white -- will not serve the Black community unless they see it as their constituency. Although Blacks are only a small part of the School District and of the City, they will have a unique part to play in both and only those who see and understand that role should be supported for election.



African Diary

By Fungai Kumbula

The past year, 1980, will long be remembered for great changes all over the African continent. Compiling a list of the highlights of the year is about as easy as writing a book on Black American music. The list below is just a random choice:

West Africa:

January 7: Coup in Mauritania topples the government of Lt. Col. Mohammed Mahmoud Ould Louly. Lt. Col. Mohammed Kouna Ould Haidala takes over.

January 17: An explosion at a Texaco oil well in Nigeria's Rivers State cause what officials describe as the "worst case of oil pollution in Nigeria's history."

February 1: Guinea (Conakry) joins the Mano River Union, an economic and cultural union involving the Gambia, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

March 3: Several people are killed when students take to the streets in Sierra Leone to protest increases in the cost of transportation.

March 27: The then now government of William Tolbert in Liberia bans the opposition Peoples Progressive Party, setting the stage for the biggest upheaval in Librian politics.

April 12: 28 year old Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe successfully topples the Tolbert regime ending 130 years of True Whig party rule.

April 15: To mark the sixth anniversary of the coup that brought him to power, Niger President Seyni Kountche, releases former President Hamani Diori from prison where he had been "residing" since his ouster in 1974. Also released was Djibo Bakary, leader of the outlawed Sawaba Party.

July 5: The government of Mauritania outlaws slavery!

September 24: Ghana's president Hilla Limman marks the first anniversary of his civilian government by declaring a broad amnesty.

November 15: Coup in Guinea Bissau topples country's first president and brother of founder of the PAIGC liberation movement, Luis Cabral. Coup leader and erstwhile prime minister, Joao Bernardo Vieira takes over.

November 25: Upper Volta President Sangoule Lamizana is toppled in a bloodless coup following a teachers' strike and a two day general strike. Lamizana had come to power in a similar coup in 1966.

December 2: Leopold Sedar Senghor who has led Senegal since independence almost twenty years ago announces that he will retire at the end of the year. His hand-picked successor is Prime Minister Abdou Diouf.

Central Africa:

January 4: David Dacko, Central Africa's President, bans all strikes to quell the rising tide of anti-government protests by disgruntled teachers, unemployed youth and others. The treasury is still virtually dry due to the very quick hands of one "Emperor" Jean Bedel Bokassa ousted in 1979 and now living in exile in nearby Ivory Coast.

January 12: Renewed fighting in Chad between Foreign Minister Hisein Habre's FAN (Armed Forces of the North) and those of fellow cabinet members Mahamat Abba Said and Adouma Dana dooms the coalition government of Chad.

February 18: Thirty four people

accused of complicity in the atrocities attributed to Bokassa go on trial in the Central African Republic. Most are found guilty.

April 15: Ahmaudou Ahidjo, running for a fifth year term as Cameroun's Chief of State (President), is declared the winner, polling 99.99% of the vote.

May 20: Amnesty International, a civil rights monitoring organization, releases a 23 page report accusing he Mobutu Sese Seko regime in Zaire of operating political detention camps "where deaths by summary execution, torture and starvation are common." Despite denials by Mobutu who is attempting to get badly international loans, a subsequent report in September contains even more allegations of the same gruesome nature.

August 24: Zaire's foreign minister, Nguza Karl Bond, sentenced to death in 1977 for alleged complicity in the first Shaba invasion but since rehabilitated, is appointed Prime Minister.

December 15: Hisein Habre's forces, engaged in a bitter struggle for control of Chad for most of the past two years, finally flee across the border into Cameroun before the combined force of President Goukouni Oueddei's forces and their Libyan allies. For now, Chad is relatively quiet.

December 19: Deposed "Emperor" Jean Bedel Bokassa, formerly of the Central African Republic but now living in exile in the Ivory Coast, is tried in absentia on eight charges. He is accused, among other things, of embezzlement, cannibalism and personal involvement in massacres.

Next Week: East Africa and The Horn.

Another Point of View

from KATU

If applause is a sign of approval, then at least one law proposed by Oregon's Governor Atiyeh will receive popular support by the legislature. It is a law that would make racial harassment a felony crime punishable by fine and imprisonment.

What's the recent record? Recently, a man wearing Ku Klux Klan robes openly walks the streets of Grants Pass evoking only the mild curiosity of passersby.

In Portland, signs carrying racial slurs are posted along 82nd Avenue.

And in Milwaukie, the home of a racial minority is subjected to a rock-throwing attack

which breaks windows, the final act over a period of weeks that was preceded by verbal abuse. Investigators said neighbors didn't seem particularly aroused.

Governor Atiyeh's answer to this "shocking and damnable act of racial intolerance" is the proposal of making racial harassment a felony crime.

Do we need such legislation? One would think not since federal civil rights legislation has been around for twenty years. But, apparently the NAACP, the Urban League and the American Conference of Christians and Jews think such legislation is necessary.

And, so do we.

Letters to the Editor

Supports Cawthorne school board vote

Dear Editor:

Wally Priestley strikes again -- like a kid who doesn't get his own way, he threw a stick and now will leave the game. Wrapped in his cloak of righteousness, working for the poor and Black...against the establishment, he will soon be off to his place of obscurity in the State Legislature. Unfortunately, he'll probably surface again in Albina-Land when there is another press-worthy evil to conquer.

Priestley's vote against Herb Cawthorne, as a second-term Chairman of the Portland Public School Board, and your editorial opinion supporting Priestley's vote was not surprising. However, the innuendo that Herb is a "sell-out" is ludicrous and doesn't deserve a comment.

I want to congratulate Herb Cawthorne for an outstanding job as Chairman during those difficult times of change on the school

board. Herb's steady, problem solving skills are still needed to help make the necessary changes to come. Thanks for staying in there Herb, and keep up the good work.

Ocie W. Trotter

(Editor's Note: The editorial neither supports Priestley's vote nor implies a "sell-out." To become a "sell-out" something must be gained in return.)

Patient diplomacy works best

To the Editor:

All Americans share a sense of profound relief and joy at the release of the U.S. hostages. In celebrating their return home, it is important that we do not lose sight of an extremely important lesson.

That lesson is that patient and persistent diplomacy, despite the many frustrations, was in the end successful. No hostages were lost, no American or Iranian lives were taken in combat.

In our joy at the return of the American hostages, we should remember the continued suffering of other people in the region. We

now face the constructive task of building better relations with Iran and her neighbors, and we can begin by urging our government to turn its efforts to support for peace between Iran and Iraq.

Even a foreign policy dedicated to peace-making, however, should be truly noninterventionist. We in the United States have learned from our experience in Iran over the past several years that our armaments, our investments and our governmental support cannot for long shore up a regime which violates the rights of its people. We have learned that U.S. involvement with repressive regimes identifies the

United States as an accomplice in wrongdoing in the eyes of those who have suffered.

We now hope for a domestic dialogue designed to shape a U.S. foreign policy which is truly non-interventionist. We hope the U.S. will call upon the other countries of the world, including the Soviet Union to join in creating a world in which each nation is free from repression and from external interference.

Sincerely,
Warren A. White
Executive Secretary
American Friends
Service Committee

Jimmy and USA undisputed winners

To the Editor:

Freedom for the hostages has been an event which brought joy and relief to everyone but the political rhetoric extolling their sacrifice and valor and is not justified by the facts. The 52 Americans were confined for a long time (14 months) under undesirable circumstances. No one relishes confinement but aside from the confinement, the hostages did what the rest of us did for 14 months; they stayed alive.

I am paranoid enough to believe that if Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan think the hostages did something extraordinary, they did. But it must have been more than stay alive.

Back in November of 1979, the Americans at the embassy were left to twist slowly in the wind when Jimmy allowed the Shah to enter the country. The Shah was not a popular dictator (what dictator is?) and Jimmy had been warned that possible trouble could occur at the embassy if the Shah were allowed to enter. The Shah's interests were given a higher priority than the lives of the Americans at the embassy. The exaggerated praise of the hostages has certainly muted criticism of Jimmy for this act.

The aborted raid on the embassy

would certainly never have freed all of the hostages. Some of the hostages and some Iranians would have been killed. Human lives could be sacrificed in order that Jimmy Carter rid himself of a political liability and have a better chance at re-election. Again the exaggerated praise served to soften criticism for this mindless endeavor.

The feeling of relief and joy was shared by everyone but the profusion of welcome home ceremonies and the flag waving mobs require more explanation and justification.

The hostages appeared to be in the vortex of a propaganda warfare between Iran and the U.S. government. The Iranians wanted to focus on the villainy of the Shah and his regime and the complicity of the U.S. in supporting a ruthless dictator.

The U.S. did not want to talk about past transgressions but wanted the focus on the hostages and their release. The three television networks were willing proponents of this focus. Little attention was given to the savage excesses of the regime of our middle eastern "friend" the Shah and virtually every news program gave the running count of days held hostage. The Iranians were crushed by a multi-billion

propaganda effort. The emotional welcome by the mobs of cheering and certainly well meaning Americans is just a demonstration of the effects of a multi-billion dollar propaganda campaign.

Herschel L. Soles

Need criticism

To the editor:

Your editorial on Herb Cawthorne and the school board was informative. We appreciate that you are willing to criticize the action taken by Mr. Cawthorne.

We complain to each other that some of our Black officials do not seem to hear what Black people are saying and we get angry. I remember that Mr. Cawthorne was critical of Gladys McCoy but it was too late. Someone should have said something publically years before. If we are afraid to complain, then no one will know we are not satisfied.

I hope Mr. Cawthorne accepts the criticism like a man and rethinks some of his decision. He is the only one we have to hope will represent us on the school board.

Willie James



Bruce Broussard
Editor/Publisher



Portland Observer

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The Portland Observer was founded in October of 1970 by Alfred Lee Henderson.

The Portland Observer is a champion of justice, equality and liberation; an alert guard against social evils; a thorough analyst and critic of discriminatory practices and policies; a sentinel to warn of impending and existing racist trends and practices; and a defender against persecution and oppression.

The real problems of the minority population will be viewed and presented from the perspective of their causality: unrestrained and chronically entrenched racism. National and international arrangements that prolong and increase the oppression of Third World peoples shall be considered in the context of their exploitation and manipulation by the colonial nations, including the United States, and their relationship to this nation's historical treatment of its Black population.

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