

Problems With United Way

by Bob Lothian

If United Way doesn't restore the \$6,000 it deducted from its contribution to the Urban League, the black community will find ways to go around United Way and contribute directly to agencies that serve Northeast Portland, according to Ron Herndon.

"We will also encourage others in the broader community to give money directly to agencies serving the poor and families in need rather than to United Way," he said.

Herndon and Rev. John Jackson, co-chairmen of the Black United Front, spoke Thursday at a press conference at King Neighborhood Center.

"The black community is outraged at United Way's recent action toward the Urban League of Portland," Herndon said.

He referred to the withholding of funds from the Urban League because it held a fundraising dinner during the United Way campaign last fall.

The Urban League held its annual Equal Opportunity Day dinner Oct. 24, 1985. Keynote speaker was Sen. Mark Hatfield.

According to United Way officials, the dinner violated a contract that bars member agencies from sponsoring fundraising events that compete with the

United Way campaign.

The Intergency Food Bank was penalized \$1800 by United Way for the same reason.

Urban League and Food Bank officials criticized the United Way action, and both organizations are appealing the cuts.

Urban League president Herb Cawthorne called the penalty an insensitive move by United Way officials jealous of other agencies' success in fundraising.

United Way president David Paradine said, however, that the sanctions were not penalties but deductions to offset funds raised by the Urban League and the Food Bank.

But Herndon described that as a "welfare mentality." "Whatever your boy makes, we're going to take it out of your welfare. It's that same kind of doubletalk," he said.

The \$6000 is desperately needed in the community, Herndon continued. Yet even though the community's problems are reaching crisis proportions, United Way has cut funding to agencies that provide services to low-income blacks, he said.

"Problems in the black community are far worse than they were four years ago when the Urban League's United Way funding was 17% higher," Herndon said.

Only 3.1% of \$392,567 out of \$12 million, went to agencies serving low-income blacks in Northeast Portland this year, said Herndon, citing United Way figures.

Jackson, a former board member of United Way, said the funds were needed for teen pregnancy and youth summer programs, and a sickle cell anemia project.

"We have to beg to do these kinds of things," Jackson said.

Having more black representatives on the United Way board would help, according to Jackson. Herndon suggested a community meeting with United Way officials and Northeast Portland social service agency representatives.

Herndon said a letter was sent to United Way explaining the community's position.

"I expect them to be rational," he said. "If they want to press the issue, it wouldn't be that hard to come up with an alternative organization."



UNITED WAY: UNFA

Ron Herndon listens as Rev. John J. Jackson responds to questions during a press conference last week concerning United Way's cut in funds to the Urban League and the Food Bank. Jackson and Herndon are co-chairs of the Black United Front.

Photo by Richard J. Brown

Washington Finally Has Council Majority

by Jerry Garner

When Harold Washington was declared the democratic nominee for Mayor of Chicago in 1983, he vowed that if he became the City's first Black Mayor, he would stop the City's system of patronage. Under this system, jobs are given to Democratic committeemen according to their ward's production at the polls, and the committeemen in turn give jobs to the precinct workers.

Washington's plan to eliminate the patronage system and the fact that he was Black and led many White life longed democrats to abandon Washington caused many to vote instead for Bernard Epton, a Republican.

Washington defeated Epton in one of this nation's most racist elections in history. In 1983, Washington and Walter Mondale attended a Palm Sunday mass at St. Pascal's Roman Catholic Church on Chicago's Northwest side. They were confronted by an unruly crowd of Epton supporters who shouted epithets at them.

Since his election as Mayor, Washington's ability to govern the city has been stymied by rebellious White aldermen led by Edward Vrdolyak, Chairman of Cook County Democratic Party.

All this changed last week when Washington gained two more supporters on the council seat after a special election was held. The election was the result of a 1981 law-suit filed by Blacks and Hispanics challenging the City Council's map reflecting population shifts found in the 1980 census. The suit charged that the map reflected racial gerrymandering. Gerrymandering is a redistricting of voting districts to the advantage of one party or race. Resulting in a federal judge ordering the remapping of seven wards in the City and special elections in each ward. Gerrymandering was a common practice used by Whites throughout the United States to keep Blacks out of elected office until the courts ruled the practice illegal.

The victory by Washington supporters (a hispanic man and a Black woman) now gives the Mayor 25 supporters on the 50-seat council. The Mayor's vote now is the tie-breaker.

The election of the two pro-Washington aldermen is another indication that the once powerful Democratic machine built by the former Mayor J. Daley was in ruins. Daley used his position as Mayor and Chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party as a power base for more than two decades. When White Democrats voted for Epton the Republican, this alienated many life long Black Democrats from the party.

This plus the failure of Washington and Vrdolyak to reach a compromise during Washington's 3 years as Mayor contributed to the weakening of the machine.

Although Chicago is known for its tough political battles, the political problems Washington encountered were new even to the City; once described by the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as "the most segregated large city in the Nation."

Hatred of Washington was so great that a million dollar contract was placed on his life. In 1983, a White millionaire real estate broker was charged with trying to hire an undercover informant to murder Washington.

During this mayoral campaign, Washington opponents distributed posters with a picture of a watermelon with a Black line drawn through the middle of it. At a banquet for Epton during the 1983 Election, the band played the tune "Bye-Bye Blackbird." They were referring to Washington.



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