National Roundup

WASHINGTON — In the rush of conventions which gathered in Washington in the recent few months and the continuing complaints and congressional rhetoric over the Reagan budget cuts and the RIF's (Reduction in Force), a number of significant achievements were overlooked. Among them, for instance, was a little sunshine let through the window by the Republicans in the appointment of Ted Lyons of Miami, FL, as the executive assistant to the new public printer, Danford L. Sawyer Jr., and the reelection of Judge William S. Thompson as secretary-general of the World Peace Through Law Conference. Both have significance in political and international judicial circles, and are precedent-setting.

To understand the significant and historic concern of the Ted Lyons appointment, it must be pointed out that he is the first black appointee at the Government Printing Office at that level in 120 years of the GPO existence and it is a Republican appointment. The new Public Printer (Sawyer) was confirmed on July 31 last, after nomination by President Reagan several months before. He hails from Sarasota, FL, and immediately named his fellow statesman, Ted Lyons, of Miami as his No. One assistant. GPO has one of the largest employee payrolls in Washington and a large number of black workers, and for years there have been serious efforts made to get better job assignments and better paying promotions for them. Lyons, former football captain at Florida A&M University, is expected to be the wedge by which some changes will be effected at GPO . . . Lyons has been active in Florida state politics and worked effectively in trying to get jobs and better living conditions for the Hispanic and Haitian refugees who have been swarming into Florida.

Judge Thompson, who is associate judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia was reelected for the ninth consecutive two-year term at the World Law Conference held in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The Conference, held in August, was attended by more than 4,000 jurists, lawyers and law professors from all the continents of the earth, and Judge Thompson was also honored when he received the World Peace Through Law Citation: "Extraordinary Contribution to the Law of Mankind.

Secretary General Thompson was first elected to that position at the First World Law Conferences in Geneva, Washington, DC, (on two occasions), Bangkok, Belgrade, Abidjan, Manila, and Madrid . . . . At the annual meeting of the National Bar Association in Detroit this past July, Judge Thompson chaired the International Affairs Committee of the NBA, primarily consisting of black judges and lawyers. Judge Thompson continued his service in and leadership of the NBA Judicial Conference, the council of black judges, Judge Thompson was national president of the NBA in 1957.

After a full ten-year term on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, Judge Thompson was reappointed to a 15-year term. However, he took an early retirement, and has continued his service on the District of Columbia bench as a retired judge . . . .

Now, hear this — If you're not earning over $500 a week as an average citizen, you are in trouble . . . The media weekly income of black families with two workers or more during the past year was $482 — compared to $579 for similar white families, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

But, all black workers with full time wage and salary jobs had median weekly earnings of only $264, about 75 percent as much as the median income for white men. In contrast, the median for black women ($206) was 93 percent of the median for white women.

For all wages and salary workers with fulltime jobs, median weekly earnings of men were $343 and $221 for women or 64 percent as much as the salaries for men. The average earnings of all families with full time workers rose 7.1 percent from $394 to $422 per week during the year, the statistics show.

If these figures sound optimistic, remember the unemployment rate for black workers remained unchanged at the startling rate of 15.1 percent last month, while the jobless rate for whites increased by a fraction to 6.5 percent.

Also, the BLS figures reinforced the disturbing trend that black workers, both women and men, report a higher rate of absence than white workers. The differences partly reflect the higher proportion of black workers in occupations which are prone to higher absence rates, such as factory jobs, officials say.

And, if there is any doubt about whether the present government is on the side of labor or business, you only need to read the latest administration pronouncements. "We are out of the business of providing public service jobs as a substitute for a thriving, growing economy. We look to you, business, commerce and industry to provide real jobs with a future," Labor Secretary Ray Donovan told the National Alliance of Business recently.

Taken as a whole, the new developments at the Department of Labor under President Reagan's administration constitute "good" news for US employers, according to G. John Tysse, a spokesman for the US Chamber of Commerce.

Discussing organized labor, the Chamber of Commerce official said the labor union movement is at a crossroads. "With declining membership and reduced political clout, union leaders are attempting to cope with changes that they no longer reflect the views of the rank and file. The signs, so far, indicate that they intend to tough it out, adhering to the programs and policies of the past," Tysse declared.

Meanwhile, the revitalized, predominantly black National Business League under the leadership of Washington developer Ted Hagens announced plans to build a new, million dollar downtown headquarters in the Capital, as black businessmen are still seeking to get a major piece of the action . . . . .

By Larry Still and Art Carter

Washington Mayor Marion Barry Jr. has defied Reagonomics by continuing Aid For Dependent Children for pregnant women with local funds despite federal budget cuts in his jurisdiction. The mayor's decision to continue AFDC despite federal guidelines to limit the program, will cost the District $1.3 million in federal matching funds, but could set a pattern for other states to follow — if the citizens demand it.

Barry also announced that if conservative, middle income Capital residents passed the "dangerous" legislation for tax relief for parents or guardians of children attending private schools, he will seek to raise other city taxes to make up for the loss in municipal revenues for the beleaguered public school system, if the controversial tax measure proves constitutional . . . .

Barry's latest actions (despite his support of a new gambling lottery) were viewed as responsible moves to protect the interest of poor and black residents in the increasing number of cities with increasing black populations and mayors — such as Atlanta, Birmingham, Detroit, Newark, Gary and Los Angeles . . . .

We are amazed at the proliferation of media groups among the "Brothers" and "Sisters." A decade ago, the Capital Press Club was the nation's major organization of black journalists, but now there are a score of new press groups — all in the Washington area, in addition to hundreds more throughout the country. The Washington Area Media Organization and Media Associates are the latest ones to surface . . . . The Trade Union Women of African Heritage also held their communications week in NY. Send us the names and contacts of the media group in your area for information on national sessions.

The National Black Media Coalition which led the struggle too for increased black ownership of radio and television stations in the past by monitoring the hiring and programming policies of the major networks and chains, now appears to have the big operators as their allies . . . . The recent turnout at the NBMC convention here was sponsored by the major stations anxious to get the NBMC okay . . . .