National Roundup

By Larry Still and Art Carter

WASHINGTON, DC—When the Congressional Black Caucus held its 12th annual weekend celebration last month (September) here at the Washington Hilton, few people knew that the pioneer organization of 16 black members of Congress has divided into two distinct groups. The original CBC Inc., is now the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Inc. with Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio) as president and the Congressional Black Caucus political organization headed by Rep. Walter E. Fauntroy (D-D.C.) as chairman.

The establishment of the CBC Foundation as the fund raising basis of the Caucus was necessary to meet Internal Revenue Service tax procedures as the organization sponsored another record breaking $150-a-plate affair with approximately 4,000 guests from all over the nation. Supporters participated in three days of activity ranging from panels and workshops on business development on Capitol Hill to a host of dinners, receptions and a midnight fashion show at some 15 major hotels throughout the Capital area.

Highlights of the weekend, this year, was a Salute to retiring Rep. Shirley Chisholm (D-Brooklyn), who is the only original CBC member who was never elected to serve as chairman of the group. Key observers report some CBC members never forgave the outspoken female representative's attempt to seek the Democratic nomination for President when her colleagues were pledged to support established candidates. Representative Chisholm was given a rousing sendoff by her colleagues at this time, but she is expected to establish a private political fund raising organization to assist more Black and women candidates.

The CBC is one of 100 or more political caucuses in Washington, including state, regional and economic interest groups such as the recently established Hispanic Caucus. As the CBC gathers new members through the election of additional Black members of Congress, its influence increases because of the solid vote it is able to deliver on major issues. Five new representatives may be added this year with the election of Black congresspersons in New York area, Kansas City, (KS), Atlanta, North Carolina and... watch it...Mississippi...

This concentration of about 20 votes (out of 435) on issues affecting predominantly black communities was the strategy Representative Fauntroy devised for opposing "reaganomics," but President Ronald Reagan was able to divide the CBC vote on his last Tax Increase — Budget Reduction Bill. At least five CBC members voted with Democratic majority leader, Rep. Thomas (Tip) O'Neil in supporting the Reagan proposals despite pledges of support to Congressman Fauntroy's celebrated Black Family Plan announced with fanfare last year at the 11th annual CBC weekend. "Some of our members thought they were serving the best interest of the people in their districts instead of the Caucus," said one member who voted yes.

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Although the National Black Republican Council scheduled their second annual meeting here during the CBC weekend, the Grand Old Party is still seeking young black Republicans to re-establish a bipartisan Caucus by electing black GOPers to Congress from Kansas and Texas this November. Ailing Atty. Sam Jackson still heads the influential Council of 100 who are expected to support Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kans.) in his probable bid for the Presidency.

Senator Dole, who has been challenging his own party and President Reagan in supporting the CBC on such issues as voting rights and opposing "supply side" economics, has finally admitted he may seek the top White House post, if the incumbent steps aside — or he is pushed — gently, of course.

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One of the most influential groups to surface in the Capital in recent months is the quietly effective Congressional Education Associates which issued its first annual report on the voting records of the members of the first session of the 97th Congress on issues affecting voters living in predominantly black communities.

If you are really serious about "rewarding friends and boycotting enemies" at the polling booth, then every voter should get a copy of this document which tells how each member of Congress voted on matters such as voting rights, aid to education medicare, fair housing, tax increases, budget reductions, etc. It is all in "The Voting Record On Issues Affecting Black Voters" published by CEA, 1511 K Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20005, 202-347-3593. Send $3.00, plus $.95 to cover postage and mailing for your copy before the November elections if you don't want to throw away your vote...

You may be surprised to learn that some Republican representatives in mid-west districts with less than one percent Black population voted "100 percent" on issues affecting Black voter interest, while many Democratic legislators in District with 30-45 percent black populations voted 70-100 percent against Black interest by opposing the Voting Rights Act, housing subsidies, food stamps, medicare, etc.

Some members of Congress openly played tricks on their supporters by voting "yes" on amending the Voting Rights Act or calling up the act for vote or even "yes" on the vote to vote on the measure (cloture), but, then, they voted "no" on the vote for final passage (which won anyway). These reports are prepared by CEA partners Gordon Alexander, David Ruffin and Gloria Barajas, all former top Congressional and Senate staff members who know their way around-and behind Capitol Hill. The trio heads an association of experts who will be monitoring the future votes of Congress and we'll be giving you periodic reports on their reports...

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Despite the slumping economy, the usual summer convention scene was as popular as ever with thousands of delegates flocking into such cities as Boston, Los Angeles, Washington and Gary, IN., where some 600 participants attended the well planned Black Economic Development Conference at Mayor Richard Hatcher's new Genesis Convention Center in the renovated industrial city.

Sponsors are planning to publish a book on the conference results, complete with recommendations for revitalizing urban and ghetto areas as outlined by experts. "These are recommendations for ourselves. We don't intend to keep depending upon the Federal government," said one participant.

Some 10,000 Elks and their ladies spent an estimated $5 million in five days in the Capital in August as they partyed in major hotels and Elks Lodges, paraded down Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the District Building (City Hall) and Mayor Marion Barry, instead of the White House . . . and elected Donald Wilson (of Philadelphia, naturally) as Grand Exalted Ruler to replace Grand Old Elk Hobson J. Reynolds . . .

The conventions provided sites for the annual pilgrimmages of Black America to a host of meetings and discussions to plan survival for the next year . . . Dr. James McGhee, director of research for the National Urban League, was honest enough to focus on the subject when he told reporters at the NUL meet in Los Angeles that major civil rights organizations must depend upon the Black Middle Class for continued support of the measures which brought about the civic, political and economic progress of the current generation . . .

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Both, the NUL and NAACP convention officials reported record attendance at their annual exhibits which passed out gifts and prices to some 50,000 visitors from Coast (L.A.) to Coast (Boston).

Jeri Johnson, veteran NAACP exhibit manager said the organization was forced to turn away over 200 potential exhibitors because of limited space at the Sheraton Boston complex. Although government agencies are curtailing promotion and travel, all the major Federal bureaus sought space in the convention, including the Central Intelligence Agency and the Agency for International Development which are still recruiting Black college graduates. The deadline for AID overseas positions is November 15. Write Office of Personnel Management, Agency for International Development, Washington, DC, 20503.

The NUL and NAACP has established Job Placement booths in their exhibits where thousands of conventioners receive new information on positions involving training and technology...The organization with the most jobs available appeared to be the NUL, itself, with vacant executive positions in San Diego (where new national president, John Jacobs, served) and Fort Wayne, IN, (where retiring president, Vernon Jordan) was wounded by gunfire and his accused, racist assailant was acquitted)...The most popular exhibit at the L. A. convention was Percy Sutton Jr.'s "Apollo Theatre" Satellite show which is being beamed to cable systems all over the country, if you ask for it from Inner City Broadcasting at the Apollo in Harlem.