Blacks in the coalfields: Civil rights not there yet

By Cindy McAfee

APPALACHIA, VA. — Just as major highways make around the outside of southwest Virginia's coal country and never come into its heart, the civil rights movement has never really reached the shacks of black miners.

"Civil rights — we never heard the words," Jack W. Gravely, executive secretary of the Virginia NAACP, said of his homeland.

In the heart of the southern Appalachia, blacks make up less than five percent of the population — not half the national average. Some counties are less than one percent black.

"When I was in high school I started reading about Martin Luther King, started seeing him on TV — it was like he was in India. The America he was in was an America I couldn't relate to," Gravely said.

A council of black Appalachians has been formed and young black historians for the first time are beginning to put together stories of how it feels to be a hillbilly black.

When blacks marched on Washington to celebrate the 20th anniversary of King's first march for equal rights, a few from the mountains of West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee were among the participants. That first march drew national attention to a movement credited with radical racial changes in parts of the country.

In the coalfields?

"I ask myself sometimes — has it really changed?" Sheila Pinkston said. She grew up in a two-room shack with an outdoor toilet and could not go to Appalachia's white stores or restaurants. She now has a master's degree in English and cannot find a job in her field.

"There are still stores where you don't see black people working there unless they're cleaning windows or mopping floors," she said.

Political clout to make changes is still hard to come by in the coalfields for blacks.

"You need numbers for that — for force and protection," said Walter Hale, a Vietnam veteran disturbed that he cannot go into some clubs near his home. "There are no signs on the doors, but you know you better stay out or you'll get beat."

Hale, Ms. Pinkston and seven black friends sat around a table at an Appalachia community center this summer and worried about a slow membership drive that threatened their NAACP charter. But the Wise County NAACP rallied and got the 50 members it needs to keep going.

At 2.4 percent black, Wise County has the second largest black population in southwest Virginia. The largest black community is in Tazewell County, which is 3 percent black, and the lowest is Buchanan County with 0.1 percent.

The situation is not much different in the rest of the southern coalfields, blacks say. Bill Turner, University of Kentucky sociology professor, has a Ford Foundation grant for the next year to find out what it is like growing up black in the coalfields.

The son of a miner, Turner will study Harlan, KY. — his home — and four other eastern Kentucky counties for his book entitled "Black Harlan." He said the 3,200 blacks in those counties, and other coalfield blacks, are a "minority in a minority" of poor people.

Many coalfield people — all colors — are poor. Being black is just one more burden, Turner and others said.

"The difference between a black person and a white person is very narrow in the mountains," said Ed Cabbell of Princeton, W. Va. He said he was the first black in the country to graduate with a degree in Appalachian studies.

"A poor white man and a poor black man are not that different. A pickaninny equals a hillbilly. A cracker equals a nigger."

"Racism" is the divider, he said.

It's a "hard, unrelenting sort of racism," Gravely said.

"It's another world. I grew up in Pocahontas," he said. "To this very day the road I grew up on has never been paved." The asphalt stops where the black section of town starts, he said.

"It's still the same. Things haven't changed a little bit," he said.

Ms. Pinkston left Appalachia to get her English degree and came back determined to change attitudes. But now?

"Forget it — it's too much," she said. She could not find a job because employers said she was either underexperienced or overeducated, she said. She said she thinks it was because she is a black, single mother.

"I'm going to work my way out of this hole," Ms. Pinkston said. "Eventually I will get out and when I do I won't come back. Now, I just grin and bear it. It is giving me ulcers and making my head hurt.

"I don't think I want my kids growing up here."

Blacks say integration of coalfield schools hurt their communities as much as the mechanization of the mines in the 1950s, which sent out-of-work blacks from the mountains to the cities to look for work.

"One old man told me that desegregation was the worst thing that happened to niggers since liquor," Turner said. "In schools now, they might have Negro history week. We had Negro history week every day."

Doretha Ross was the first black person to send her children to a white school in Scott County. She was taking her children to a Kingsport, TN, black school — paying tuition for the privilege — and passing Gate City High School every day. She demanded the school board allow her son and daughter into GCHS and, after some consideration, the board agreed.

But, "I don't think integration has been an improvement for black students, period," she said. Her children stopped being as involved in school activities when they went to Gate City as they were in an all-black school, she said. Often there is only one black student to a class.

The biggest surge of blacks to the coalfields occurred in the late 1800s when king coal was discovered. Blacks were imported from sharecrop farms to build railroads and dig mines.

Compared to their past employment, the mine jobs that paid a man — black or white — the same salary and segregated coal camps looked good. But mine mechanization hit blacks hard because their jobs were the ones most often taken by machines.

The Rev. Curtis Burney, president of the Wise County NAACP, is a miner. He said he was too busy to pay attention when King was organizing the country.

"I was looking for a job," he said. "My father would always tell us — 'I don't want you in the mines.' But if you want to eat, if you want to live without stealing, you'll take a job."

Blacks said they are hardest-hit by unemployment in the coalfields and are still the poorest people in the mountains. But few protest their lot.

"The best way to survive in the coalfields is to keep quiet," Cabbell said.

"As long as they can eat, as long as they can sleep and have a little money in their pockets, they're happy," Ms. Pinkston said.

Mrs. Ross, the first woman and black to be elected to Gate City's town council, said only voting power will help blacks and "there are too few people to be effective."

"I'm angry — but that doesn't change anything," she said. "If blacks get more votes, if we become more in the mainstream of things ... we're so far behind in this area that it will take us a long time to catch up. If white people are behind, you know blacks are behind." (UPI)

People in the News

Joins Brown-Forman

Milton B. Gillis, director of employee benefits for Brown-Forman Corporation, announced the appointment of Ronald C. Hickson to manager of group insurance. In his new position, Hickson will be responsible for the design, implementation and administration of all group insurance programs for the corporation and its subsidiaries.

Ronald C. Hickson

Audley F. Shaw

Hickson had been the insured benefits' manager for the Kroger Company in Cincinnati. He is a graduate of Franklin University, Columbus, OH, with a bachelor of science degree in business administration.

Brown-Forman Corporation, through its various divisions, markets Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey, Canadian Mist Canadian Whisky, Early Times and Old Forester Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskies, Usher's Scotch, Bolla and Cella Italian Wines, Korbel California Champagnes and Brandy, and Southern Comfort.

Jamaican executive

Audley F. Shaw has been appointed by the government of Jamaica to head the United States and Canadian offices of the Jamaica National Investment Promotion, Limited, an agency formed by Prime Minister Edward Seaga to attract investments to Jamaica.

Shaw assumed his duties in New York as the U.S. Congress passed the Caribbean Basin Initiative which allows Jamaica duty-free trade with the United States for 12 years.

Shaw sees the need for Jamaica to aggressively promote the advantages available to the U.S. and Canadian investors in Jamaica and to back these points with comparative advantage studies.

Allstate analyst

Oliver M. Darden has been appointed senior investment analyst for Allstate Insurance Co. Most recently, he was national urban affairs director.

In the new position, Darden is responsible for administering the Allstate Urban Investment Program. The program is designed to create jobs in urban communities by providing expansion capital to minority businesses.

Oliver M. Darden

Darden began his Allstate career in 1971 as a management trainee in the company's Menlo Park, CA, regional office. There he also held positions as personnel assistant and division personnel manager.

He also was affirmative action coordinator for Allstate's Western Zone and division personnel manager for the company's Seattle regional office. Prior to his appointment as urban affairs director in May 1979, Darden was personnel manager for Allstate's San Diego and Pasadena regional offices.

Fort Valley president

Dr. Luther Burse, professor and coordinator of graduate studies in industrial arts and technology at Cheyney University, has been elected president of Fort Valley State College.

His election by the board of regents of the University System of Georgia was recommended by Chancellor Vernon Crawford.

Burse succeeds Dr. Cleveland Pettigrew, who served as president of Fort Valley State College from 1973 until his death on June 11, 1982.

Dr. Walter W. Sullivan Jr., dean of academic affairs and professor of chemistry, served as acting president since June 17, 1982.

Burse served as interim president of Cheyney University from July 1981-Sept. 1982. He has been a member of the executive committee of the National Education Association since 1980.

Army secretary

Delbert L. Spurlock Jr. has been appointed as the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. In his current position, he is principal advisor to the Secretary of the Army on all the Army policy and activities pertaining to manpower and force structure.

Delbert L. Spurlock Jr.

He was born in Richmond, Va., on April 3, 1941. He attended the public schools of Oberlin, OH. He attended Hamilton College, Clinton, NY, for two years prior to graduation from Oberlin College in 1963.

Spurlock graduated in 1967 from the Howard University School of Law, where he was a member of its law journal. He received a masters of law degree in labor law from the National Law Center, George Washington University, in 1973.

Following his graduation from law school in 1967, Spurlock was admitted to the Tennessee Bar and began law practice with the firm Looby and Williams.

Beauty aid manufacturer donates $50,000 to UNCF

CHICAGO — As a result of Alberto-Culver Company's successful 3-month "Move Ahead to Excellence" campaign, a check for $50,000 was presented by Rohn Hamel, general manager of TCB, to the United Negro College Fund at UNCF's telethon recently held in St. Louis, MO.

The "Move Ahead to Excellence" campaign was launched in March as a tribute to the development of young black minds.

"This promotion for UNCF, was highlighted on boxes of TCB No Lye, No Mix Relaxer which carried a special logo. Every kit with the special logo that was purchased during March, April, May and June was set aside for UNCF," Hamel said.

"We are glad that so many hairdressers believe in the continuing excellence of education. Without their assistance we would not have been able to present this check for $50,000 to UNCF", stated Hamel.

Along with the donation, Alberto-Culver Co. challenged everyone in the greater St. Louis area to contribute $25 or more to UNCF. For doing so, the company would present each contributor with a special gift package.

Since the telethon, several contributions of $25 have been made on behalf of UNCF. "Every contribution is greatly appreciated and is going to a worthy cause", observed Hamel.

Charitable gifts, like the $50,000 Alberto-Culver Co. donation, are used for a variety of educational purposes. Among the member schools, UNCF contributions help maintain qualified faculty, improve teaching and laboratory equipment, award scholarships and financial aid, increase library materials and maintain - construct campus buildings.

CELEBRITY ARRAIGNMENT — Actor Todd Bridges of the television show "Diff'rent Strokes" appeared in a Beverly Hills Municipal Court Aug. 23 for his arraignment on misdemeanor weapons charges. He pleaded innocent on charges of carrying a concealed weapon and carrying a loaded firearm in a vehicle. A preliminary hearing was set for Sept. 13.

John Hamel (L), general manager of TCB division, Alberto-Culver Company, presents a check for $50,000 to Richard King, regional supervisor for the United Negro College Fund.

Neighborhood leaders set national meeting

The National Association of Neighborhoods will convene its Eleventh National Meeting on Sept. 30, in Jackson, MS. Tougaloo College, the Southern Rural Women's Network, and the Southern Office of Rural America will host the 500 neighborhood leaders from across the country that are expected to attend.

For the last 12 years, NAN has served its 1000 member organizations as an advocate for more effective neighborhood programs and as a technical resource center for neighborhood organizations. Explaining his organization's commitment to America's neighborhoods Stephen Glaude, executive director said "Neighborhoods should be partners in the efforts to revitalize our communities, not silent partners but vocal and active partners...NAN is an instrument by which neighborhoods speak and act for social and economic democracy."

Glaude noted that "this year's theme, 'New Hopes, New Directions and Renewed Determination', expresses the spirit of the neighborhood movement. 'New Hope' expressed our optimism for achieving a better life style for neighborhood residents. 'New Direction' expresses our efforts to find and implement innovative solutions for the difficult problems affecting our communities. 'Renewed Determination' attests to the commitment we share with others to improve the quality of life for us all."

Man killed on expressway

PHILADELPHIA — An unidentified elderly man was struck by a car and killed when he apparently stumbled into eastbound traffic on the Philadelphia Vine St., extension of the Schuylkill Expressway, police said.

The man, described as being about 70 years old, had been walking along the shoulder of the road when he walked into the path of a car driven by Gregory Rubin, of Montgomery County.

The man was pronounced dead on arrival at Hahnemann University Hospital. No charges have been filed in the accident.

Reagan sides with white workers again

By Barbara Rosewicz

WASHINGTON (UPI) — For the second time, the Reagan Administration is before the Supreme Court on the side of white firefighters to oppose a race-conscious layoff policy ordered to protect black workers.

In papers filed at the high court, the Justice Department objected to court orders that helped less experienced black firefighters in Memphis keep their jobs during a 1981 budget crisis, while more senior white firemen were laid off.

The government took the same stand last December in a similar case involving layoffs of Boston firefighters. But the Supreme Court never ruled on the case because all the laid-off Boston firefighters were eventually rehired.

Before the Boston and Memphis cases, the Federal government had never before sided with whites in a major racial bias case before the high court.

Memphis decided to lay off workers based on their length of service because of a deficit in its proposed operating budget in 1981.

But the seniority-based layoffs threatened a serious reduction in the number of minority firefighters, who had been hired by the city as a response to a discrimination suit in the 1970s by black firefighter Carl Stotts.

Black firefighters challenged the police in court, and won an injunction barring use of seniority to determine layoffs because of the devastating effect it would have on newly hired minorities.

The court found that the city's "last-hired, first-fired" policy discriminated against blacks. Most blacks above the rank of private had accrued little seniority, leaving them most vulnerable to personnel cuts.

Layoffs were then accomplished by methods other than seniority under the court's orders not to decrease the percentage of black firefighters.

In "friend of the court" papers, solicitor general Rex Lee urged the justices to find the lower courts overstepped their authority in protecting the jobs of workers who had not actually suffered from discrimination.

Lee argued that seniority systems, and the workers covered by them, have special protections under the law.

Seniority systems should not be modified by courts, except to help identifiable victims of bias by moving them into their "rightful slot within the seniority system," Lee wrote.

In the Memphis case, he said, "innocent firefighters were required to sacrifice not only their seniority, but also their jobs to persons who have never claimed to be victims of unlawful discrimination."

The 72 white and eight black firefighters laid off were rehired in November 1981. But the International Association of Firefighters said a survey of states and cities in fiscal year 1982 indicated that shrinking municipal economies make it likely that similar situations could arise elsewhere.

The Supreme Court has not yet set a date for arguments in the Memphis case.

—City council

Continued from page 1

The five Ashburton activist John Clark, second district councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke, National Democratic Policy Committee candidate Debra Freeman, former State's Attorney William Swisher, and the incumbent Clarence "Du" Burns, education, housing and economic development.

Their responses revealed a sharply divided field of presidential candidates who differ over a number of points.

So clear cut are their positions that voters may have an easier time choosing from among them than from among candidates in the other contests slated for the Sept. 13 elections.

The debate proved the difficulty of pidgeonholing candidates ideologically. Swisher, a political conservative, came off sounding like a coalition liberal when he suggested the city bolster minority business by giving local contractors a bidding edge over out-of-town firms.

And, later, he said he would seek an equitable distribution of the council chairmanships among blacks and women, and among the city's six councilmanic districts.

Currently none of the council's three major committees are chaired by blacks or women. And while the fifth district controls two chairmanships, the heavily black second and fourth districts control none.

Swisher's coolness toward subsidized housing was more in keeping with his conservative image, however.

"Spreading public housing around is not the answer," Swisher said.

If the city focused on economic development, rather than increasing public housing, the need would be eliminated, as working heads of households could afford to pay for private dwellings.

"We can't afford public housing forever," Swisher said.

John Clark differed with Swisher's hands-off attitude. Trustee money could be used to rehabilitate some of the city's estimated 6,000 abandoned houses, to make them available for low-and moderate - income families, Clark said.

Clark added some form of rent control would be desirable to "stabilize" renters' costs, and pledged to make rent control a constant issue in Council.

Councilwoman Clarke agreed that rent control is a "partial answer" to rising rental costs, but said it is not a total solution. Returning vacant units to the city's housing stock would help relieve the upward pressure on rents, Clarke said.

Education did not fail to draw differences between the presidential hopefuls.

"I believe today the goal of the school system is to produce functionally illiterate people who can fit into Schaefer's post-industrial nightmare," Freeman said.

"I think we have a good system," Clarke rebutted. "I have the three children in it and I wouldn't send them if it were bad."

John Clark called truancy and the high school dropout rate "a massive problem" and called for an "early identification program" which would address children with these problems before they slip irremediably behind.

Clark said he would use the president's seat on the Board of Estimates to address black economic development. Contracts could be awarded more fairly, to include more black businesses.

A low-interest, revolving loan could help participating small firms overcome cash-flow problems while working for the city.

And the definition by which firms qualify as minority business could be tightened to prevent white businesses from using female "fronts" to win minority contracts.

Mary Pat Clarke said the city should boost small businesses to expand the tax base. Services could be protected without the need to raise taxes.

"I think our local taxpayers are already taxed to the hilt," Clarke said.

Burns said city services are threatened by the formula under which state tax revenues are divided among the Maryland subdivisions.

"I think when you look at the fact that 60 percent of the state's poverty, and 49 percent of the elderly are on fixed incomes, then there is something wrong with the reimbursement formula," Burns said. "The reimbursement from the state must reflect our needs."

In general Burns painted a blank view of the city's fiscal future. The city is already doing all it can, Burns said.

"We don't shake a tree to get money. We get it from you," Burns said, addressing the audience.

—John Douglass

Continued from page 1

Eastsider's run for City Hall.

Among the list of Douglass backers are several white financial superstars, whose firms control billions of dollars in assets. Their support, along with the backing of most of the city's black politicians, businessmen, and civic leaders, and from several labor unions, has contributed a broad-based credibility - and vital funding - to the Douglass campaign.

Confidence in Douglass' fiscal expertise, and an ebbing confidence in Pressman's abilities after 20 years in office, are most frequently cited by individuals in explaining their support of Douglass.

Henry Baker, senior executive vice-president of Maryland National Bank, said Douglass merits support, and is an "ideal candidate by education, training and by experience."

And Henry A. Rosenberg, Jr., of Crown Central Petrolium, speaking for his fellow Douglass supporters, said: "We think that the office needs a change, needs a younger, more aggressive person in office."

The backing of influential whites could help him win votes in the white community, Douglass said. But he was quick to point out that he also has received overwhelming support in the black business community.

The comptrollership is an important part of a "well rounded administration" because of its role in the Board of Estimates, Rosenberg said. Estimates controls the city's purse strings, and plays an influential role in city development.

Douglass supporters said Douglass would work well with business leaders, the mayor, and government officials, as well as the city's labor leaders.

The support by the business community is welcome, but not surprising, Douglass said. All he had to do was make himself known to them, he said.

"People want a banker's image, not a clown," Douglass said. "Once we got started almost everyone supported me."

Douglass' background appears to be the most compelling reason for broad support from both blacks and whites.

The Eastside delegate has a master's degree in chemistry from the Johns Hopkins University, and taught at Morgan State University before being elected Annapolis in 1971.

For eight years he chaired the Joint Budget Audit Committee, which oversees the state's auditor.

And he sponsored debt control legislation which he claims helped control government spending and protect Maryland's AAA bond credit rating.

Douglass also has sat on the Spending Affordability and the Appropriations committees.

"In those capacities I've tackled and solved various state financial problems," Douglass said, adding he would like to do the same for Baltimore.

Pressman, who admits he will have to run hard to thwart Douglass' third challenge for his seat, has said the business community's backing proved Douglass' interests are not with the people.

Pressman said bankers are repaying Douglass for his support last spring of a controversial banking deregulation bill that was viewed as anti-consumer.

"I've been fighting for the consumers, the little people," Mr. Pressman said. "My opponent is for the big-shots."

But most of Douglass' backers are unrelated to the banking industry.

Douglass said that Maryland lost 1,000 jobs when four banks moved their credit card operations to Delaware recently, and that the deregulation bill would save jobs by encouraging other banks to remain in the state.

"The unions' endorsement of my candidacy indicates they think I will work for the working man," Douglass said. "Clearly I'm the one who represents the little guy."

—Murphy calls

Continued from page 1

12.5 percent and another 12 percent has gone to make selected areas attractive to professionals and managers — Barre Circle, Ridgeley's Delight, Bolton Hill, Butcher's Hill, etc. Thus, for every $2 spent on downtown and fancy urban revitalization, only $3 was spent on the "neighborhoods".

In Ridgeley's Delight and Otterbein areas, brick sidewalks, new trees, mini-parks, and fancy street lights have drastically changed the nature of the neighborhood. And well it should, the combined cost to the city runs to about $25,000 a house. In Park Heights by contrast, more city development money has been spent in total but the size of the area means that less than $1000 has been spent per house.

We do not begrudge anyone a nice place to live; we just question whether the budgeting practices of the current administration are fair. At $25,000 a house, the increased taxes that go with the improved homes are not enough to amortize the investment.

Moreover, Murphy campaign officials say that their research will become plain to the public when commercials, graphically depicting the glaring contrasts between what the Mayor claims and what is reality, air on local television at the following hours:

Friday, September 2nd, Channel 11, WBAL, 1:28 p.m.; 2:58 p.m.; 4:10 p.m.; and 4:46 p.m.

Friday, September 2nd, Channel 13, 9:45 a.m.; 7:46 p.m.; Saturday, September 3, 6:29 p.m.; 6:58 p.m.; and Sunday, September 4, 11:28 p.m.

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Fall YWCA classes set

The month of September signals the kick off of a new season of classes offered this Fall by the YWCA of Greater Baltimore at locations in Baltimore City, Baltimore, Harford and Anne Arundel Counties.

The Central YWCA, located at 128 W. Franklin Street, will begin its Fall program with an Open House featuring "Physical Fitness and Water Safety Survival Skills on Tuesday, September 20, 5:30 -9p.m. Free sample classes will be offered in Aerobics, Slimnastics, Jazz, Yoga and Volleyball along with free dips in the YW pool and a demonstration of basic water rescue techniques for the non-swimmer. The regular Fall Schedule of classes begins the week of September 19, and will include Modern dance, Ballet, Jazz, Tennis, Yoga, Slimnastics, Aerobics, Fencing, Swimming, Weight lifting for Women and a lot more! Central classes meet at 128 W. Franklin Street and locations in South Baltimore, North City, Fells Point, and Bolton Hill.

This Fall the Madison Avenue YW Center, now located at 128 W. Franklin Street begins program the week of September 19th with classes in Aerobics, Jazz, Karate, Ballet, Slimnastics, Calligraphy, Brass Rubbing, the Art of Public Speaking and Gourmet Cooking on a Budget. Madison classes are offered at Wayland Baptist Church, Caroline Street, United Methodist Church and Trinity Baptist Church.

YWCA programs also extend to Baltimore, Harford and Anne Arundel Counties. All YWCA programs are open to the community

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