

Maryland legislators see good year for Black Caucus

By SCOTT PONEMONE

In the midst of their last minute preparation for the Jan. 10 opening of the 1973 session of the General Assembly, city legislators make a common New Year's prediction: the Black Caucus in Annapolis will be a more unified body than ever before.

The Maryland 18 member caucus is one of the largest block of black lawmakers in any state legislature.

Senator Verda Welcome (D, 4th) remarked, "I'm predicting we will do a better job. We are growing closer because we know the importance of working together."

"I'm hoping," Senator Clarence Blount (D, 5th) told the AFRO, "the 13 member of the black General Assembly can work cooperatively together on the major bills."

He commented, "In order to do this, it's going to mean every member of the delegation will have to get past history and not allow divisive opinion to permanently divide us."

To this, the senator emphasized, "I will certainly exert every influence I personally can to bring about this kind of unity."

Senator Robert Dalton (D, 2nd) also expects a stronger Black Caucus but cautioned, "The Black Caucus will only be effective if three or four people do not dictate to all the rest."

"On the major bills that are going to affect black folks," he declared, "once the Black Caucus meets and agrees, we should follow through on our stand."

Sen. Dalton added, "The whole answer in a nutshell to a strong caucus is there has to be trust between the members."

Senator Clarence Mitchell (D, 4th) admits, "The Black Caucus has been disorganized on basic philosophies and personality differences."

But the senator forecast, "I predict there will be a closer working together of the black legislature in this upcoming session."

"This is basically because," he explained, "of the leadership by higher elected officials, by Milton Alton, Parren Mitchell and Paul Chaster in bringing people of different political factions together for common purposes."

On the major issue of redistricting, the four senators predicted the change-

over from six districts with twelve senators and 43 delegates to eleven districts with eleven senators and 33 delegates will lead to higher black representation in Annapolis.

Sen. Blount stated, "I'm satisfied with the district that I have to run in 1974, and I will run."

"The city will lose one senator and ten delegates," he remarked, "but these will all be from predominantly white areas."

He exclaimed, "The Governor's proposal, as it stands, protects all the black legislators of Baltimore, and I worked very hard in the Senate to see that this was so."

Sen. Dalton told the AFRO he sees the plan as a chance to regain "a solid black voting area in East Baltimore."

"What I like about the present proposal," he said, "is that certain precincts in the 8th Ward that were cut out of the 2nd District and put into the 3rd will be back in the 2nd."

Sen. Welcome asserted she was "very pleased" that the legislators have returned to Mandel's plan because "it redistricted so more blacks can get elected while letting elected officials to hold their ground."

On the possibility that she and the other 4th District senator, Sen. Mitchell, who both reside in the same proposed district, will face each other in the 1974 elections, Sen. Welcome commented:

"Yes our residences are in the same district; however, Sen. Mitchell's office is in another (proposed) district and he can run in that district."

Sen. Mitchell informed

the AFRO he knows other legislators have run from their office address with the court's approval, but he believes, "If the law says you live in the district you represent, you should conform to the law."

He firmly stated he intends to run from his Wabash Ave. address and not from his office and he does not intend to move his home because he has two children in the local elementary school.

Pointing out that Sen. Welcome, who lives on Liberty Hgts., still owns several properties on Harlem St. in the other half of the present 4th District, he suggested she and her husband (no children) make the move.

"If she . . . stating that I can run from my office," Sen. Mitchell declared, "she can run from her former residence. Want is good for the goose is good for the gander."

Otherwise, he predicted the redistricting plan "will certainly increase black representation in the House and will certainly provide for more equal representation in the Senate in the future."

Also, he agreed that cutting senatorial districts in half from 100,000 constituents to 50,000 will allow senators "to give more personal representation."

Sen. Dalton told the AFRO he thought there was a clear agreement made about this time last year at a meeting of city lawmakers that Sen. Mitchell would run from his office address.

"At the meeting," he said, "There was not any opposition between the two. It was understood they didn't have any problems. That was the only way we (the city legislators) would agree to Mandel's plan."



VERDA WELCOME (D., 4th)

Zaire leader speaks against contraceptives

KINASHA Zaire — President Mobutu Sese Seko praised agriculture but damned contraceptives in his yearly address to parliament on the state of the nation.

In his discussion of social problems Seko strongly condemned "the use of the pill or any other contraceptives." The president "so called on all Zairians to practice agriculture as the priority of priorities."