Shapes New Political Phenomena

By L. W. Quinn

As we move more deeply into a new phase of the long, tortuous struggle for full freedom, dignity and equality — or, in the classic phrase, liberty, equality, fraternity — for black Americans, the role and responsibility of the Black Press become increasingly important and essential.

As I see it, the decade of the Seventies is the beginning of a new period to be characterized by the assertion of political power by blacks. Those of us who are most optimistic regard this as the historic though belated start of a second Reconstruction. For others, what is now happening in my own city of Detroit and others where black mayors have been elected — and more

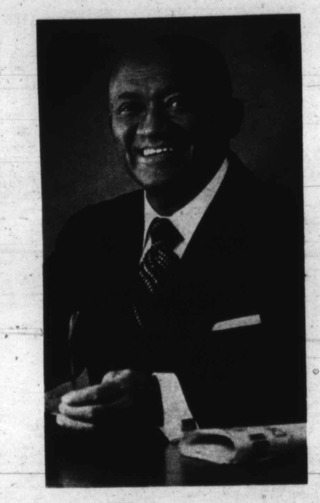
'Sticks To Its Guns When It Knows It Is Right'

dramatically, throughout the South — this progress, though heartening, is pitifully meager compared to the white body politic.

Regardless of the school of thought to which you subscribe, there is a fact of history that is neither debatable nor deniable — and that is the powerful constructive force that the Black Press and its editors and publishers, as community leaders, have wielded in this new political black phenomenon.

In spite of the massive outpouring of news through white-oriented media, black citizens throughout this country still depend heavily on the Black Press for "the truth of the matter," for the "black perspective," for the "inside story." That is where they know the writer, and editors can be counted on to "tell it like it is."

Over the years, in spite of economic and political pressures and, in some instances, threats, the Black Press has held firmly true to its charge of reflecting the needs, interests and demands of an oppressed people determined to



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make the U.S. Constitution a living reality.

There are many lessons of Watergate. It has emphasized to all Americans the pervasive influence of political propagandists and how these forces can manipulate the news media. Crusading journalists whom the entrenched interests tried to dismiss as cranks have emerged smelling like roses.

This strongly indicated the increasing responsibility of the Black Press to its constituency and the urgent necessity of becoming more vigilant, to make sure that political opportunists and propagandists of whatever stripe or motives are not allowed to exploit the hopes and aspirations of black people. The Black Press must "stick by its guns" when it knows it is right.

It also seems to me that the Black Press should and must become stronger, more aggressive, and effective in expanding our role as we move into this new phase in the quest for black economic and political parity. Our goals must not be narrow but should be oriented toward the whole texture and fabric of American life.

The challenges facing us will continue to multiply, but I am confident that, if the black leaders in the print and other media will pull and work together, we shall overcome.

'A Miracle'

By James S. Tinney

"The Black Press is a miracle."

This is how one of the foremost white journalism experts, a professor at Syracuse University in New York, describes the black news industry.

Outside of the church itself, the Black Press is the oldest and the largest institution of blacks in America. And the fact that it has been able to not only survive, but to flourish, and to influence the masses is what earns for it the term "miraculous," says Roland E. Wolseley.

Wolseley, a veteran professor of journalism, the author of more than 19 books — most on journalism, makes these assessments in a new book entitled "The Black Press U.S.A.," published by Iowa State University Press.

Robert E. Johnson, executive editor of Jet magazine, calls this book "a redeeming document of black men and black media struggling to overcome chaos and establish community in a racist society against incredible odds."

We are reminded that until recently blacks could not obtain employment working with white publications, regardless of the position. There were for scores and scores of years no black reporters, editors or craftsmen working for any white newspaper or magazine.

Since many times the route of apprenticeship on white papers, or the lengthy promotion system whereby one graduated from one relatively unimportant press task to a more important one, was based on experience, blacks were thus effectively locked-out of such positions.

Even today only 4.1 per cent of all media workers are black, although opportunities are expanding. But even this poses a problem to the black press.

For where do white papers get their experienced journalists? Often they get them by raiding the black press industry.

Trials Recounted

In this book are recounted other examples of the trials with which black publications have been afflicted.

Ku Klux Klan raids on newspaper offices, laws forbidding the printing of circulation of black periodicals less than 50 years ago (northern black papers were, more often than not, confiscated and destroyed at Southern terminals) and other tactics.

Less than a year ago a black newspaper in Wilmington, N.C. had its offices bombed, as was the office of the New Jersey Voice less than two years before that.

And in 1969, Charles Cade, publisher of the Jackson, Mich. Blazer, was murdered in his home and racist slogans scribbled in blood on two walls. (Whites who deplore black violence forget that all this started with them).

During World War I, the federal government charged black papers with sedition for opposing discrimination. And in World War II, Washington officials tried to quiet the editorials of both the California Eagle and the Pittsburgh Courier.

The Chicago Defender, one of four black dailies, has also been the target of raids on newsstands in the South. Papers have also been seized at train and bus depots.

"Greatest Influence"

Yet through it all, the Black Press has maintained a never-ceasing voice of protest for freedom and human rights. A poll shows that 97 per cent of all blacks call the Black Press "the greatest influence in securing for the Negro first-class citizenship.

Wolseley's book, by the way, devotes more space to the AFRO-AMERICAN paper than to any other, except the Defender. He calls it "one of the oldest and most powerful black journalistic institutions in the U.S."

He also reminds that "the highest circulations are among those that take the strongest stands."

Black Press Lighting Road To Freedom

By Carlton B. Goodlet
President, NNPA

It is time for us to take a new look at Black America, the people served by the Black Press and the changing circumstances which challenge the viability and very existence of the Black Press.

We are a nation whose population is roughly 25 million, the second most numerous aggregation of black people within the confines of a nation on the face of the earth — second only to Nigeria with its population of 61 million. Only two of Africa's 52 nations are more populous than Black America: Nigeria and Egypt.

There are 152 nations in the world whose populations are smaller than Black America's. Closer to home, of the 36 nations of both North and South America only three are bigger than Black America: White USA (184,000,000), Brazil (91,000,000) and Mexico (45,000,000).

Highly Developed

In terms of education we are the most highly developed of any nation of black people on earth, with approximately 7,500 physicians, 2,700 dentists, 4,000 attorneys, thousands of academicians and tens of thousands of public school teachers; and our black youth in institutions of higher learning number 467,000—200,000 more than British students in Great Britain with its population of 55,000,000.

In terms of economics, we are a people with an income 9th largest in the capitalist world. Dr. Andrew Brimmer, commissioner of the Federal Reserve Board, states that in 1972 Black Americans earned $51 billion and, moreover, spent $45 billion. Despite the economic disparity between the White and Black Nations — USA which places Black Americans in a disadvantaged position at home, when viewed internationally among 77 nations of the capitalist world Black America's income for 1972 was topped by only eight other nations, in the following order: United States of America, Japan, the Federal German Republic, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada and Indian.

India, with a population 22 times that of Black America, had a Gross National Product of $52,920,000,000, only $1.92 billion greater than the 1972 income of Black America. The Black share of the One Trillion One Hundred Twenty Billion Dollar U.S. Gross National Product was approximately 4.5 per cent, or a short-change of approximately 7.5 per cent. If Black Americans could gain equity and parity in the job market, it has been estimated that our income would increase between $35 and $55 billion a year. Moreover, every dollar placed in the marketplace adds $3 to the GNP. The black man in America, free of economic discrimination, would be able to enhance the Gross National Product from $105-$165 billion per year. (What a tremendous price the USA pays for racism!)

Challenges Awesome

The awesome circumstances challenging the Black Press are perhaps most glaringly illustrated by the new sociological statistics, as Black America progressively becomes an urbanized nation. Twenty five U.S. cities now have black populations in excess of 1,000,000, 16 metropolitan areas have black populations exceeding 250,000. It is estimated that by 1980, 12 or 14 of America's 20 largest cities will elect black mayors.

"For the totality of his American experience, the black man has been caught up in the semantics of "individual freedom" as opposed to "freedom for the black masses." Our unquestioning acceptance of the myth of individual vs. mass freedom has permitted the white majority to deal with the black people as "the 10th American," when in truth our strength lies in the collective concept that we are 11 per cent

DR. CARLTON B. GOODLET
President, NNPA

of America, a force of 25 million.

The Black Press

For 110 years since the Emancipation Proclamation the Black Press has been a marginal business. It was not until the mid 1920's that black newspapers began to receive advertising — the life's blood of newspapers in a capitalist soiety—from the white business community. Prior to this, the great black newspapers existed entirely on circulation revenue. For the past 50 years white business has given the Black Press a token amount of advertising, reflecting how little it comprehends of the emerging economic viability as well as the size of the Black Nation-USA.

The 20-billion-a-year advertising industry is one of the cornerstones of our society. In 1971, the 100 largest advertising agencies (white) placed $1,900,000,000 worth of national newspaper advertising.

Amalgamated Publishers, Inc., the only established national black newspaper advertising representative, received less than $2.5 million worth of gross business, or less than 0.14 per cent of available national advertising. Remember that a 2 per cent expenditure for advertising based upon $45 billion spent by black people in 1972 should have yielded hundreds of millions of dollars in advertising for the Black Press (USA).

Advertising Is Important

Without advertising, the Black Nation cannot sustain even its present fare of publishing once a week.

The Black Press-USA is estimated at 200 to 250 publications, of which 90-95 are members of NNPA. More than 90 per cent of all black newspapers are published only once a week. Three or four are published twice a week. The Atlanta Daily World and the Chicago Daily Defender are the two nationally recognized daily black newspapers.

The Black Press must now demand equity in advertising. The policy of the advertising industry has not been one of reciprocal response to the needs of the black community, by more equitably distributing the advertising dollar—especially in dealing with the 9th wealthiest nation in the capitalist world, which has an annual income two to three times the present amount of U.S. foreign trade.

Must Crack Barrier

The advertising industry must be charged with special task of instructing its clients in the wisdom of allocating a fair share of sustained advertising to the black community newspaper. Such constructive efforts by the advertising agencies, prodded by black entrepreneurship, would reflect the advertising industry's awareness of U.S. business' responsibility to the black community, which contributes from 10 per cent to 25 per cent toward the gross income of such businesses as food, clothing, automobiles, alcoholic spirits, entertainment et al, and yet cannot maintain a viable community press because of their disproportionate share of advertising budgets.