Action against child support office heats up downtown

Ann Helton

By Alisa Samuels
AFRO Staff Writer

Three unions and several bitter Bureau of Support Enforcement employees have joined together to ask for two resignations in the agency's upper management.

The American Federation of State and County Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the Maryland Classified Employees Association (MCEA) and the Teamster's Union supported a rally sponsored by the bureau workers June 27 at the North Eutaw Street building demanding David A. Angle, assistant director, and Ann Helton, executive director for the administration, to resign.

David A. Engle must go. Ann Helton must go," shouted Sammy Odumodu, a support enforcement agent, as he carried a sign echoing the requests.

Monday marked the worker's third consecutive protest of the agency which is a party of the Baltimore City Department of Social Services and the Department of Human Resources State of Maryland.

The workers claim Engle is a racist and Helton is ignorant to the bureau's policies.

They also blame Engle for transferring a veteran unit manager, Mary A. Fields, to a food division in another building, after she testified at a budget and taxation hearing in Annapolis, about the problems workers face in the support enforcement agency.

Excessive caseloads, overcrowdiness, unfair personnel practices, lack of manpower and errors in intercepting federal and state income tax refunds from parents who failed to make child support payments, have plagued the agency, workers said.

Over 91,000 cases were intercepted, totalling about $500,000 to $1 million, said Charlotte Carter, a MCEA local 232 member, representing the workers.

"In many of these cases, the cases were closed and the payor didn't owe the money, but had to wait four to six months to get the money back," said Carter.

Carter and Baskins said the average caseload for an agent is 2,500 to 3,000 cases. Only 58 workers are able to handle nearly 100,000 cases. Forty-nine agents are permanent and nine are contractural, the woman said.

"She (Helton) can come down here and see for herself," said Odumodu, referring to the lack of manpower. "Let her come down here and we can count the cases together."

Helton said she knows her job and that Fields would not return to supervising the collections division, despite workers demands.

Fields, president of Zeta Phi Beta sorority, local, to make a statement, protester said, he sorors attended the rally.

"Obviously, something is wrong here. Someone should take a look at the problems" said Sen. Nathan Irby, who sat in on the budget and taxation hearing at which Fields testified.

He said he came only to offer support to the workers and not to propose any legislations.

Irby said an outside agency, like the Department of Human Resources, should scrutinize the support enforcement bureau to resolve the current controversy, instead of the bureau examining itself, because "it's like the fox managing the henhouse."

"There is obviously some flaws in this operation," the senator said.

Sen. Irby was recently appointed to the Baltimore Urban Services Commission.

The support enforcement administration is developing a new case management system to allow workers to be more efficient and to standardize the caseloads, because workers tend to "individualize" the caseloads, Helton said.

"It's a new accountability system," said Helton. "It says you are accountable for certain things to move your cases along."

Enforcement agents will be accountable for 10 cases a day, Helton said.

Helton denied the charge that Engle was racist, saying he had appointed eight blacks and one Indian to work directly under him.

"The racial question is blatantly untrue," Helton said.

"I'm not optimistic that these demonstrations will get us what we want," said Donna W. Edwards, president of AFSCME, Local 112.

The workers said they would break from protesting for a while.

WHAT A NEWSPAPER! Costa Ricans visited the AFRO-AMERICAN Newspaper earlier this month to see first hand how it is actually put together.

Costa Ricans visit AFRO

By Gloria Howe
AFRO Correspondent

Twenty Costa Rican Boy & Girl Scout Leaders visited the Baltimore AFRO-AMERICAN during their June 18 thru 26th tour of major black oriented cities.

Project director, Dr. W. Carroll of Coppin State College says, the tour was sponsored by the Agency for International Development, and its' explicit purpose was to expose the visitors to black lifestyles, particularly in the areas of education, civil rights, and political achievement.

"They were delighted to meet with both Mayor Kurt Schmoke and Governor William Donald Schaefer, and seemed extremely impressed with the Baltimore AFRO-AMERICAN" said Carroll.

As the uniformed scouts toured the historically black-owned AFRO, they asked Director of AFRO Charities, Elyn Garrett, several questions and seemed enthusiastic to learn more about the black press.

George Phelps and Dale Woodford served as translators, guides facilitators for the Costa Rican visitors; while Coppin State College served as their local host and the College of Notre Dame as their residence during their stay.

The group visited Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and will continue thru Seattle, Washington, and Wyoming; then its' back to the coasts of Costa Rica with many memories of the advancements of black American enterprises.

Scholar cites low voting rate

By Jill P. Carter
AFRO Staff Writer

It has been over twenty years since the passage of the United States Voting Rights Act of 1965 expanded the boundaries of those eligible to vote, yet a recent study indicates that one-third of the citizens eligible to vote are not seizing the opportunity.

The report, Assessment of Voter Registration in Baltimore County, by Herbert H. Lindsey, points out that while there are 53,000 blacks in Baltimore County, black political presence is not felt.

Black people make up eight percent of the population in Baltimore County, but the numbers are unevenly dispersed throughout different sections.

The areas with the highest numbers of blacks have the lowest number of voters, according to Lindsey's report.

Variation in the number of registered voters fluctuates from a high 95 percent in the tenth election district (Jacksonville, Phoenix, and Monkton), where there are few blacks; all the way down to 52 percent in the thirteenth election district (Arbutus, Halethorpe, Lansdowne, Relay, Baltimore Highlands), where there is a large number of black residents.

The areas with the highest percentage of blacks also have the highest number of home renters vs. homeowners and the lowest number of voter registration.

It surmizes that the elderly, blue-collar workers, women, and blacks, who compose the largest group of the renting population, are not taking an active role in electing officials to represent them.

Lindsey, a former professor of Sociology at Morgan State University, spent two months researching and writing his report in an effort to alert Baltimore County residents of the need for them to take an active role in the decision making and politics of the county.

"This is a presidential election year when interest in voting is expected to peak," Lindsey stated in his report. "Now is an auspicious time for neighborhood groups, civic and political groups, churches, labor unions, business corporations, individual citizens, and elected officials to help bring up the level of voter registration and participation to an acceptable standard."

Lindsey urges citizens not to take the right to vote for granted.

"Afro-American citizens should need no reminder of the right to vote, and its power should not be taken for granted," he states. "The right to be among the electorate has been paid for by acts of courage, sweat, pain, tears, blood, and life itself."

Tri-State Elks convention ends

By Mattie J. Hawkins

More than 600 Brothers and Daughters of I.B.P.O.E. of W. converged in Pikesville, Md. last Friday for the Annual Tri-State Convention of Maryland, Delaware and District of Columbia which was held at Baltimore Hilton Inn.

Registration began at 4 p.m. At 7 p.m. Dgt. State President Alfredia fountain held a meeting with elected and appointed officers and advisory board members. The Conservation of Sight Disco was held from 9 p.m. til 1 p.m. which was well attended and enjoyed by all.

Following salutations from the presidents, Grand Dgt. Ruler Smith brought greetings from Philadelphia and the Grand Temple after which the convention was officially opened for business.

Greetings were extended by the Exalted Ruler LeRoy A. Stanton of Crescent Lodge No. 355 and Dgt. Ruler Cherine Wise of Emma Williams Temple No. 358 of Catonsville, Md. who hostessed the convention.

Brother officers which included Brothers from Maryland, Delaware and D.C. were Brothers Elmer E. Moore, president; First Vice President Franklin Murray; Second Vice President Charles Grandson; Third Vice President Philip Allen; Financial Secretary, Ray Brightful; Assistant David Lynch; Treasurer James N. Taylor, Sr.; Recorder Joseph A. Hall; Assistant William Washington; Esquire, Simon Smith; Assistant, Theodore Hyman; Tiler, Amos Fields; Inner Guard, Warnick Graves; Chaplain, Perrie N. Lee; Assistant Marcus McBride; Chief Security, William Braxton; Convention Chairman Joseph Cornick; Military Aid to State President Robert Coleman, Brig. Gen.; Parlimentarian, Jacob Johnson; Director of Education Richard Mitchell; President Emeritus William S. Fountain. Trustees Alvin Tinch, Moscoe Brownlee, Stanley Anderson, Willie Slay, William Jiles, Vance Thorpe, and Norwood Coehins.

Tuesday following the regular sessions, the health day program was held with Nurse Mildred Michael presiding. Following the opening selection of "What A Friend We Have In Jesus," Prayer was offered and followed with a selection from State Song Bird, Dgt. Carrie Jones. Following the capping of the new Purple Cross Nurses and a Solo, Dr. Charles Moore, II, guest speaker was introduced by Nurse Thelma Cooper of Columbia Temple No. 422. Dr. Moore gave a most impressive messag eo nhow to help combat the rage of today's killer. Following a Musical selection by Nurse Joseph A. Hall; Nurse Mary T. Scott recognized all visitors which was followed with remarks from President Alfredia C. Fountain and President Elmer E. Moore which followed with the benediction.

Other members of the Nurses Unit included Nurses Edna Henderson, Flora P. Chambers, Bro. Mack Allen, Asst. Administer of Health Service, Nurse Phillip Allen Chairman of Tri-State A.A. and Nurse Derene Hammond, Supervisor of Grand Lodge Medical Clinic.

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CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Murder suspect Warren survives hung jury

By Ejike Obineme
AFRO Staff Writer

A Baltimore City Circuit Court jury Tuesday failed to reach a verdict in the murder trial of Donald Warren, who is charged with the July 19, 1987 execution-style murder of Lamont Anderson, 28, of the 1600 block of Mountmor Court.

During his closing arguments before the jury began their deliberation, defense attorney Robert Feinberg told the jury, "It's hot in here. It's hot in the jury room. Don't give up your personal conviction just to go home early."

The jury did not go home early. After deliberating from 3:30 p.m. till nearly the midnight hour, the result was a hung jury, as the voting was 11 to 1 guilty. All jurors are expected to agree before a verdict can become valid.

As a result of the hung jury, the case will go back to trial, and Assistant State Attorney Sharon Beckler will have to figure out a way of convincing another jury to convict Warren of the 1500 block of Baker Street.

The irony of the hung jury is that when Warren was charged with murder in 1975, Judge Elsbeth Boothe, who presided over the present case, was the public defender who successfully convinced a jury to acquit him.

The 36-year-old Warren had been on trial since Monday. Police report showed that Anderson was sitting on the steps of 1716 Presbury Street when he was approached by Warren, who shot him once in the throat, and twice in the upper chest for an unknown reason.

Based on a tip from an anonymous caller, police found a .22 caliber semi-automatic handgun in a dumpster located in the 1600 block of Bakbury Court. The gun turned out to be the murder weapon.

A prosecution witness Wanda Raymond, 27, testified that on the night of the incident, she and Warren's niece, 22-year old Tawanda was sitting together when Warren brought a gun and gave it to Tawanda to hold for him.

Tawanda held the gun for a few minutes and gave it back to Warren.

Raymond said that after a while, she heard about 3 or 4 shots coming from the area of the project where the murder occurred.

She said she also saw Warren coming from the area where the shots had come from.

Police got a statement from Darnell Palmer, Warren's nephew, a few hours after the killing. Palmer's statement gave a very accurate description of the murderer which matched that of Warren.

However, when Warren testified in the trial Monday, he denied giving the detailed description to the police. He could not even identify Warren in the courtroom.

A reliable source said that Palmer changed his story because he was later arrested on drug charges and put in the same jail with Warren.

The source said that if Palmer had testified against Warren, he would have made himself a good candidate for a lynch mob in jail, because they don't like "snitching" in there.

In her closing argument, the prosecutor Beckler said that Warren had intended to execute another man, Larry Howell but when he saw Anderson who was wearing the same clothes and fit the same description with Howell, he killed him.

"Donald Warren goofed," she said. "He killed the wrong man."

Beckler said the fact that no finger prints were found on the gun did not mean that Warren was innocent.

"We don't need prints," she said. "We have something better than prints. Someone saw him use the gun."

Apparently she was referring to (Wanda) Raymond.

"Wanda never said it was the same gun," defense attorney Feinberg countered. "She said it looks the same."

He said the only reason why Warren was picked up by the police after the murder was because he was wearing a black sweat suit and had a gun.

"I submit that the state has not found the person who killed Anderson" Feinberg said, adding that the state could not show any motive for the murder.

"Why did he do it?" he asked," There is no evidence that he knew Anderson."

Feinberg said that there has only been a feeble effort by the prosecution to show that it was a mistake killing on the part of Warren.

The hung jury did not mean that Warren was free. He will remain in jail until a new jury is selected in September for another trial.

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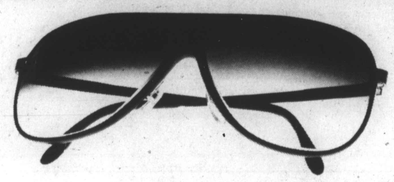

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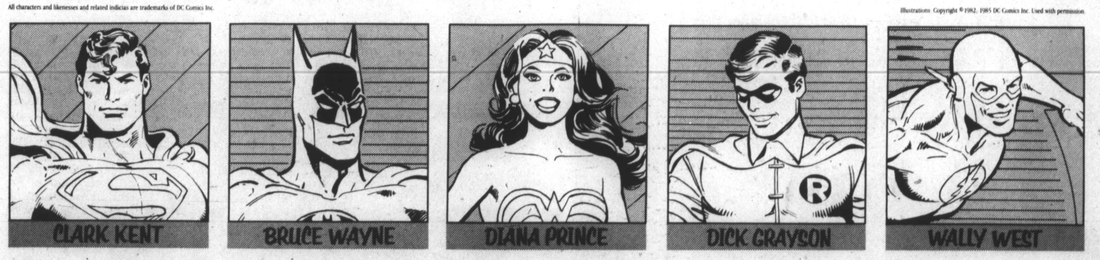

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