

## Perspective-from Focus magazine

**THE PUBLICATION** this month of the 1975 edition of the National Roster of Black Elected Officials is an appropriate time to reflect briefly on the responsiveness of our political system to the needs of minorities.

The number of blacks holding elective public office has increased from 1,185 in 1969 to 3,503 as of June 1975. Last year alone a 17 percent increase was recorded. There are not only more black elected officials than ever before, but they hold more important offices than ever before. There are two black lieutenant governors, 276 state legislators (many of them in leadership positions), and an estimated 135 mayors governing cities as large as Los Angeles and Detroit and as small as Santee, S.C.

The gains have been dramatic and there can be little doubt that in addition to holding more public offices, blacks have generally increased their influence in the political arena, particularly in the South.

**IT IS NO ACCIDENT** that the new governor of Tennessee named a black man to his cabinet and another to head one of the major agencies of state government. It is not happenstance that Rubin Askew, the governor of Florida, is appointing black people to head some of the most powerful state agencies in Florida.

The governor of Georgia didn't ask, he pleaded for black support in his successful race. So did gubernatorial

candidates in South Carolina, North Carolina and Arkansas. These men have learned to count black votes. Their calculators are telling them that certain responses must be made to this new bloc of voters, and that they can no longer afford to exclude blacks and their elected representatives from the bargaining tables.

All of this reflects movement in the right direction. Yet we must remain sober among those who would intoxicate us with words like "progress" and "black political power." Black elected officials still represent less than one percent of the approximately 500,000 elected officials in this country, while blacks constitute 11 percent or more of the population. In fact, in only 13 states do blacks hold even one percent or more of elected positions and 12 of those states are in the South; more specifically in some of those jurisdictions covered by the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

**THE GREATEST THREAT** to the continued growth of black influence comes not only from white racism, but also from within the black community itself. An overall turnout of only 34 percent by black voters in the 1974 election endangers past gains and jeopardizes future progress.

As Fredrick Douglas stated so eloquently:

"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. . .Men may not get all they pay for

in this world, but they most certainly pay for all they get. If we ever get free from the oppressions and wrongs heaped upon us, we must pay for their removal. We must do this by labor, by suffering, by sacrifice, and if need be, by our lives and the lives of others. . ."

I suggest that our ability to force positive responses from the political system is in direct proportion to the price we are willing to pay - the sacrifices we are willing to make - in pursuit of our goals. I think we need to stress some of the ways in which the price is calculated.

**WE KNOW** that we must become experts on how the system works; we need to develop the skill to manipulate that system to serve our interests; we have to be astute enough to extract from the coalitions we must occasionally join the substance of our own survival; we know that we must make our voting potential credible at all times; we must have the vision and backbone to say "no" to those temptations that would divert us from our goals.

The political system can and often does respond to skill, intelligence and courage; frequently it does so grudgingly, especially for black Americans. But it can be moved, by expenditure of time, energy and money, which when translated into political participation will provide black Americans with access to the nation's decision making councils.



**PEPSI-COLA COMPANY RECEIVES AWARD**--The Pepsi-Cola Company receives an Award of Appreciation from the National Dental Assistants Association at the 62nd Annual convention of The National Dental Association recently concluded in Atlanta, Georgia. Mrs. Ramona Gomez, Manager, Consumer Affairs, (center) accepts the award on behalf of Pepsi-Cola Company which sponsored the Dental Assistants' Open House and Lawn Party, from Mrs. Helen Fraizer, Washington, D.C., past president Frances Hinton, Washington, D.C., National Dental Association Liaison, beams approval.

### AFL-CIO urges Senate to override veto

The AFL-CIO strongly urged the House and the Senate to override the President's veto of the education appropriations bill for fiscal 1976.

"An override of the President's veto is a necessity if the future development of this nation's human resources is to be maintained," AFL-CIO Legislative Director Andrew J. Biemiller wrote every member of the House and Senate.

If the House overrides, then the Senate must act.

Beimiller noted the bill "appropriates \$700 million less for education than was authorized by the first Congressional budget resolution."

He pointed out that while the bill provides for spending that is \$1.4 billion above the President's budget request, "the administration's proposed budget called for an \$855 million cut in FY 1975 funding and would have eliminated over 30 ongoing education programs.

**RANCHO CIRCLE LAUNDROMAT**  
NEXT TO RANCHO CIRCLE THEATRE  
OPEN 24 HRS.  
2401 West BONANZA

### Woman Heads International Economic Policy Office

When Gloria Vernon Pratt was a Howard University student here, she took a part-time job as a government clerk. After two days of stuffing pieces of paper into pigeon holes, she quit, vowing that the government was no place for her.

Today, Mrs. Pratt is director, Office of Foreign Economic Policy in the U.S. Labor Department's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB).

It was quite by happenstance that Mrs. Pratt returned to government. After graduation, she went to work for Howard University and eventually became administrative assistant to the dean of students. Among her duties was handling liaison with personnel offices in government.

Her Labor Department contact convinced Mrs. Pratt she should take the federal service entrance examination. She did, was certified and in 1957 joined the Labor Department as a GS-5 economist in the Wage and Hour Division.

With Wage and Hour, she worked in the Office of Territorial Wage Determinations. This meant about twice a year going to Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands to participate in industry hearings pertaining to minimum wage problems.

In 1963, Mrs. Pratt joined the Bureau of International Labor Affairs as an international economist. The Office of Foreign Economic Policy had just been set up. Its work was geared toward preparation for the trade negotiations authorized under the Trade Expansion Act of 1962.

The negotiations, known as the "Kennedy Round," started in Geneva, Switzerland, in late 1964, with 90 to 95 countries participating. From January 1966 to June 1967, Mrs. Pratt served as the Labor Department's resident representative on the U.S. delegation.

As a senior women negotiator in the "Kennedy Round," Mrs. Pratt says she was not aware of any discrimination because of her sex. Only once, when an ambassador was having a working dinner for delegates and a separate dinner for their wives, did she run into a problem. The ambassador was nonplussed about what to do with one woman at a men's dinner. So Mrs. Pratt says she diplomatically offered to serve as an assistant hostess to the ambassador's wife at the women's dinner.

Recently, she has been gratified to see women on delegations from other countries.

Perhaps because she's been one among so many, Mrs.



Pratt wants to see qualified women in good jobs on her staff. Although she admits she didn't hire them all, she boasts that of her present staff of 18 professionals, 9 are women. And one of her two assistant directors is a women. She has a total staff of 35.



**IF YOU NEED DRAPERIES... AND MISS THAT GOOD "Old Fashioned" QUALITY...GIVE VIRGIL A CALL HE'S BEEN DOING THIS FOR YEARS.**  
**385-3411**  
**NEVADA BLIND & FLOOR CO.**  
1300 So Main St.

**FREHNER Construction Co.**  
INCORPORATED  
Common Carrier PHONE  
General Engineering 649-2397  
124 W. BROOKS AVE. N.L.V.  
AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER