

# Ministers Seek Assemblymen's Defeat SNEDC DEMISE BLAMED ON BLACK ELECTED OFFICIALS

Local and national representatives of the National Black Pastors Conference called, last Friday, for the election defeat of the two black elected assemblymen, Marion Bennett and Lonie Chaney, both Las Vegas Democrats.

Rev. G. James Christopher, Northwest Regional Vice President of the Conference said at a press conference that "conspiracy on the part of local, state, and federal officials has

dismissed the allegations.

In March 1981, the federal government reneged on a \$4.3 million grant set aside in 1980 for economic development in West Las Vegas. Funds from the

Economic Development Administration were put on freeze by President Reagan. They were earmarked for the Southern Nevada Economic Development Council headed by Otis Harris.

In May, the federal

criticized state and local officials for the lack of development in West Las Vegas.

The Ministers Conference has set a mass rally on Friday, Nov. 13 at the True Love Missionary Baptist Church. Rev. Christopher will be the guest speaker.

Bennett said the pastors "have never been involved in economic development. I'm not about to support organizations that are self-serving."

## A MESSAGE FROM REV. G. JAMES CHRISTOPHER

NORTHWEST REGIONAL OFFICE, Sacramento, California

NATIONAL BLACK PASTORS' CONFERENCE

Nov. 7, 1981

I am Reverend G. James Christopher, N.W. Regional Vice President of the National Black Pastors' Conference. I arrived in this city, along with my investigative aide, two days ago to meet with local officials and the Black Ministers Alliance for Las Vegas to finish laying the groundwork for the inquiry into the reasons behind the economic conditions of the Westside community being in a state of deprivation while the rest of the city is economically flourishing, both visually as well as actually. The stark contrast that exists between the plush and palatial conditions of this city and that of a totally neglected town within-a-town (so to speak) leaves this objective observer-seeking some answers. On November 5, I met with the Black Ministers Alliance in a conference attended by State Senator Joe Neal. Senator Neal's concern for the economic development of the black community in Las Vegas, was, in a very pronounced manner, consistent with his action demonstrated over the past ten years in public office. The depth of this concern actually set the temp and tone for our meeting which

lasted almost two hours in length.

Despite Senator Neal's clear concern, however, we were disturbed and now outraged by the conspicuous absence of Assemblyman Marion D. Bennett, who was also asked to attend. Not having attended a previously requested meeting called by the Alliance two weeks ago to discuss several issues pertaining to the economic, social and political welfare of his

refusing to meet with us on this occasion, citing both late notice and lack of concern for some "old mess". In spite of his having been informed of the gravity of the meeting, along with the expressed desire by myself and another member of this body to meet with him at a later time and even the next morning, Mr. Bennett's response was no more than salutary. His failure, on two or more different occasions, to respond in a responsible manner to the concern of the ministerial leaders of his own constituency, indicates to us that indeed he is part of the many pervasive problems surrounding black life in this city.

But Mr. Bennett is not alone in his disgusting and despicable indifference to the needs of his deprived constituency. Of like mentality is his colleague, Assemblyman Lonnie Chaney, who was also invited to attend this conference. Upon informing one of the

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CONFERENCE ATTENDEES (L-R) Rev. I.W. Wilson, Rev. Willie Davis, Rev. G. James Christopher and Rev. Ted Coveston.

been successful in creating an illusion of wrongdoing within the program, when the truth is that the program was undermined and sabotaged by external political forces. We are going to blow the lid off this thing."

Representatives of the conference vowed to mobilize the black community in a voting drive to oust both assemblymen.

Christopher said "these black elected officials have exercised a puppet mentality to the governor's office. They have done little to represent the poor and underprivileged of this community."

Both elected officials

government withheld more than \$500,000 of economic development funds to the private sector because of the alleged misuse of a federal grant.

Christopher said he came to Las Vegas from San Francisco to conduct "an objective investigation" of the charges against Harris and the withholding of the federal funds. "He alleged federal and state authorities combined to put SNEDC out of business."

"This man is innocent," said Christopher. "His character has been assassinated. I am satisfied there was no misuse of funds. He also

Chaney said Friday he's working on the newly created Task Force for Black Economics. He said his goal is to get "poor people off the backs of the taxpayers."

Chaney echoed Bennett's remarks with "I don't even know if Harris is right or not, but I'm

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Rev. G. James Christopher  
own constituency, he further demonstrated a callous, cavalier and insensitive attitude by

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