

# COMMENTARY

## AS WE SEE IT

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### Vegas Chamber's Deal With Blacks Only Talk

We doubted, when we first heard of it, that there would be any substantial turnout of Las Vegas blacks for a march along the Strip prior to the Holmes-Cooney fight.

There had been a brief, implied threat of such a demonstration this past week.

There are, of course, a handful of blacks who regularly see such major events here as the ideal time to draw attention to their complaints about job discrimination, equal pay, etc.

But a Westside minister said that the march supposedly planned before the championship fight was called off because of an agreement reached by the Black Ministers Coalition and the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce to try and create jobs in the Westside.

**CHAMBER PRESIDENT** Fred Lewis met with the black ministers and agreed that the Chamber would initiate an effort to try and get some of the depressed black areas designated as an "enterprise zone" by the federal government.

The aim would be to encourage industry to locate in these areas and offer more jobs to minorities in return for federal subsidies including tax incentives.

Well, the Las Vegas Chamber has come a long way when it is able to sit down and talk to representatives of the black community as Mr. Lewis has done.

**WE THINK** it is a good step. We are encouraged to see this type of exchange taking place.

Indeed, it is an enlightened, common-sense approach which has been neglected by the leaders of the Las Vegas business community for too long now.

In the past the only time there was any attempt at communication was when a crisis was upon us.

Neither the black ministers meeting with the Chamber, nor Mr. Lewis and his Chamber colleagues expects anything to happen overnight.

We think that is wise, because in our view, despite their best intentions, it

doubt that anything will.

In the first place, under the proposals outlined by the Chamber and the Black Ministers Coalition, the "enterprise zone" must first be designated by HUD. Mr. Lewis, one of the more enlightened and progressive presidents of the Chamber, will be out of office by the time that happens.

**IN FACT**, considering the very real plight of blacks elsewhere in the nation to their almost affluent status here, we would think there might be some doubt at the federal level as to the legitimate need for the establishment of an "enterprise zone" in the Las Vegas area.

But even presuming that a Las Vegas "enterprise zone" designation is granted, and we're a long way from even deciding what the specific area will be, the more difficult challenge lies ahead — actually enticing some industry to set up shop in the zone and employ minority workers.

The areas under discussion are not particularly suited for industry. In fact, we can't think of a less attractive area for a new industry.

**SOUTHERN NEVADA** has a hard enough time attracting industry to our most ideal areas, much less trying to plunk one down in the midst or on the fringes of the black Westside.

The very idea that industry must be located in the somewhat depressed and predominantly black areas of Las Vegas merely to employ black workers is questionable thinking in and of itself, particularly when the majority of the blacks living there now travel such relatively short distances for gainful employment now.

So, while we think it is a progressive step forward for the Black Ministers Coalition and the Chamber to be talking to one another, let's not kid ourselves about the prospects of new industry being established in the black areas of Las Vegas. That, in our view, is a pipe dream, pure and simple, no matter what the

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GREATER



LAS VEGAS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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June 8, 1982

Reverend I. W. Wilson  
President  
Ministerial Alliance  
1941 N. 8th Street  
Las Vegas, NV 89106

Dear Reverend Wilson:

At the May 27 Board of Directors meeting of the Greater Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, it was unanimously voted that we would join with the Black Ministers Coalition for Jobs in an effort to seek out new businesses with an eye toward providing more jobs for the members of our community.

Recognizing the broad value of such an alliance, it is our desire to work with you and any other sincere organizations in soliciting businesses to locate facilities in the greater Las Vegas area.

We consider our first and foremost priority the preparation of an application to be submitted to the Federal government for the designation of portions of southern Nevada as enterprise zones. Toward that end I have appointed a committee which includes Bill Heinrich, Tom Wiesner, Barry Becker, Elena Blake, Art Williams, Ken O'Connell and myself to work directly with your designated representatives in moving forward to accomplish this without delay. We understand that this group will also begin to form the necessary corporate structure that will be able to enter into legally binding agreements with those governmental and private agencies applicable in establishing the enterprise zone. It is our clear intent to form a working partnership with you in this matter.

It is our most sincere wish that this union will reflect in a positive way on all members of our community, and we look forward to working with you in a spirit of cooperation and understanding.

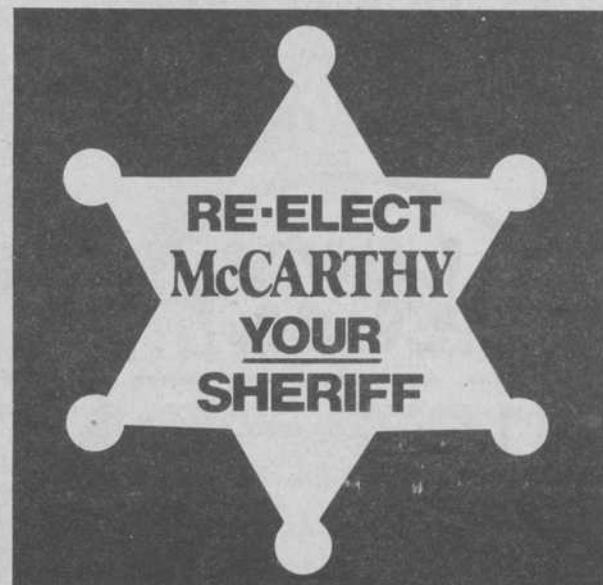
Most sincerely yours,

*Fred Lewis*  
Fred Lewis  
President

### Black Ministers Coalition For Jobs Enlightened

"We will not be going back as it relates to demonstrations," said Rev. S.P. Parks last Friday when relating to a previously planned march to Caesars Palace during the Holmes-Cooney fight.

Lewis said his organization intends to work with the ministers' group to get the federal government to designate portions of the city as "enterprise zones"



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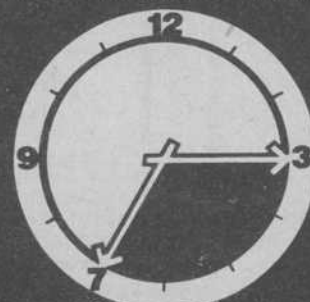
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