

Black Alumni..... (Continued from page 12.)



Thomas Dortch, president of CNA, discusses the economic needs of black colleges with Therman McKenzie, executive vice president of M&M Products Co., and James Davis, director of community affairs for the Georgia Power Co.



Niles White, director of governmental affairs for the United Negro College Fund, is honored by CNA for his contributions to black colleges.

—Miles College (in Birmingham, Alabama) holds the national distinction of having trained the largest number of lawyers passing the bar on the first examination;

—Both Prairie View College (in Arkansas) and Tuskegee are internationally famous in the field of agricultural research—Tuskegee particularly in such research among “Third World” countries;

—Talladega College stands out among all US colleges for producing proportionately greater numbers of graduates completing their degrees than any other institution in the US;

—Texas Southern, Southern University (in Baton Rouge, Louisiana) and Howard are responsible for the vast majority of the country’s black fraternities and sororities.

BLACK COLLEGES NEED HELP

These are but a few of the myriad accomplishments which distinguish African-American colleges and universities...at a time when higher education—black and white—is confronting serious crises, financially, politically and academically.

“Not only do black colleges need financial help from their alumni,” says Thomas Dortch, “but also, they need monetary and other assistance from all other black Americans who recognize the awesome consequences to us of ill-preparedness among so many of our young and older adults.

“One sure way that all AOIP organizations can help is by assisting all black colleges to get AOIP in some form on their campuses. As one example, students in language and social ser-

vices departments could be given credits for being among the AOIP troops working among the functional illiterates in communities nearby.

“Another way black Americans could help is by everyone selecting one or more colleges to which they would commit to make annual gifts, no matter how large or small.”

A listing of these colleges is at the end of this article.

The CNA’s project director, Dr. Beatrice Tignor, identifies the three major legal challenges traditionally confronting African-America’s colleges and universities: “desegregation efforts within higher education, reverse discrimination suits, and the use of race as an allowable enhancement tool. But even more importantly, the black colleges and universities are faced with a clear and realistic agenda for the 1980’s: the effort to cut federal spending. This will indeed affect the future of many black youth who have college aspirations.”

To face these serious challenges, the Council of National Alumni Associations, under the leadership of president Thomas Dortch, is developing plans to influence and exercise decisions affecting these institutions at all levels of government. Prior to this current goal, the CNA has been an organization actively instrumental in making impact on higher education policy through effective letter-writing campaigns, lobbying, direct appeals and utilization of a variety of political alternatives.

The CNA seeks and draws upon black college alumni to lend the needed political and financial support for the continued growth and development of black colleges and universities. The Council is strikingly clear that it is the black

alumni who must establish their own position of prominence in order to save the traditionally black college and university, and offers them the critical opportunity to unite efforts to work towards their survival.

Today, over thirty years since its inception, CNA is, in the words of president Tommy Dortch, “trying to set new directions, to play even more critical roles other than the standard and vital quest for monies to maintain and develop the colleges.”

With a clarity and broadness of perspective often unmatched by the average ancillary organization, the CNA has a clearly articulated analysis of the societal concerns which strike at the core of the organization’s real commitment to education. According to President Dortch, “the level of illiteracy in the black community has passed the critical stage. Understanding the importance of education to the future development of the black community, the crisis of illiteracy is jeopardizing any kind of future in terms of growth and development of the whole society.

“Likewise, unemployment can’t be separated from illiteracy. Just looking at the core of the matter, we’re allowing to develop in our society a generation of blacks who’ve never been employed! Basically, this will minimize the future of an entire generation, left dependent either on crime or welfare.

“If the federal government wants to solve the problem of federal spending for welfare and individual dependencies on some kind of support from the government and really assist black and white families to stand on their own, then the illiteracy problem must be attacked.

“Government has depended on one loaf-of-bread, quickie scheme, then another. We can look at the Bible for guidance when it says, ‘...Give a man a fish, and he can eat for a day; teach him to fish, and he can eat for a lifetime.’

“Accordingly, before attacking illiteracy becomes a national priority, the black community must deal with it. Before the streets, the family is first. We have a *major* responsibility—we can’t blame it on the school system without first dealing with it ourselves. For that reason it is now the role of the Council for National Alumni Associations, Inc. to make it a part of our agenda and daily exercise.”

The Council for National Alumni Associations, Inc. comes by its considerable wisdom from a history of hard work and steady testing of its goals in the fire of experience. To fully appreciate its development, let us look at its principal, established functions.

Beyond its vital financial role in helping raise funds for the colleges, CNA must also play a valuable political role—following closely the decisions of state boards, trying to keep college presidents from being victimized in games of political football which often result in cuts in funding. As CNA President Dortch so succinctly puts it, “Alumni are key people to play politics for the institution, both in preserving the institution and in supporting the larger community that the institution serves.

Within this context, CNA is particularly clear that the recruitment of students is dependent upon instituting pride in the institution itself and

(Continued on page 15.)