

point of view

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foundation tie, too

STOKES PULLS LOCHER STRATEGY ON STANTON

Council President Jim Stanton's moral stand against the Greater Cleveland Associated Foundation and Dolph Norton rings hollow. Indeed, it was downright ungrateful of the West Side Councilman.

Apparently Stanton forgot he's been the recipient of the results of questionable payments by the Greater Cleveland Associated Foundation to high officials of Cleveland's poverty program.

It seems less than sincere for Stanton to call Bill Silverman for foundation money to help Mayor Stokes' image (see Vol. 1, No. 22) without a murmur about a program with which he is connected.

The annual payments are made to Findley, director of the Council on Economic Opportunities and his two top lieutenants, Don Martin and David Walker. The payments, from \$2,000 to \$4,000, supplement the salaries of the poverty warriors above the \$15,000 maximum set by the program.

One has to question the reason the Greater Cleveland Associated Foundation pays top officials of the poverty program the same way one questions foundation financing of Silverman or Abe Fortas for that matter.

And one has the right to be suspicious when these payments are not made public.

Stanton, indeed, has been the beneficiary of the actions of poverty officials. When neighborhood poverty programs organize to bring pressure, it's often councilmen who feel the sting. The practice has been that the councilmen run to Stanton with their woes.

One such incident resulted in the resignation of a West Side poverty worker, Ed Marcus. Marcus provoked Ward 8 Councilwoman Margaret McCaffery, a close Stanton ally. McCaffery cried to Stanton and the word went out to cool Marcus.

Usually, that works, but in this case Marcus fingered Stanton publicly in the Plain Dealer for interference. That Stanton didn't like.

At the poverty board meeting following the resignation, Stanton, holding the newspaper clipping of the attack by Marcus, said, "We'll get these bastards, one at a time."

The hatchet man for the poverty program at that time was John Olsen, then deputy director to Findley. Olsen, a master bureaucrat, had been hired for the job by Norton, who sat on the CEO board with Stanton.

Olsen had graduated from a special public administration program at Western Reserve as the "darling" of the class and Norton's boy," as one CWRU professor put it.

The public administration program, as might be expected, is funded by Norton through the foundation. Olsen also received a salary supplement from Norton's foundation while he was working for the poverty program.

Olsen's job was to control the neighborhoods via the proposal committee. No program got through without his approval and presumably, Norton's, since he was Norton's man.

It would seem reasonable that if Silverman had the good grace to resign, Findley, Mason and Walker would be wise to do the same. As for Stanton, he too should resign his position as CEO board member since he apparently can't separate his council job from his desire to do small favors for fellow councilmen.

As for the foundation trustees, it's time they sat down and reassessed the funding of all programs and got the hell out of the social control business and back into funding public gardens.

LEE-SEVILLE

The foundation funding got itself caught in the middle of a fierce political battle between Stokes and Stanton over an administration desire to build low income housing, mostly one family, in a middle class area. The black councilman in the area objects, as do many residents. Council tradition dictates that when a councilman so objects, the rest of council defers, expecting the same courtesy some day. Stanton thus has blocked legislative hearings necessary for the project, called Lee-Seville.

But more than council tradition is involved. Indeed, it's more likely Lee-Seville has become a No. 1 political issue because Mayor Stokes shrewdly saw it as a powerful weapon to divide Council, erode Stanton's power and stature and enhance his own re-election plans.

Stokes has set up a battle that he wishes to fight, on grounds of his choosing and under the conditions he wants. Stanton and council have fallen into the trap.

We don't accept Stokes' over-righteous claim that he is concerned only with building low cost housing and is willing to dangerously risk even re-election in a moral stand. Rather, Stokes has set in motion a well-planned maneuver that is being executed with remarkable finesse, contrary to mass media interpretation.

Not that Stanton didn't knock out the Mayor's press agent in the process of trying to hit back at Stokes. He did. But what does it really mean? It's like the Marines taking Hamburger Hill. There's absolutely no value in it for Stanton and it cost him too much.

He was left in the same position, only with the noose a bit tighter. Stokes maneuvered him into using a bludgeon to shoo a fly. Further, Stanton then had to come up with an alternate plan on the Lee-Seville dispute.

His plan -- a referendum to settle the housing question -- placed him in the position of abdicating council's responsibility to legislate, not a comfortable position for the leader of the legislative wing of City Hall.

From this position, he retreated to an even more cumbersome strategy. He now wants the voters to decide the issue in the Nov. election by electing a councilman on the basis of his campaign stand either for or against the housing. That's an even more bizarre legislative method.

Moves such as these say only one thing about an otherwise adequate politician: he's frightened, confused and even desperate.

After an early career of promise, Stanton has been in Cleveland council for 10 years, six as president. The vision of that fast start eroding so badly as to reduce him to a mere Cleveland councilman again at 37, is frightening, as well it might be.

Stanton has been king-pin for many years. He has been able to sit back comfortably with little challenge, avoiding blame for the utter failures of the Locher administration and council.

He has been overrated by a friendly press which had an all too obliging scapegoat in Ralph Locher. Stanton himself had fun kicking and humiliating the former mayor.

Stanton had been given credit by the press for welding a workable coalition of ethnic and Negro councilmen that suggests a progressive position on racial issues. But the coalition had little benefit for blacks and its reason for being was simply to keep Stanton on top. The "brotherhood" rarely, if ever, extended to the problems of the black community.

Indeed, Stanton could be a potential Cleveland Sam Yorty, though it's unlikely he could succeed. But that potential has always been there and now, in the clinch, it's becoming recognizable, if only in council's preoccupation with law and order lectures.

But Stokes has a secret weapon. He knows white politicians as only a black can. He understands that inbred white racism affects the decision-making of white politicians.

Thus, he chooses issues that inevitably force the white politician to make decisions based on race when they would otherwise obey better political instincts.

Stokes anticipates the reaction of his enemy because he knows racism will play an inordinately large part in the decision.

He has used this insight before. The Stokes forces set up Mayor Locher in 1965 when black ministers tried to meet with the Mayor but were spurned and eventually jailed for a sit-in. The group included the minister of the church of Councilman Charlie Carr, then a powerful Locher ally. Carr sat the race out and Stokes almost won. But in 1967, Locher fell for the same ploy, this time refusing to meet with the late Rev. Martin Luther King, labeling him an "extremist."

In both cases, Stokes anticipated Locher's action, seeing it as inevitable because Locher was acting to hold the "white vote." In the end, he pleased only the overtly racist white and gave blacks a reason to hate him and organize.

Stanton, we feel, fell for the same trap in the Lee-Seville issue. If council tradition were the main factor, Stanton would be clever enough to de-fuse the issue. But what's really involved is race. If Stokes is successful in Lee-Seville, won't that open middle class white areas to public housing and blacks?

Stokes could anticipate that Stanton and Council would begin acting as racists and SLAM! the trap springs shut. Racism runs too deeply in all of us whites. We really can't separate ourselves from the inbred feeling of superiority. Stokes has a masterly insight into this white defect and an ability to frame strategy to use it.

This is not to say that the Mayor planned each bad mistake made by Stanton, only that he could anticipate Stanton would make them because he couldn't deal with the issue color blindly.

And just as the pressure mounted against Locher, Stokes has mounted it against Stanton. The Council President must be furious with the flurry of ostensibly powerless, but noisy, "citizen" groups.

It must be like having an army of mosquitos flitting about your head with your hands tied.

Stanton is feeling pressure from party officials, church groups, including the Catholic Church, and even the League of Women Voters.

He just isn't used to this kind of blitzkrieg upon him. Council life has been too comfortable, too devoid of competition and sophisticated political infighting. Whereas, Stokes has spent the past six years with nothing but uphill political battles.

For Stokes, the Lee-Seville strategy has had unbelievable payoffs as a multi-political tool.

It has been a "non-political" means of marshalling Stokes forces for the coming election. Having lost or alienated many who helped him in 1967, the issue re-calls loads of individuals and liberal do-good organizations back to battle. The Call & Post, often overlooked by the white media but still a potent political ally, is fired up over Lee-Seville, as are the "little people" of the black community, another group overlooked by the white media. And the black minister is the best voter registration organizer. These groups make up a combination that raises funds and more important, sets the proper pre-election atmosphere in the black community.

The Mayor, some feel, has alienated many black middle class people in pushing public housing in their community, but it's not likely he will lose their vote in November. For whom would they vote -- Perk or Stanton? By election time, either will have moved to a racist position and middle class blacks will feel obligated to vote against them.

Further, the Mayor chastising blacks about not wanting low income residents in their area has a certain advantage for him in the white community. First, it leads some whites to feel that the Mayor will be tough on his own people too. Then it also makes whites unconsciously feel less racist and somewhat good about themselves by highlighting what whites like to believe: that not wanting poor blacks is not a matter of race, but of economics since middle class blacks don't want "those people" either.

Possibly, the most important factor has been the Mayor's ability to keep Lee-Seville stage-front as an issue. At a time when law and order would likely be the main issue, the council, and more importantly, the mass media, seems to be all caught up in a housing issue.

Stokes has made the construction of some 200 housing units the dominate political issue in Cleveland today. If that isn't a remarkable political coup, we don't know what is.

If he can do it for three more weeks he will have de-fused council for the year.

The fact that Lee-Seville will not be okayed by council will give Stokes a powerful issue during the campaign because Ralph Perk and other white opposition will take the same stance as Stanton has. How can a candidate remain sincere about solving urban problems and oppose construction of housing in a city where there are more than 50,000 blighted housing units? Lee-Seville is the Mayor's campaign issue, all the way.

In any event, the "establishment" money is still with Stokes and that's not likely to change.

The reason is the same as two years ago. Stokes remains the best safeguard against racial disorders, notwithstanding Glenville. Further, he is a deterrent to development of a strong and militant black movement here.

For these reasons, the money will be with him. Though the establishment can't buy the election for him, they can arrange the events so that the result is the same.

Stokes may even be goading Stanton into a position of running for mayor or losing face.

But as it stands, the Silverman episode may be a thorn in the Mayor's side, but that's a spear protruding from Stanton's stomach. The Mayor put it there -- and it hurts.

ONE YEAR....

We had intended to use this last issue of the year to evaluate the first year and to think out on paper where Point of View is going, how and why. And frankly, to use the issue to convince subscribers that they should come along for Volume 2.

But we thought the final issue could be put to better use as an examination of the Lee-Seville political issue which we assess much differently than the Cleveland media has. We may still look at ourselves in a future issue.

We still invite those who have been with us for Volume 1 to resubscribe for \$5 (or more!). It isn't necessary to fill out a subscription form so long as you indicate yours is a renewal and not a new subscription.

Some who have resubscribed have used the opportunity to comment positively and negatively on past issues. We invite such comments and hope to print some.

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