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The Seattle Medium

A Message From The People....To The People

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2600 South Jackson Street, Seattle, WA 98144

Now In Our 17th Year...

Number 16

323-3070

25¢

Cong. Mitchell Blasts Front Companies, Black And White

By Angela Jenkins

A near capacity crowd turned out Saturday, April 26 at the Stouffer-Madison Hotel to pay special tribute to a unique, personable man—the Honorable Parren J. Mitchell, who is retiring after serving 16 years in the United States Congress.

Many accolades of praise were given by minority businesspersons, as well as local, state and federal politicians who had the

honor of knowing Congressman Mitchell and achieving success through his leadership.

William (Bill) McIntosh, Jr., president and CEO of North Seattle Chrysler, gave thanks to Mitchell for opening the doors of opportunity for Blacks through Lee Iacocca, chairman, Chrysler Corporation, in establishing the Chrysler Minority Retail Dealers Development Program.

In 1982, Mitchell sent Iacocca a

letter inquiring about the lack of Black car dealerships at Chrysler. Shortly thereafter, Iacocca established the Minority Retail Dealers Development Program. McIntosh became director and established 25 Black car dealerships throughout the country. Today, there are 40.

After the many acknowledgements of Mitchell's contributions, the Baltimore Congressman delivered a powerful and resound-

Election '86

POLITICAL POTPOURRI

Consistency pays off. Congratulations to Publisher/Broadcaster Chris Bennett on having been selected to Ebony Magazine's 100 Most Influential Blacks for the third year in a row, the only Northwesterner so honored. The prestigious honor shows that consistency in outstanding leadership pays off. Bennett publishes The Seattle Medium, Seattle Metro HomeMaker Shopping Guide and the Tacoma True Citizen newspapers, and he is owner of radio station KRIZ. In addition to his personal business ventures, Bennett is also president of all the Black newspapers in the country — the National Newspaper Publishers Association. Congratulations to Chris Bennett for that well-deserved honor!

The Mitchell affair. Hats off to State Representative Jesse Wineberry in the fine tribute (for the most part) he organized for retiring Congressman Parren Mitchell last Saturday. Accolades upon accolades went out to the deserving Baltimore Congressman. It was an interesting evening, despite the lengthy program. The event started at 6 p.m. and continued for almost six hours. Through it all, the Congressman delivered a powerful message that hit close to home, very close. But it was a message that needed to be said. It was well received and obviously did not go out void. Because it was THE event of the weekend, much of this column will highlight the events that took place.

Big booboo. Rep. Wineberry made a major booboo when he talked about Black and women/minority economic development, then turned around through many of the acknowledgements he gave through his list of sponsors, and put his foot in his mouth when he made special acknowledgements to HIS bank, which he owns stock and has funds in, a major downtown bank and not Black-owned Liberty Bank in Seattle. The cornerstone of any economic revival in the Black community has to begin, Jesse, with your Black bank. This was a major blunder. Not only was the president of Liberty Bank there, so was the chairman of the board.

Protocol. It seemed against pro-

ocol for Rep. Wineberry to announce the apparently undeclared official opponent of 43rd District State Representative Janice Niemi. Niemi was at the function, but left immediately after Wineberry recognized her apparently unofficial opponent before recognizing her as an incumbent.

Right on comments. Congressman Parren Mitchell paused during his speech to address the nerve wars and divisions among Seattle's Black contractors. In chastising them, he told them they were doing exactly what the adversary wanted by setting themselves up for the old divide and conquer scheme.

The articulate Congressman and former Morgan State College professor emphasized his hatred for front companies — Black or White. If they are indeed Black front companies, they should be prosecuted and put in jail just as their White counterparts and eat the same slop as others in the cells, as they all sing "Ebony and Ivory" and "We Shall Overcome," said Mitchell.

Mitchell says he's working now to rewrite the penalties for the set-aside laws. Imprisonment will be changed from two years to five years, and the fine from \$5,000 to \$50,000. That oughta raise some dandruff.

Noticeable absentees. Noticeable people absent from the weekend political affair for the retiring Congressman were Gov. Gardner although he did send greetings from the state via Commissioner Ike Turner; Senator Dan Evans; State Senators George Fleming (37th District), and Jim McDermott of the 43rd District. County Exec Tim Hill didn't come, and sent no message, neither did Mayor Royer. Ron Sims, the only Black on the King County Council was also absent.

No City Councilpersons were there except for Norm Rice who brought greetings from City Council President Sam Smith. There were no representatives from the Seattle School Board, including the three Black members.

Parren Mitchell, despite his push for economic parity, was competing with the Ebony Fashion Fair. So it's possible some of those absent had previous commitments. Then again, some of

them didn't show up at the Fashion Fair either.

Nevertheless, the Madison Grand Ballroom was near capacity with primarily businesspeople and politicians.

Comedy of the evening. The president of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce paid tribute to many at the Mitchell affair, including Congressman Mike Lowry. He stated he remembered Lowry long before he became a politician when he was a "flunky for what's that senator's name you used to hang around with?"

A surprised Lowry gained his composure long enough to gentlemanly acknowledge the obviously embarrassing comments. Flunky or not, Lowry has consistently been one of the strongest advocates for the political, social and otherwise well-being of Blacks and other minorities. Matter of fact, it has been stated that Lowry should hold regular seminars for young aspiring politicians (and others already in office) on how to represent their constituents.

Blind ambitions? Several weeks ago, we couldn't help but notice the alleged results of a recent survey supposedly done on Black audience participation in radio. This survey obviously was meant to discredit KRIZ and did not indicate a date or time it was taken.

Many listeners called The Medium and KRIZ in outrage at this attempt to slant and discredit the only locally Black-owned broadcast facility. Many questioned the merit and authenticity of that service, and questioned whether the survey was done before there was Black-owned radio here, or during the time the Black-oriented radio station that was here was working its way through bankruptcy court.

We don't know, but we do know that during the first two weeks that KRIZ went 24 hours a few weeks ago, there were 3600 requests. These are the listeners who called in and were able to get through. KRIZ has a metered phone to measure its request line. This slanted survey was an obvious attempt by over zealous and envious individuals in and around the community attempting to discredit the efforts of those trying to communicate with the masses of Blacks locally on a regular basis — instantly. Blind ambitions?



Pictured are Regina Tyner, mistress of ceremonies and Congressman Parren Mitchell. Staff photo/Wallace Salahuaddin.

ding message. Despite the lateness of the evening, the articulate Mitchell was able to hold the audience spellbound throughout the 30-minute span of his speech. Every word that came forth was power-packed. The closer he hit home, a scan through the audience showed many guilt-ridden faces.

Mitchell thanked Congressman Lowry for allowing him into his territory. He stated, "Some congressmen won't allow me in their district. Then there are some who will allow me, but I have to watch what I say." The congressman pointed out that the problem with local minority contractors is that they are not a team. They are too busy fighting with each other, instead of trying to procure contracts to benefit everyone.

Speaking on the theme "Economic Prosperity of Minority Businesses," Mitchell pointed out that in order to ensure the future of the generations to come and make us whole men and women, "we have to have solidarity and unity NOW!"

Continued Mitchell, "We have achieved economic prosperity. We have come a long way from being solely consumers to producers of goods and services. We are succeeding. Before we were given \$37,000 to start a business. But we have taken that money and turned into something big. Now we're able to make bids on big jobs."

The set-aside program has been proven to work, stated Mitchell, despite the many obstacles. When Mitchell established the set-aside program, many reasons were given why it wouldn't work from

"It won't take into account the other factors or obstacles like bonding" to "It's unfair. It will drive the 'poor' Whites out of business."

Mitchell sees the problem isn't only with the set-aside program but also with the discord among contractors, even minority contractors, who are establishing "front companies" in order to bid and receive federal contracts based on guidelines of the set-aside program.

"What I see happening here and elsewhere among contractors, even minority contractors, is that we're fighting each other and doing the dirty work for our enemies. It is not just the White contractors who are establishing front companies, minority contractors are doing the same thing. I don't believe in front companies. I'm working now to rewrite the laws, changing the jail time from

two years to five years and the fine from \$5,000 to \$50,000."

"I want a jail established just for front companies," he continued. "Putting Black and White illegal contractors together where they can sing 'Ebony and Ivory' and even 'We Shall Overcome.' Then we will have legitimate companies."

To ensure the survival of minority business, he asked, "Do we have the guts to beat our enemies? We do," he stated. "Since we do have the guts we will survive and beat our enemies. This is the final struggle we as a minority have to overcome to gain economic prosperity."

Mitchell said, "You have to understand that Clarence Pendleton (U.S. Civil Rights Commissioner) is the administration's 'house boy' and he is only carrying out his orders. But I dare him (Pendleton) to come into my district talking all that mess."

Black Contractors To Meet May 1

The Black Contractors Coalition will meet Thursday, May 1, 7:30 p.m. at the Cotton Club, 820 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way South.

According to Eddie Rye, Jr., Coalition spokesman, "It's essential that Black contractors and Black construction workers get their share of the pie. We can no longer tolerate little or no participation on the billion dollar plus

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Speakers for the meeting are Willie Harris, director of Civil Rights, Region 10, Federal Highway Administration; Maurice Alexander, administrator, Washington State Department of Transportation's Office of Minority Business Enterprise; and Michael Clanton, director of Washington State Support Service Center.