



THE BEDFORD STUYVESANT



COALITION on EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & SERVICES

268 ASHLAND PLACE / Room 602 / BROOKLYN, N. Y. 11217

NEGOTIATION TEAM

Mr. A. Vann, Chairman
Mr. J. Pannigan, Vice Chairman
Judge T. Jones
Mrs. E. Sease
Mr. R. Carson
Prof. H. Patterson, Alternate
Mr. Isaure Santiago, Alternate

July 1969

PROGRESS SUMMARY TO THE COMMUNITY

Our Progress Summary of March 1969 (which is still available upon request) defined the origin, structure, and composition of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Coalition on Educational Needs and Services, the Negotiating Team, and the relationship that exists with members of the Board of Higher Education of The City University of New York.

This report listed the priorities established by the Bedford-Stuyvesant community prior to negotiations as well as achievements gained as a result of the past year's joint meetings with representatives of The City University. Essentially,

- 1) changing the concept of Community College Number Seven so that it will now offer two-year Associate degrees and four-year Baccalaureate degrees;
- 2) agreement that the policy-making body for the college coming to Bedford-Stuyvesant will be determined by the Coalition in conjunction with members of the Board of Higher Education;

- 3) agreement on the interim site for the college; and
- 4) establishment of criteria, procedures, and a selection process which would enable us to find the most suitable candidates for the Presidency of Community College Number Seven.

On January 30, 1969, a second evaluation took place. Dr. Burkhardt, Chairman.

The search for a President began in August 1968 when the Negotiating Team solicited resumés from noted educators throughout the country; some resumés were also solicited by the staff of The City University. Many of the persons contacted submitted their curriculum vitae while others wrote letters indicating great interest, but advising of their unavailability. The Presidential Search Committee (i.e., the Committee composed of the Negotiating Team and representatives of the Board of Higher Education) reviewed and evaluated all of the resumés received and began to categorize the applicants worthy of an interview. All candidates who were granted an interview met the minimum criteria established by the Presidential Search Committee for the Presidency of The Bedford-Stuyvesant College of Professional Studies*, and were categorized either 'A' - outstanding; or 'B' - to be considered.

During the months of November 1968 through May 1969, the Presidential Search Committee was involved in screening, interviewing, and the selection of hopeful candidates whom they felt could serve as President of the College.** At a Presidential Search Committee meeting on January 13, 1969, an evaluation was made of the candidates who had been interviewed to that date:

"the consensus being that Rhody McCoy, James Holt Reeves,

* Age, educational background, and experience.

** Previously referred to as the selection process.

and Roscoe Brown were in the 'A' category for the Presidency."

On January 30, 1969, a second evaluation took place. Dr. Burkhardt, Chairman of the Committee to Plan and Seek a President for Community College Number Seven (Presidential Search Committee), reviewed some of the criteria for the presidency and asked the Committee for the "front runners..."

The names offered were: Roscoe Brown, Samuel Proctor, Rhody McCoy, James Reeves, Samuel Westerfield, and Preston Wilcox."

On February 6, 1969, Dr. Burkhardt stated that,

"the purpose of this meeting was to review the curriculum vitae of the six strongest candidates; i.e., Samuel Proctor, Samuel Westerfield, Jr., James Holt Reeves, Roscoe C. Brown, Rhody A. McCoy, and Preston Wilcox; and to select, if possible, a President for Community College Number Seven".

A voice poll of the six candidates was called for following the suggestion that each voting member name his three top choices. Messrs. McCoy, Proctor, Westerfield, and Wilcox were nominated."

During this period, The City University staff was trying to set up an interview with Dr. Hugh Smythe, at the request of the Presidential Search Committee. Dr. Smythe was finally interviewed on February 26, 1969, and was evaluated and rated highly by a majority of the Committee*. His name joined those of the four remaining candidates as our outstanding nominees for the Presidency.

Throughout these meetings it became obvious that resistance

* When contact was first made with Dr. Smythe requesting a resumé, he declined and recommended Dr. Mabel M. Smythe.

to Mr. McCoy had developed. He came to be regarded as the first choice of the Bedford-Stuyvesant community. Notwithstanding this resistance, however, Mr. McCoy met all criteria that had been established and was within the group of the top five contenders. It was during these negotiations that the Coalition sent five observers to two meetings of the Presidential Search Committee. The observers reported that the Negotiating Team was bargaining in good faith and in the total interest of the Bedford-Stuyvesant community, and acceded that the Coalition remain solidly behind their Negotiating Team.

Concurrent to these events, the State Legislature projected a budget cut within the structure of The City University of New York. The atmosphere was a fearful one. Fear of losing the college, as a result of the proposed budget cut, was (by design) instilled in members of the Coalition. The Negotiating Team was under great pressure to move rapidly toward selecting a President, an interim site, and a name for the college. In response to pressures and to the emotional temper of members of the community, the Negotiating Team compromised its beliefs and submitted the names of Dr. Hugh Smythe and Mr. Rhody A. McCoy to the Presidential Search Committee as their first and second choice, respectively, for the college Presidency.

By this time, some of the top contenders had either accepted other positions or decided to continue in their current status; namely, Dr. Samuel Proctor, who was the first candidate to be contacted regarding his availability for the position.

In addition, the Negotiating Team submitted the name of the Long Island University College of Pharmacy as the college interim site; and

Martin Luther King, Jr. College as the college name. The Presidential Search Committee agreed to ask Dr. Smythe if he would accept the position and the Board of Higher Education gave informal approval of Dr. Smythe's appointment -- pending his acceptance -- and of the college name -- pending approval from Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr.

With no coherent or definite message having been received by The City University from Dr. Smythe after several weeks delay, the Chairman of the Bedford-Stuyvesant community Negotiating Team took it upon himself to ascertain the feelings of Dr. Smythe in regard to his acceptance of the Presidency of the proposed college. In brief, Dr. Smythe said he felt that he could best serve his people in his present capacity as a member of the U.S. Ambassadorial Corps. This was communicated by letter to Chancellor Bowker along with his opinion that the best man for the position, Mr. McCoy, was right in our own community.

At subsequent meetings of the Coalition, unanimous support was given to the Negotiating Team via a vote of confidence and total support of the order of candidates selected by the Team.

At this point, the only candidate left of the top five people, as categorized by the Presidential Search Committee, was Rhody McCoy. Mr. McCoy, incidentally, was the community's first preference and, yet, we had agreed to accept other qualified candidates before him. This was done under some pressure, but mostly to hasten negotiations. In spite of this history of events, representatives of the Board of Higher Education openly refused to recommend Mr. McCoy to the total Board of Higher Education, in opposition to the strong

wishes of the Bedford-Stuyvesant community. The Negotiating Team had played the game fairly, had followed the procedures established by the Presidential Search Committee, had even made compromises; and through natural order, our first choice became the logical choice. He was denied recognition through a flimsy rationale.

Shortly hereafter a letter was received from Albert H. Bowker, Chancellor of The City University of New York, which was addressed to the Chairman of the Coalition. Copies of this letter were sent to innumerable community leaders in Bedford-Stuyvesant and to the Amsterdam News. (Attached is an editorial which appeared in the New York Post on June 3, 1969 in response to Chancellor Bowker's letter.) The purpose of this letter was an attempt to discredit the Negotiating Team, to de-emphasize the importance of the special category of outstanding Presidential hopefuls, to present Mr. McCoy as unqualified for the position, and finally to create a schism in our community by casting doubt, suspicion, and fear. After a year of "breaking bread" with the distinguished gentlemen of the Board of Higher Education they had, in addition to tapping our brains, resorted to this type of strategy as the means of accomplishing their end, and were denying the Bedford-Stuyvesant community a voice in naming the President of Community College Number Seven.

Ironically, this was being done at a time when "a new breed of college President is being sought throughout the country"*, and being done with the awareness that the college coming to Bedford-Stuyvesant is supposed to be "experimental, innovative, and participated .. by

* From an article which appeared in the New York Times on May 8, 1969.

community people".

No doubt, other subdued methods have been employed in order to bring about division within the Coalition and the Bedford-Stuyvesant community. It is unprecedented that the Coalition and the Negotiating Team have remained together and on target for some 15 months. This kind of unity is community strength and community power.

At this very moment, however, this unity and power is being threatened. A call was received from Chancellor Bowker's office asking that the Negotiating Team attend a meeting at which the committee from the Board of Higher Education will be present, as well as the elected politicians from the Bedford-Stuyvesant area. It is the hope of the Negotiating Team that our local politicians have not been privately negotiating with The City University; for this would be a classic example of how to undermine the people who have put them in office. If our politicians have ignored the community structure that has been dealing with the Board of Higher Education and The City University in the planning and developing of Community College Number Seven, then they will be exhibiting the disrespect for Black people that is commonly associated with white politicians, who rarely have any concern for our communities. It would be a grand sellout.

The position of the Negotiating Team of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Coalition on Educational Needs and Services is as follows:

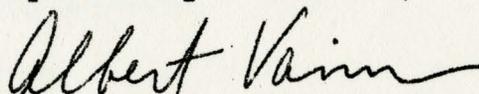
- A. We have negotiated competently and in behalf of the interests of our community, Bedford-Stuyvesant;
- B. We have functioned within the framework established

by a committee comprised of members of the Board of Higher Education and our Negotiating Team (Committee to Plan and Seek a President for Community College Number Seven/Presidential Search Committee);

- C. We made an extensive search for a President for the college coming to Bedford-Stuyvesant conforming to criteria, procedures, and practices as agreed upon by the Presidential Search Committee;
- D. All outstanding candidates, as categorized by the Presidential Search Committee, have either withdrawn, declined the position, or accepted other positions; with the exception of Mr. McCoy, who has not even had the opportunity to accept or decline;
- E. Even though Mr. McCoy was our first choice because of demonstrated ability, he became our first choice, again, because of the selection process set up by the Presidential Search Committee. It is now a matter of principle.

Our community and our elected officials must understand the need for total support of the Coalition and the Negotiating Team, and the logical selection of Rhody McCoy as President of Community College Number Seven. If the community, through its representatives, after having participated equally in negotiations with the Board of Higher Education and The City University staff will not have its decisions respected, then the whole concept of valid community participation becomes a farce. It means that the proposed college will not have a chance to even begin to meet the real needs of our young people or to maintain any semblance of relevancy to our community as a whole. Without struggle, there is NO progress.

Respectfully submitted,



Albert Vann, Chairman

THE NEW YORK POST

Tuesday, June 3, 1969

On the Rejection of Rhody McCoy

With a peremptory rejection of Ocean Hill-Brownsville school administrator Rhody McCoy as a potential president of the new community college in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, City University Chancellor Bowker has again shown that even enlightened educators have a lot to learn about New York.

According to Bowker, who maintains that his judgment is shared by a Board of Higher Education committee, McCoy "may get high marks on community identification and understanding. He cannot be given the same high marks on his administrative experience in higher education."

Is that really the controlling standard

in this case? Are Chancellor Bowker's views and those of the committee actually more informed than those of the community spokesmen who recommended McCoy—now the only candidate for the job? What is most needed in this setting—orthodox "administrative" competence or sensitive community understanding and the quiet dignity McCoy has so often exhibited under fire?

If the new college is to open next fall, there will have to be forthright answers to such questions. This critical current issue in urban education cannot be dealt with wisely if CUNY officials insist upon going by "the book," the text of the old school.