

# Off Center

Sol Plafkin

1968

An interesting entry to the TV “talk show” circuit locally is “Haney’s People,” at 11:15 p.m., on Channel 7 (WXYZ-TV).

Host for the new show is Don Haney who is dark black in color, but not very black in philosophy. For instance, in discussion July 7 on bias in the mass media, Haney kept on insisting that TV had played an important role in magnifying the image (with a clear implication that this was detrimental to “good race relations”) of Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown.

An executive of the American Broadcasting Company denied that the networks had given any undue coverage to them, but Haney kept on hammering away at the silly point nevertheless.

State Sen. Coleman Young also appeared on the panel and really blasted away at Boyd Simmons, an assistant editor of the *Detroit News* for the obviously discriminatory policies in hiring (especially reporters) at the *News*.

It was only a few years ago that the *News* hired its first token “Negro,” Bill Matney. After Matney moved on to NBC television, they hired Joe Strickland who is leaving now for a year’s study as a Neiman Fellow.

Simmons claimed that the *News* now has more than one Black reporter. The only one I can think of is Alice Beasley who covers entertainment, and there’s supposed to be a new man who was hired after the strike began and hasn’t been published yet.

Simmons indicated some typical Northern-style subtle bias when he told about some token efforts to train new Black reporters.

“We’ve tried to get some of our Negro office boys to become reporters but they seem to have more obligations than white office boys and would rather go out to work in plants and make more money,” he claimed.

Oh well, at least he doesn’t assert that they can’t read or write.

In Haney’s first show two weeks earlier, beautiful Barbara Burris did a great put-down of Sheriff Roman Gribbs on the issue of student demonstrations. Gribbs adheres to a narrow, doctrinaire view of “law and order” (but aren’t “laws” supposedly enacted for the people for their own benefit?). Barb took him apart very nicely with some assistance from another guest, liberal comedian Phil Foster.

Mayor Cavanagh’s signing of the “stop-and-frisk” ordinance came as a surprise—in a way. He probably figures he can have his cake and eat it too.

If Cavanagh decides to run for reelection in 1969, he probably figures that his major opponent will be Walter Shamie again—so that he’ll get the white liberal and Black vote anyways, as the “lesser of two evils.”

There isn’t much of a chance for the promotion of a major Black candidate for mayor next year, unless Bob Tindal who can be very dynamic and aggressive at times—makes one of the two council vacancies this year and sets an outstanding record before next summer’s primary.

Both Tindal and Andrew Perdue, running for the Detroit Board of Education, appear to have broad support in the Black community.

Tindal, though he is serving as executive secretary of the relatively conservative Detroit NAACP, is getting strong backing from many young militants.

Perdue, who with Milton Henry and this writer participated as attorneys in the famous Algiers Motel mock tribunal last year, is vying for one of two vacancies in frustration on the school board (which has the almost impossible job of cracking the bureaucratic indifference of the paid administrative staff). His backing ranges from Francis Kornegay (Urban League), Rev. Roy Allen (Detroit Council of Organizations), and former Councilman William Patrick, Jr. to Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. and Jimmy and Grace Boggs.

Getting back to the mayor's race next year, there are two possible White Candidates who might give Cavanagh a run for the money among Blacks and liberal whites: Councilman Mel Ravitz and former Recorder's Judge David I. Kaufman.

Ravitz interrupted his hard-earned vacation to vote (together with Councilman Hood) against "Stop-and-frisk."

I've ridden hard on Ravitz at times for missing the new mood of militancy in the community, but he's still been pretty solid when it comes to "gut" civil liberties issues.

Ravitz grew up politically in an era when it took some courage to be for "open housing" and civil rights generally. If he could just attempt a little harder to communicate with the growing community forces of the new mood, he might find himself a major contender next year for a political promotion.

Kaufman is a candidate for one of the two council vacancies this year and his short service on the Recorder's Court bench have shown him to be pretty progressive. He may have trouble getting nominated this year since many Black groups who would normally support him in a nine-man race are limiting their endorsements for the two seats to Black candidates. If he survives the primary, his chances for election in the final should be quite good—with the mayor's seat in the not-so-distant future.

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