



VICTOR RIESEL

Post-Intelligencer

July 28, 1970

Art Fletcher Making His Mark

Black leader Whitney Young Jr. is a man of considerable whimsey. He doesn't mind standing up to be counted. But he does mind getting up to be shot.

So he was slightly discomfited but hardly discouraged when he learned some time ago that there was a cabal loose which planned to put a man in a tree and rifle him down. In the private court of the cabal his crime apparently was moderation in pursuit of happiness for the black people inside "the system." Curiously this bizarre episode is slipping into black history almost unnoticed.

CREAKING THOUGH this system may be, it turns out to be a rather gentle system hardly intent on making the punishment fit the crime.

Point is, which system will you have? Point is that Urban League National Director Whitney Young Jr. and NAACP Executive Director Roy Wilkins believe it wiser to better it than to burn it. And there are those who

believe it can't be bettered under President Nixon. That could be. But political objectivity rather than political obscenity should be the measure before we semantic-ize ourselves into pluralistic rioting, confrontations, blockaded streets, shootouts between coalitions of angered citizens which any well-informed police department intelligence division can tell you is just one hot incident away.

For that measure of reason I turned to ex-football star, husky Arthur Fletcher, eloquent, voluble Assistant Secretary of Labor of the U.S. for Wage and Labor Standards. Three times Richard Nixon urged Art Fletcher to join the administration. Three times the big man from the Northwest said nay to the President who has been labeled pro-white. Then Mr. Fletcher picked up the challenge.

Now, says Secretary Fletcher, "Nixon is anything but anti-black. He is pro-black. He tried to get 87 blacks into the government and they turned him down."

President Nixon and Secretary Fletcher, who is the first black man ever to hold a press conference in the White House, now are friends. There must be a margin for the error of partisanship. But the fact is the fact. Art Fletcher takes nonsense from no one. He is hitting the un-black line of some construction unions harder than anyone ever has. He is pushing the Philadelphia Plan, or the hometown solution plan or the goal system or the black quota in over 100 cities now.

He knows there is an average of 7.4 per cent black workers in the building and construction unions—and that there are no blacks in the asbestos union and that there are 29.2 per cent in the laborers organization.

This is a tough man. He says this just is not enough. He says that the time may come when construction union and contractor, indeed most of commerce and industry, will have to hire blacks in proportion to their number in the community—or the government will have to set quotas. And he uses the hard-nosed word—quotas.

BIG ART FLETCHER also warns that this may soon have to be the law—and be tested by the Supreme Court. And that's that. Well, it may not be. And his quota system may not work and blacks, Chicanos, hispanos and all others of our pluralistic minority-jammed nation may have to get into the pipeline for training as electricians or business suite executives.

So it's not Mr. Nixon's system or anyone's apparatus. It's all just a lot of people wanting a piece of the action, the wages, the bread, the executive salaries—and always there have been more poor working people than there has been bread. But this gives no one license to whip up riots, or conspire to kill the decents of our society, the Whitney Youngs who say let's have that domestic Marshall Plan.

P.S. We made a four hour tour of OEO projects with Don Rasmussen today and told him to tell you hello. Freddie May also met him.

*Dear Art:
Just a short note from your home state to show you that you still have many boosters. I certainly appreciate any help you've given me on this job with Dick Williams in HUD at Seattle. I'm really anxious to try it.
Thanks!*

Leon H. Vaughan

Freddie May also met him.