

The Battle for Black Brooklyn

A Heated Race for Chisholm's Seat

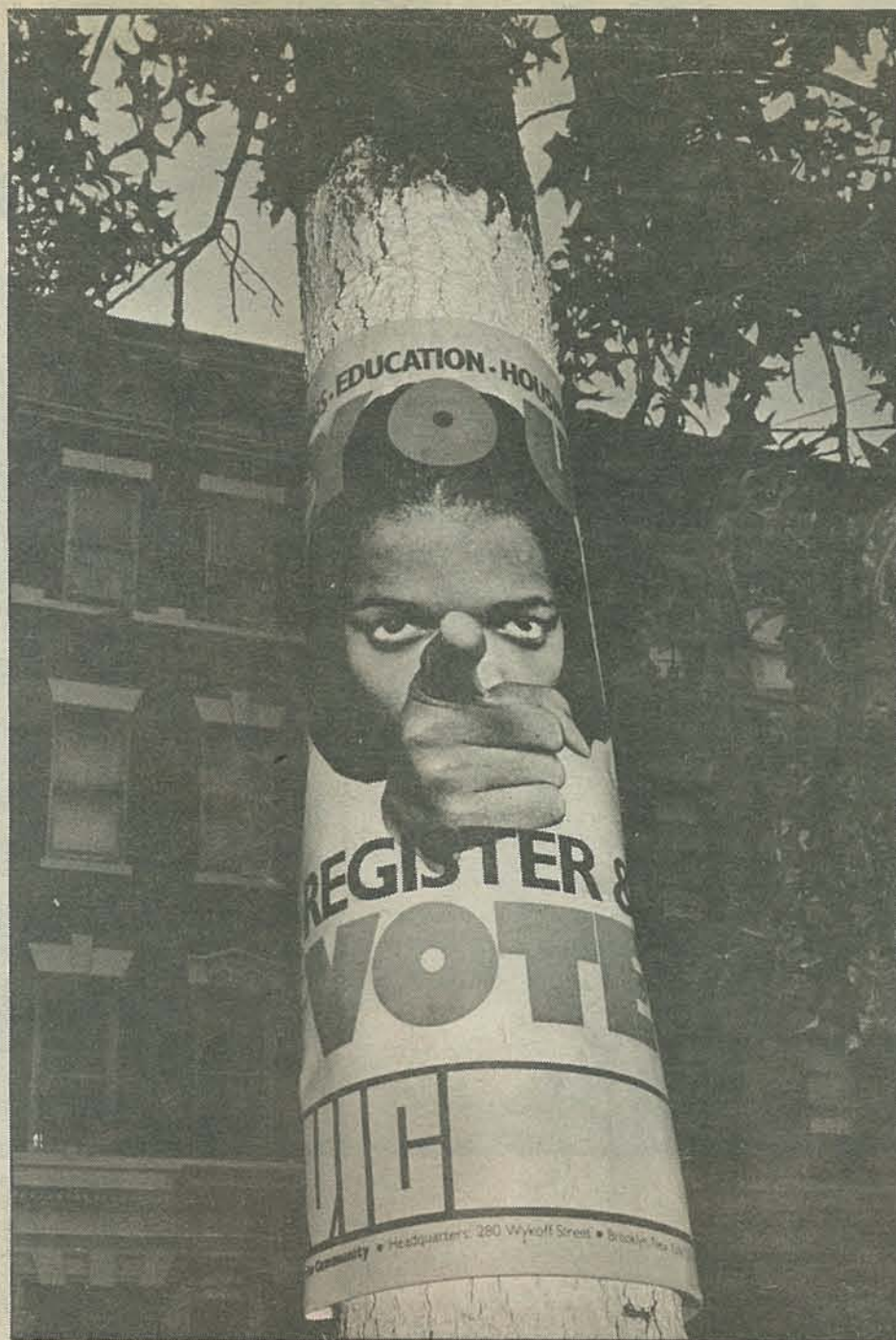
By Jim Sleeper

The battle between state senators Major Owens and Vander Beatty to succeed the departing Shirley Chisholm is carrying the 516,000 residents of central Brooklyn's sprawling 12th congressional district toward a moment of self-definition at the polls in the September 23 primary.

Their choice is critical because the winner will become the voice of one of America's largest black communities at a time when there is almost no margin for error in the substance and timing of minority claims. In Ronald Reagan's racist, retrenching Washington, blacks will need a spokesperson of stature, a broker universally trusted, an astute team player at moments requiring collective action. And Chisholm's successor will automatically draw national attention; what he brings to the tortuous development of black-white relations will be magnified in the national consciousness and conscience, whether he comes with the constructive challenges that grow from coalescing black strength, or the self-serving, phony militance that always gives way to ingratiating and impotence. Brooklyn's blacks cannot afford a mistake.

Yet the dramatic differences in philosophy, ability, and integrity which distinguish Major Owens from Vander Beatty have been so obfuscated in this campaign that Beatty, who would almost certainly disgrace his community in Congress, has at least as good a chance of winning as Owens, who would bring it credit and solid gains. If Beatty is to be kept from mislead-

(Continued on page 10)



JAMES HAMILTON

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By Jim Sleeper with photographs by James Hamilton

(Continued from page one) ing blacks during the coming critical years, the voters of central Brooklyn will have to discover the carefully concealed truth about his record, a record which too many influential blacks have indulged or willfully misunderstood. And Major Owens, one of this city's most capable and enlightened politicians ("Will These Men Change New York?" *Voice*, December 9, 1981) will have to find the resources to counter Beatty's strength and covert support from interests hostile to black empowerment.

The 42-year-old Beatty is heir and custodian to the "poverty empire" tradition established in Brooklyn by his mentor and ally, former city councilman Sam Wright, who was convicted in 1978 of extortion and conspiracy. Like Wright, Beatty deftly channels the pathologies of poor neighborhoods into networks of corruption, trading upon the needs of people too weak, embittered, or ill-trained to act together outside a structure of personalized, authoritarian leadership.

● Beatty, like Wright, begins with the unspoken assumption that white domination cannot be altered. He has ingratiated himself with powerful interests to become a conduit for crumbs tossed to the black community, a dispenser of favors to loyalists who keep him in power through fraud and thuggery at the expense of democratic school boards, community boards, and lo-

cal institutions like day-care centers and development corporations. This behavior extends to party and general elections. For the last 10 years Beatty has maintained about 20 key associates on publicly funded salary lines obtained through his legislative influence. These associates have subverted elections, taken over at least two school boards, one antipoverty board, a huge antipoverty program, two day-care centers, (where they engaged in illegal antiunion practices), and five or six local development corporations brought into being by Beatty from the state supplemental budget. The staffs, resources, and powers of these institutions have been devoted to the furtherance of Beatty's political career, in violation of their contracts and fundamental purposes. Beatty has established what has been known since the days of Boss Tweed as a political "ring," mixing equal parts fraud, intimidation, charisma, money, and jobs.

● There can be no doubt of Beatty's role as the prime mover, strategist, and chief beneficiary of these activities. As in all such rings, it is his associates (including his wife) who do the dirty work and who have sometimes been caught and convicted of crimes; the principal himself stays free and replaces them with others. Indeed, Beatty runs a virtual affirmative action hiring program for felons convicted of politically related crimes and social ripoffs; he's had at least four such people on his various payrolls since 1974.

● Beatty "gets over" with middle-class whites and blacks by making himself as

charming and available as possible. Within his own community, however, he poses as a kind of Robin Hood, nourishing the belief that the larger society is to be ripped off because it cannot be significantly improved. When the larger society strikes back against corruption, Beatty leads his followers in circling their wagons against "white justice." He stood outside a federal courthouse on April 1, 1977, telling the black community that "the indictment of Sam Wright was prearranged... rigged. It was a political indictment." Since white justice is often commingled with racism, this claim is often accepted.

● Yet the irony is that the Beatty/Wright model of enriching a relatively small group of loyalists at the community's expense plays into the hands of the larger society's predators. It cuts down on the demands the community might make for service delivery and investment if it were more broadly mobilized. By its nature, the political ring prevents that mobilization because it subverts democracy and suppresses every initiative taken without the leader's direction. Small wonder that power brokers like the Brooklyn county leader, reactionary union heads and influential slumlords have indulged Beatty and his mercenaries, who are so useful in pacifying local community boards.

● All this is bad enough, but an examination of Beatty's record shows he's added something new to the Tweed/Wright repertoire, an ability to denounce in public the very powers he serves. Beatty has shown his skill at sluicing legitimate

black anger at dominant white interests into powerful currents he could ride to his own greater glory, while his actions in the long run have actually undermined black interests, deepening black cynicism.

Beatty knew, for example, that his petition drive to recall Ed Koch from office after the mayor defunded the poverty programs never stood a chance of succeeding—which is why he had the recall drive all to himself, along with the attendant publicity. Yet when the chance to defeat Koch really came, in the 1981 mayoral election Beatty was silent while Major Owens and others got out the vote for Frank Barbaro. "Beatty met with me once, said he would support me, and I never heard from him again," Barbaro says.

Similarly, while Beatty blustered about the legislature's discriminatory reapportionment plan this year, he is now supporting white organization candidates in at least three of the minority districts he claims to have won for black representation. The whites are on his petitions and they have endorsed him for Congress. Beatty is also endorsed by Assemblyman Mel Miller, architect of the legislative reapportionment Beatty denounced so vociferously for the cameras. And the media man for his congressional race, Hank Sheinkopf, admits he's handling Beatty, whom he calls "an inventive thief," as a favor to county leader Meade Esposito: "I need the regulars' contracts if I'm going to eat, and this gets me in good with them before Meade dies," Sheinkopf says.

By misleading blacks about his posi-

Research assistance by Barbara Turk



Franklin Avenue Shuttle Station, Bedford-Stuyvesant

tions on issues like Ed Koch and reapportionment, Beatty is not only a political fraud, he is also a political danger to the black community, telling people to march at the wrong times and to lay down their arms when the real struggles are underway.

● Beatty has misled blacks and whites alike about his own campaign and the sources of his support. Until June 17 he was officially running against Fred Richmond, and garnered endorsements and contributions on that basis. The Federal Election Commission reports that as of August 21 Beatty had still not reported that he is running in the 12th congressional district against Owens.

● Beatty has never filed a single itemized report of campaign contributions during all his years in public office; it is impossible to know officially where his money comes from. While federal election law permits gross lumping only of contributions under \$200 (state law, under \$100), Beatty publicly boasted, at a breakfast in April, that he had 28 members of his \$1000 club; and his spokesman Sheinkopf says, "We expect to raise and spend \$250,000 in this campaign." Beatty is in violation of federal election law for not having filed his July 15 quarterly report of receipts and disbursements. His last filing, in May, claimed \$34,032 in contributions and did not itemize any individual contributors. "We are notifying [Beatty] at the end of this week that he is in violation," says FEC spokesman Fred Eiland, and we will be requesting the additional information."

● Beatty has assaulted reporters and his opponents' supporters, and engages in vicious slanders of his opponents. The day Major Owens announced for Congress, Beatty was quoted in the *New York Post*, saying that Owens "is supported by communists and radicals; he talks black but he sleeps white."

● Finally, Beatty is a vacuous legislator. His chairmanship of the legislature's Black and Puerto Rican Caucus was, according to a cross-section of colleagues and observers, a disaster, and when his col-

leagues denied him a third term in the post, he stomped out of the 21-member body with four others to set up a ludicrous rival organization which has done nothing but undercut minority unity—a point which members of the Congressional Black Caucus in Washington might want to ponder. This year, Beatty was absent from senate sessions almost twice as often as he was present, receiving a 22 percent rating from the New York Civil Liberties Union as a result.

● Wesley McD. Holder, the octogenarian dean of black Brooklyn politics who's managed all Chisholm's campaigns, remembers getting a call in 1968 from a pipe-puffing, briefcase-toting "college professor" who wanted to hold a fund-raiser in his home for Chisholm, then running for Congress. It went well, and Holder passed "Professor Beatty" on to Norman Levy in the 1969 Lindsay campaign. "I discovered him," says Holder. "He was completely naive about politics."

Beatty did get a Ph.D. from NYU's School of Education, though not until October 1980, when, despite his many travels and duties as chairman of the legislature's Black and Puerto Rican Caucus over the preceding two years, he managed to submit a 186-page thesis based on an elaborately computerized analysis of a questionnaire he'd submitted to all his colleagues in Albany. A line in his thesis attributes the legislators' astounding 95 per cent response rate to the "availability of staff" to collect the documents. Beginning March 1979, Beatty paid a Dr. James Miller \$545 a week as a "senior research associate" on his senate payroll, making Miller director of the caucus as well.

Beatty's thesis examines his colleagues' perceptions of "barriers" to election—race, financing, party support, media—and is essentially a digest of good-government canards, warning, for example, that circuitous business deals have replaced the old brown bag as politicians are cut quietly into the interests they protect, instead of bribed. What's noteworthy about the writing of "Professor Beatty" (who has long

since exchanged his pipe and briefcase for a licensed .38 caliber Colt and some unlicensed goons) is its indifference to the passion for empowerment and community mobilization sweeping the black community during the time Beatty was teaching as an adjunct at Lehman College and running for office.

● Beatty was elected to the assembly with Mac Holder's urging and help in 1970. There he gained a new tutor, Sam Wright, also an assemblyman. Like Wright, Beatty assembled a platoon of loyalists who have continued to operate together to control antipoverty groups, day-care centers, and community school boards. The key members can be found on Beatty's own senate payroll, on senate minority (i.e., Democratic) leader Manfred Ohrenstein's much larger payroll, and on the staffs and boards of directors of the five or six local development corporations Beatty has funded from the state supplemental budget.

In 1971 Beatty associates Simon Levine (a black who claims to be a minister), Manuel Young, William T. Lancaster (alias Lancaster Williams), William Cruz, and Sylvester Leaks became active in neighborhood elections to the board of directors of the city's largest antipoverty organization, Bedford-Stuyvesant Youth in Action (YIA). Former state senator Waldaba Stewart insists that they showed up with a number of "nondescript" recruits and "swamped the honest voters by going from area to area."

Beatty forces wrested control of YIA from Assemblyman Thomas Fortune, and Sylvester Leaks became chairman of the board of the \$8 million, 1500-employee organization. Young also became an employee. Neighborhood elections were never held again, and in the ensuing years YIA became a scandal, with several of its executives going to jail for embezzling and misusing funds, fraud, conspiracy, bribery, loan sharking, gambling, and gun-possession. In 1976 YIA was deprived of control over its program funds, but in May 1977, according to a city administration report obtained by the *Voice*, "in response to

Senator Beatty and others, control over funds was restored." In all, according to the *New York Times* story in 1978 at the time of YIA's complete defunding, over \$4 million had disappeared during Leaks's tenure and 95 percent of YIA's accounts could not be adequately monitored by independent accountants.

In 1972 Levine, Young, Lancaster, and Cruz surfaced again as Beatty ran against Waldaba Stewart for the state senate. Stewart was so certain of election fraud that he and Myrtle Thompson carefully monitored the following year's Crown Heights school board 17 elections at the John Edward Bruce Day-care Center 1 on Sterling Place. The center was directed by Beatty's sister-in-law Evelyn Maxey and designated a polling place by the Board of Elections only after Beatty had entered politics.

The monitoring showed that voter registration cards had been filled out for nonexistent people registered as living in vacant lots and abandoned buildings, and that Beatty associates were then sent to vote, as reported by Wayne Barrett in the *Voice* ("The Bleak Politics of Black Brooklyn," September 10, 1980). As a result, Beatty's wife Betty was convicted in 1974 of 52 counts of vote fraud, and his aide Manuel Young was subsequently convicted of 25 felony counts for the same offense. The board of directors of the day-care center at the time included Sylvester Leaks, Willie Lancaster, and William Cruz; the election registrars who had to look the other way for Young's efforts to succeed were Leaks, Lancaster, and two other Beatty staffers.

Beatty himself, already a state senator and a candidate for the school board in that election, was thrown off the board by the courts, along with his whole slate. But three years later, in 1976, Sylvester Leaks became president of school board 17 after a Beatty slate triumphed; another member of that slate, Clarence Robertson, was a former executive assistant to Sam Wright's school board 23. William Cruz, meanwhile, is president of school board 16

Continued on next page



Crown Gardens public housing, Crown Heights

ner from each of its three finished rehabilitation jobs, earning what, according to HUD officials, is the going 20 per cent on his investments. CBUDC itself is 98 per cent owner of a recently tenanted 31-unit rehabilitation and would-be 100 percent owner of a proposed 46-unit federally subsidized housing project for the elderly now under review at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. CBUDC also takes a 6 1/4 per cent management fee for all its projects and has a contract to manage all properties constructed by Gabriel Prince's Refine Construction Company.

There has been some question whether CBUDC can be at once community sponsor, developer, and managing agent of its federally subsidized rehabilitations. HUD files reveal such unusual arrangements as a letter written from Sylvester Leaks, director of CBUDC, the sponsor, to Sylvester Leaks, general partner (i.e., investor) in the President Arms project, arranging for the managing agent, CBUDC, to receive compensation of \$1705 for preparation of the management plan and the selection of qualified tenants.

These arrangements represent continuing income for Leaks and for a corporate entity (CBUDC) composed almost entirely of Beatty's platoon members and other associates. Leaks, it should be noted, is not only chairman of Beatty's congressional campaign, but, in apparent violation of state DHCR regulations, is running for district leader in the 43rd assembly district on Beatty's slate and petition—a position that would permit him to appoint election registrars, the post he held in the fraudulent 1973 election for the school board he now chairs.

Beatty's involvement in real estate goes beyond these corporations. He has personally bought and sold property, some of it under corporate names, not far from CBUDC's rehab work. His campaign treasurer is Ed Meyers, a developer. It is impossible to trace real estate support directly, however, for Beatty never filed itemized campaign contributions listing actual contributors during his years in the assembly and senate, nor has he named a single contributor on his one federal report. Irwin Weintraub, one of the *Voice's* 10 worst landlords this year, threw Beatty a fund-raiser last spring, and the head of Beatty's committee on vacancies in this election, county organization lawyer George Meissner, defended arson landlord Joseph Bald and his associates, as well as another *Voice* "worst landlord" this year, the violent Kenneth Noonan.

Some of Beatty's other supplemental budget corporations make even less of a pretense at community development, since they do virtually no work at all. One was created when Beatty people muscled in on existing community efforts. In 1979 Tommy Jones, formerly of Together We Stand, had found a job organizing merchants for the reputable Crown Heights Progress Council. One night, according to Jones, Beatty's wife Betty and his accountant Arthur Thomas showed up at a meeting of the fledgling merchant group to disrupt and disband it. They told the merchants that community residents didn't want any "fly-by-night" organization meddling with businesses, and that in any case "the senator's office is always open" to serve merchants' needs. They announced, too, that there was a better merchant group in formation.

This turned out to be the Crown Heights Commerce Association, funded by Beatty over the past three years from the state supplemental budget through the Commerce Department for \$275,000 to survey area business needs, and operating out of a two-story brick-front house on Rogers Avenue. Jones dropped by CHCA shortly after Thomas and Betty Beatty appeared, and, in the company of Esther Mendoza, a friend who worked there at the time, witnessed CHCA staff being instructed to collect signatures for five full Beatty state senate petitions each.

CHCA's director at \$25,000 a year, plus 17 per cent fringe benefits, is Reverend Robert Hardmond, pastor of Faith Chapel

Baptist Church, site of a disputed summer meals program investigated by Representative Liz Holtzman in 1976 and run at the time partly by Sylvester Leaks through YIA. Hardmond is also on the board and is a former staff member of Beatty's housing corporation, BSUDC. Charles Tilley, who is CHCA's "Industrial Developer," at \$21,000, is on Beatty's petitions as a candidate for district leader and judicial delegate in the 56th A.D. William Lancaster is CHCA's executive assistant, at \$17,000, a post he manages to fill in addition to his many other Beatty obligations. Robert Hurst, on Beatty's petitions with Tilley as a candidate for judicial delegate, is an "economic developer" for CHCA making \$10,000. CHCA's contract says that its funds must not be used to advance candidacies or influence legislation, but as of August 20 there were Beatty posters in the windows of CHCA's residential-looking facade, and if Jones' account is correct, the premises have been used as a petitioning base.

Beatty also funded the Afro-American Caribbean Cultural Center which Reverend Hardmond chairs. Linda Sutton, a longtime Beatty staffer (she was full-time on his senate payroll through the summer of 1981), is executive director. In 1981 the center was given \$205,000 by the state's Department of Social Services, which handles welfare and entitlement programs. After an unfavorable audit, DSS dropped the center, but it was somehow transferred to the Department of Education, which promptly funded it again for \$145,000. "We weren't even aware it had been funded previously by anyone else," says DOE spokesman Michael Carey. What the auditors will find is a single large room on Bedford Avenue two blocks from Beatty's office, with a few paintings, some sculpture, a guest book that shows fewer than 500 visitors over the past year, and an upstairs "gallery" which was "closed for renovations." This place carries six people (the *Voice* could not obtain the names of five) on salary lines totaling \$66,000. There are other community corporations run by Beatty associates on state funds.

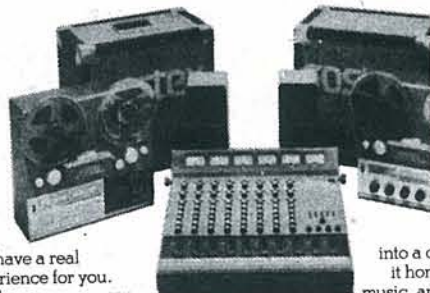
Beatty has had four felons on his various payrolls since 1974. While consolidating his control over YIA in 1973, he became friendly with citywide Council Against Poverty (CAP) chairman David Billings, convicted in 1975 of embezzling \$5000 from the Fort Greene Community Corporation, whose representative he had been to CAP. The charismatic and flamboyant Billings, fond of mink coats and fancy cars, was on Beatty's senate payroll in 1977 making \$159 a week, and in 1980 Beatty had an unwitting senate honor him with a resolution congratulating him on becoming a "bishop" of the Church of God in Christ International. Bishop Billings has endorsed Senator Beatty for Congress this year, and he is on a Beatty petition as a delegate to the judicial convention—a convicted felon who will select the judges Meade Esposito tells him to.

Other miscreants on Beatty's payroll have been former assemblyman Calvin Williams, convicted of perjury in 1970 and of breaking and entering in 1975 (he was given work-release time from prison to work on Sam Wright's 1976 congressional campaign); Caspar Yaspas, convicted and jailed twice for credit card scams and subsequently appointed to a Harlem anti-poverty Area Policy Board; and Manuel Young, whose 1978 indictment for vote fraud in the 1973 school race and again in 1975 registration activities was denounced by Beatty to Trans-Urban News director Andrew Cooper as "political."

When Beatty was appointed deputy minority leader in 1975, a testimonial dinner in his honor drew all the important state politicians, and was sponsored by virtually every Beatty associate. But in 1976 Beatty's close association with Wright got him into trouble; he was the only elected official to back Wright against Shirley Chisholm for Congress. Wright was decisively beaten. Meade Esposito punished Beatty for supporting him, running Clarence Norman Sr. against Beatty for

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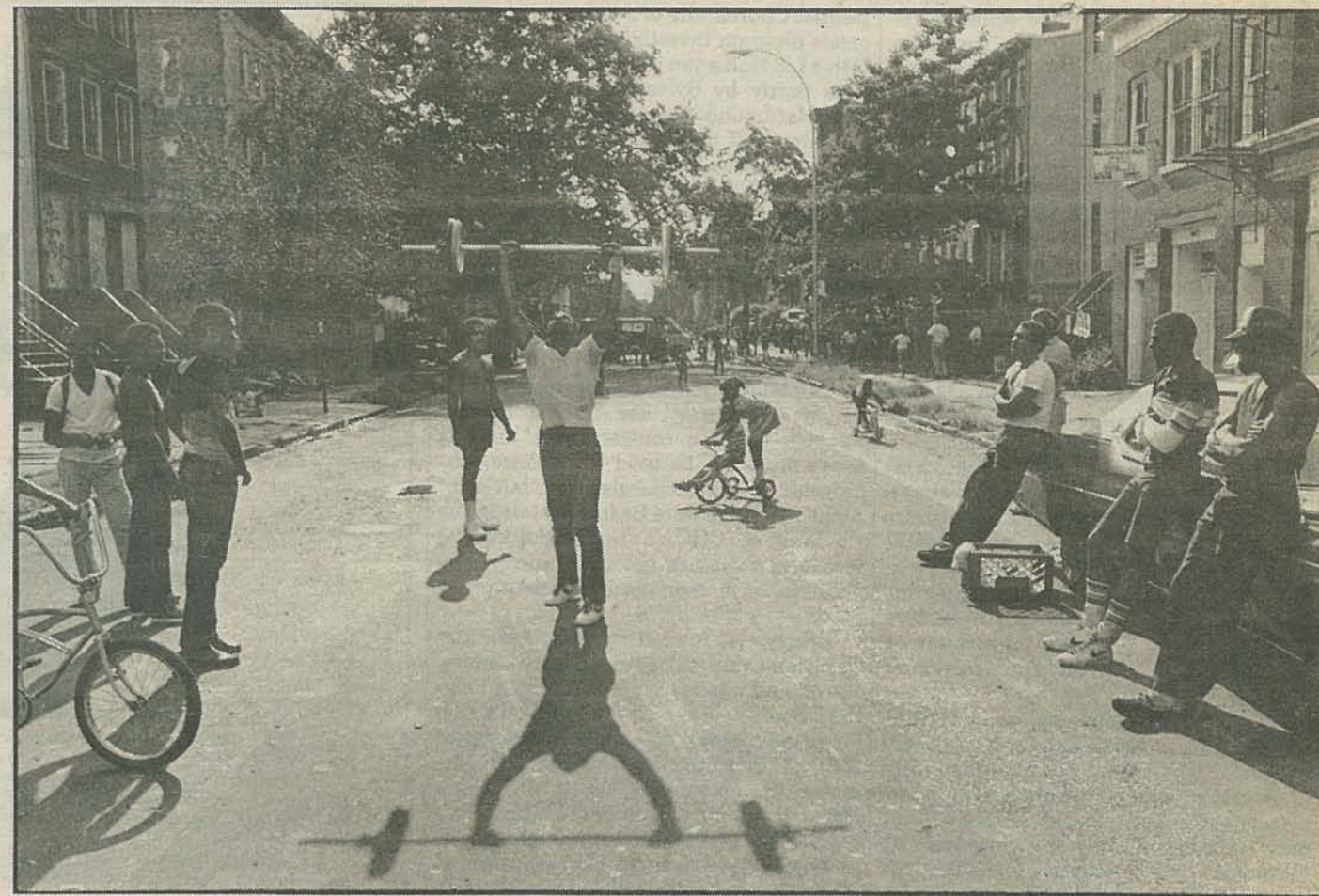
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state senate, but the "platoon" prevailed and Beatty survived.

Only three months after Wright's debacle, however, in December 1976, Ohrenstein dumped Beatty from the deputy minority leader's post. According to *The New York Times*, senators had "lost respect for Beatty" because his concerns were "too narrowly focused on his Bedford-Stuyvesant/Crown Heights district." In 1978 Beatty weathered the trials of Manuel Young and Sam Wright, and lost control of Together We Stand. But the heavy-handed defunding of all anti-poverty community corporations by the Koch administration outraged respectable black leaders, giving Beatty the opportunity to cloak his own troubles at Youth in Action in the righteous anger of a broader cause.

In February 1979 he concocted the idea of a petition drive to recall Koch from office, a plan he announced to the press on behalf of the legislature's Black and Puerto Rican Caucus without consulting its members. So many of his 110,000 signatures proved unacceptable (generally because the signatories were not registered voters) that the effort had to be abandoned. But Beatty had succeeded in placing himself at the center of black anger, and in 1979 he was elected chair of the legislative caucus.

While few of the eight minority legislators contacted by the *Voice* wished to be quoted, all agree that Beatty's chairmanship was a disaster. The caucus met infrequently, failed to conduct effective research and bargaining efforts, and suffered a minor scandal when its annual dinner was badly mismanaged and Beatty's promised guest of honor, UN ambassador Donald McHenry, failed to appear. The executive director of the caucus, hired by Beatty at \$750 a week, was William Cruz. Roger Green contends that Beatty used his title to bargain more effectively for himself with the governor and state agency heads, who gave him more access than an ordinary legislator would have enjoyed.

During 1979 and 1980 Beatty junketed to Africa with 50 businessmen on a trip organized by the state Department of



Commerce. He also went to Japan to inspect metal works and fish hatcheries. More significantly, Beatty began traveling around the country, making contacts through Shirley Chisholm, who with Holder's encouragement had taken him under wing after Wright's indictment and was beginning to tout him as her possible successor. Beatty began to meet a number of prominent southern civil rights leaders, including the Reverend Martin Luther King Sr. and Coretta Scott King. While Valerie Pinson of the Carter campaign remembers "no support to speak of" from Beatty (he was nominally for Carter), Carl Green, formerly of the staff of the Congressional Black Caucus, believes Beatty

used the campaign to forge links with Carter supporters like the Kings. It is also likely that Beatty told the southerners about that usurper, Fred Richmond, reigning unjustly over a congressional district drawn by the Voting Rights Act for minority representation.

By 1981 Beatty desperately wanted a third year as caucus chair but his colleagues denied it to him, electing Al Vann. Beatty walked out with four others to form the State Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Alliance. After some confusion, the Albany press and other legislators decided to write off the "Alliance," but a certain agnosticism on the part of some state officials inclined to play one group against

the other gave Beatty at least the courtesy of access.

Because Beatty was so often absent from senate sessions, his New York Civil Liberties Union rating slipped from 86 per cent in 1978 to 25 per cent in 1980. This year it was 22 per cent (Owens' ratings for those years were 93 per cent, 88 per cent, and 89 per cent, with a 100 per cent rating in 1981. In 1981, the NYCLU gave Beatty a 50 per cent rating and reported that only three other senators had worse attendance records than his for votes on bills of importance to the group.

In 1979 and 1980, Owens voted for Medicaid funding for abortions; Beatty was absent. Owens voted against the Lasher



"cult" bill; Beatty was absent. Owens supported the gun control measure; Beatty was absent. This year, Owens voted for the bottle bill, against electronic media coverage of the courts, prochoice again, and to raise the drinking age. Beatty was absent on all these votes. Beatty missed 41 sessions this year, attending 24, and addressed his colleagues only twice. Owens attended 56 of 65 times and spoke dozens of times. "Major is wonderful on the death penalty and he's in there on most civil liberties debates," says NYCLU's Barbara

Shack.

But perhaps the most important issue in Beatty's record is his tendency to exploit legitimate black grievances for personal gain. Beatty was full of bluster in support of Medgar Evers College students anxious to oust president Richard Trent this year; but when Trent was appointed 10 years ago, it was Assemblyman Al Vann who protested, boycotting his inauguration while Beatty proudly attended.

Many Medgar Evers students are single

mothers angered by Trent's refusal to permit day-care facilities on campus. When some of them sat in at his office, Beatty arrived to promise melodramatically that "if any blood has to be shed to get Trent out, it will be mine first." On May 5, Beatty told students he'd given CUNY chancellor Kibbee and Board of Trustees president James Murphy a 24-hour deadline to remove Trent.

When nothing happened, students kept calling Beatty's office. "Beatty said only that he'd work on it," says Diane Ellis of

the Student-Faculty Coalition To Save Medgar Evers. Finally students cornered Beatty only to be relayed the administration's original demand that they must vacate Trent's office before anything would be discussed. "We don't think there was any real commitment from Vander Beatty," says Ellis. "If we hadn't nudged him, he wouldn't have done anything." Adds Iona Anderson, chair of the school's teacher education department, "He came out with this initial bluster, and after that his hands were dropped."

Anderson's comment about Beatty's rhetorical bluster and substantive capitulation applies as well to his performance on other complex, emotionally charged issues. At a recent public candidates' night where he ballyhooed his opposition to Koch (his radio commercials push the same theme), Beatty was challenged about Barbaro and claimed he'd held a fund-raiser for him. Barbaro knows nothing about it to this day.

Beatty's Koch-hoax takes on added significance given a letter from the mayor himself to HUD dated September 11, 1979, shortly after Beatty's recall efforts had collapsed, certifying the worthiness of a Beatty rehabilitation proposal through CBUDC and Leaks. Such a letter would normally have been handled by the city's housing commissioner.

Beatty is endorsed for Congress by the only two black Brooklyn officials who supported Koch openly for mayor in 1981, Chisholm and Assemblyman Ed Griffith and by Councilman Enoch Williams, who like Beatty was silent in the mayoral race, and who received a \$4000 contribution from Koch in 1981—so timed, as Andrew Cooper of Trans-Urban News discovered, that it wouldn't have become public until after the council contest, had that contest not been postponed by the courts.

Most deceptive has been Beatty's handling of the bitter dispute over reapportionment. Beatty was content to show up unannounced at the Justice Department

Continued on page 32

SLEEPER

Continued from page 15

hearings, where those unannounced at the Justice Department hearings, where those who had done the research and filed the briefs had to listen patiently to his cant about a hundred years of black slavery and his electoral misinformation, before they could get down to the substance of the work. Beatty may have contacted friends he'd made through Chisholm while in Washington, but his posture was clearly toward the media, not the Justice Department or the courts.

As for the additional minority districts Beatty claims to have won, the painful truth is that he is running black "spoiler" candidates against stronger black independents in at least three new minority districts, in order to elect the whites who are also running in them. In the 80 per cent black 21st Senatorial district, he is supporting white senator Marty Markowitz, who is on Beatty's petitions and has endorsed him for Congress. Officially Beatty is endorsing Clayton Majete, his former YIA executive director, and he also endorsed, early in the same race, Waldaba Stewart, against the Owens/Vann candidate, Carl Andrews. A divided black vote means Markowitz wins.

In the 70 per cent black 25th council district, Clarence Robertson, the school board 17 loyalist and Wright associate, is Beatty's spoiler against former Barabro black campaign leader George Dames. Thanks to Robertson, Susan Alter, will probably win.

In the 42nd assembly district, more than 70 per cent black, white machine district leaders Jeremiah Bloom, the former state senator, and Molly Scheff are challenged by Hazel Ann Smith and Herbert Lambright, who are likely to lose because Beatty has entered Clarence Robertson's wife Mabel and Michael Hendrickson, a close Wright associate. Bloom's dealings with Beatty, not always friendly, go back a long way, but he has endorsed Beatty for Congress, a sure indication of the alliance.

What compounds the outrage of Beatty's misleadership is that he lies about it. Asked at a recent Crown Heights candidates' forum whether it was true or false that the white candidates were the ones on his petitions, Beatty shot back, "What do you mean, is it true or false? I don't have to tell you, I know where you come from." When a third of the all-black audience hooted and booed, Beatty said, "Yes, and we know where the cheering squad comes from," pointing toward Brownsville, Owens's much more impoverished home turf: "This is a stable community, we don't need these rabble-rousers from over there." It sounded for all the world like a Bensonhurst bigot talking about keeping the neighborhood safe from "them."

And it was sadly ironic, for it was Beatty who had caused a disruption at the start of the evening by shouting at me and giving me a poke in the chin (he had to be restrained by Sylvester Leaks) while one of his goons grabbed the flash attachment of *Voice* photographer Steve Crichlow and smashed it to smithereens. Beatty becomes violent when his lies begin to unravel and he will divide black from black as eagerly as white from black in order to distract people from his own vulnerability. He tried to tell the crowd that "white leftists" were dictating to the black community who it should send to Congress (conveniently omitting all mention of his designation on the New Alliance Party line and his recent press conferences with NAP candidates).

Beatty picked up a chair during a debate with Major Owens before the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists three weeks ago and attempted to hurl it at a black man in the audience who'd questioned his veracity. CBTU president Jim Bell had to restrain him and force him to apologize. (CBTU has endorsed Owens.)

When Beatty attempted to assault *Voice* reporter Wayne Barrett at the Board of Elections last year, his associates were unable to restrain him until Bill Gary, Meade Esposito's (white) county organiza-

tion lawyer, said, "All right, Vander, that's enough." Beatty stopped in his tracks.

Beatty's account of his own record and support should be seen for what it is. His brochure claims the endorsement of the Reverend Martin Luther King Sr. From Atlanta, Reverend King explained to the *Voice* through a secretary that he was not aware who Beatty was opposing. Beatty's brochure announces the endorsements of Rabbis Elye Gross, Ben Zion Schaffran, Sandor Katz, and Meyer Lustig; all have been on his senate payroll. Six of the ministers endorsing him endorsed Fred Richmond during his hour of need in the race against Bernard Gifford in 1978. He has yet to file his campaign contributions, so that we can see where his support comes from today.

"This is a joyous and historic occasion," cried Major Owens, announcing his candidacy in tandem with the formation of the Coalition for Empowerment, a slate of 16 independent candidates chaired by Assemblyman Al Vann. "Today, once and for always, we are burying the cult of personality. United, collective leadership is the greatest benefit we can offer our people at this hour of crisis."

What may sound like rhetoric has deep roots and scars in Owen's personal history as architect of the Brownsville Community Council in 1964 and, then, of the Community Development Agency as John Lindsay's commissioner until 1974. To understand the meaning of this congressional race, it is necessary to remember that it was Sam Wright who destroyed everything Owens had built in Brownsville after Owens left for City Hall. And it is necessary to know that Owens returned, in 1974, to purge his community of the scourge of Sam Wright, first by winning his own state senate seat, then by establishing the Central Brooklyn Mobilization to sweep most other offices away from Wright's control, and, finally, by freeing school board 23 at last from the death grip of Wright's corruption.

It is true that the winner of Owens's

race with Beatty may not be black Brooklyn's only congressman. Along the northern and eastern rim of Chisholm's old territory, in the devastated, desperately poor neighborhoods of central Williamsburg, Bushwick, and East New York, Howard Golden's deputy borough president (and Meade Esposito's loyal factotum) Ed Towns, a likable, largely ineffectual politician, stands ready to snatch the 11th congressional district, more Hispanic than black, from a falling Fred Richmond.

But the epic battle is to the south, where the 12th congressional district stretches from its brownstone parlors in Fort Greene across the vast, wounded splendor of Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights, down among the once-grand apartment buildings jammed with large, low-income families in Flatbush, and across the owner-occupied boulevards of East Flatbush into Brownsville's abject desolation. To walk these blocks of stooped, still-Southern gentility and too-often brittle middle age is to wonder what happens to thousands of youngsters coming up on the same broken streets, how they negotiate those first, panic-stricken moments when an adolescent looks beyond his or her home block, and beyond the neighboring blocks, and fears never becoming somebody who amounts to anything. Can political leadership do anything to help youth through that panic and onward to resources and opportunities?

The weight of white cynicism, dismissiveness, and simple neglect in the face of these young black questions is truly awesome. Major Owens has borne that weight, and he bears it now in fighting Vander Beatty, whose minions and blue smoke and mirrors may be the best an ignorant white world deserves. Owens says no. By challenging us to do better he offers us back our dignity, in a coalition able to pose more fundamental demands to the structures of decadence and domination dividing us. Vander Beatty has flourished because we have not met Owens halfway. Owens has been endorsed by Herman

Continued on page 67

SLEEPER

Continued from page 32

Badillo, Bella Abzug, Frank Barbaro, Representative Charles Schumer, John Lindsay, Carol Bellamy, all the best unions. That is not enough.

Beatty flourishes, too, because blacks who should know better are avoiding confronting him, or because they've let themselves be taken in by his manipulations of real grievances, or because, like Mac Holder, boastful now in old age, they've become terminally cynical: "I care only that I have a willing candidate; I don't care what he does between elections, and I've never lost an election, never." But perhaps Holder should consider whether Beatty is the legacy he wants to leave to his people. And perhaps those who have kept quiet,

like Percy Sutton, David Dinkins, Carl McCall, and Charlie Rangel, should think it over, too.

At a Gracie Mansion breakfast for state senators two and a half years ago, Ed Koch strode up to Owens and, towering over him, wagged a finger in his face. "I know you've been criticizing me, and if I were a different kind of guy, you wouldn't be getting any programs out there." Owens chuckles as he recalls the incident. "What he really meant was, shut up or you *won't* be getting any programs!"

Perhaps white society owes Owens an apology, on behalf of Ed Koch. Perhaps influential blacks do too, for letting him go it alone so much of the time. Perhaps we all owe him an important debt. If so, it comes due this month. ■

Vander Beatty's Desperate Gamble

By Jim Sleeper

By the time this appears, readers should know whether Acting Supreme Court Judge Eugene Berkowitz has decided to let a bizarre wave of postelection fraud swamp black Brooklyn's clear choice of Major Owens over Vander Beatty in last month's 12th Congressional District primary. There is no question that thousands of "election day" signatures were forged on voter-registration buff cards. The issue is whether, as Beatty claims, these forgeries were done on election day by people actually voting or, as Owens claims and even some Beatty allies admit, the forgeries were made over the holiday weekend of October 9-11 at the Brooklyn Board of Elections. During that weekend, Beatty and 35 loyalists descended upon the understaffed board to "review" the registration cards. The next day, in an attempt to scuttle Owens's 54-46 per cent victory, Beatty submitted the forgeries to the court as evidence of fraud.

It was a breathtaking gamble. Never in election history had so wide a margin of victory been contested. Beatty tried to convince the judge that enough of the forgeries figured in the race to require a court-ordered special election. Naturally Beatty would use such news to support his claim that Owens had stolen the primary. Since the rerun would have to precede the November 2 general election, the Owens forces would have little time to mobilize against whatever Beatty's war chest might buy. "Look at it this way," said a veteran Board of Elections watcher of Beatty last week. "The man is either going to jail or he's going to Congress."

The almost unbelievable events and allegations surrounding Beatty's suit turn on some simple aspects of the election

process. If a voter votes in the primary of a party other than the one he or she is registered for, that's an irregularity, and the vote is discounted if challenged. If someone else shows up in the voter's place and forges the election-day signature on the registration buff-card, that's an irregularity, too. Traditionally any election won by a slim margin—say 50 votes in an assembly race—may be rerun if there are three times as many irregularities as the margin of victory; we can't know which candidate received which of the "bad" votes, but we do know that if they could be subtracted, as they should be, the race might turn out differently.

In the 55th Assembly District, for example, which overlaps part of the Owens-Beatty turf, Tom Fortune led William Boyland by only 33 votes this year. Boyland canvassers combed the buff cards and on Friday, October 9, submitted specifications for 300 apparently random irregularities, including 25 forgeries. Assuming Fortune cannot prove these votes valid, a special election should be granted.

Given Owens's 2900-vote margin, Beatty would have to prove thousands of irregularities among the votes actually counted and also prove they were part of an Owens conspiracy in order to convince the court they actually made a difference.

When the Owens camp got the first of Beatty's specific allegations of 14,000 irregularities and frauds on Tuesday, October 12, they learned to their considerable amazement that he was claiming 695 forgeries in the 55th A.D. alone. Examining once again the same buff cards they'd just searched the previous Friday for irregularities for Boyland's suit against Fortune, they discovered the hundreds of new forgeries.

In the meantime Carl Butler, an anti-Owens/anti-Boyland-slate candidate who narrowly lost to City Council incumbent Enoch Williams in an area sharing many of the 55th A.D.'s election districts, canvassed the same registration cards on Friday, October 9, and came up with figures on irregularities similar to Boyland's. In an unusual alliance, the two losing candidates from enemy camps filed a joint memorandum with Judge Berkowitz, charging that the forgeries alleged by Beatty had been committed after the election—certainly not by themselves, given their earlier claims, and certainly not by any of the victors (Fortune, Williams, or Owens) who had a stake in the existing results.

All across the 12th C.D., but especially in election districts where Owens had done well, thousands of new forgeries were found, 20 or 30 per election district, several hundred per assembly district. Batches of forgeries appeared to be in the same handwriting across different election districts, suggesting not only that they weren't random, but also that they couldn't physically have been committed on election day itself. And most of the forgeries were found in the front of the election books for each district, so that as one got to names beginning with L or M, they ceased to appear—a strong suggestion that books were taken systematically off the shelves at the Board of Elections. Also, the numbers supposedly written by "inspectors" next to the forged voters' signatures duplicated numbers already appearing elsewhere in the book, next to the legitimate signatures of people who'd actually voted on election day.

By the middle of last week, all fingers pointed toward Beatty. The *Voice* ex-

amined the Board of Election's sign-in sheets for the critical October 9-11 weekend: Beatty, his wife (convicted in 1974 of 52 felony counts of vote fraud in his behalf), five other family members, and at least 35 loyalists graced the Board of Elections over the Columbus Day weekend, when the board was open, for postelection canvassing, with a skeleton crew of employees. No Owens representatives signed in that weekend, their canvassing for irregularities having been limited to the close Boyland loss in the 55th and completed by noon Friday.

Among those signed in as "representing Vander Beatty" and described in the *Voice*'s August 31 analysis of Beatty's machine ("The Battle for Black Brooklyn") were convicted poverty program thieves Bishop David Billings and Caspar Yasar; longtime Beatty lieutenants William T. Lancaster, J. Moise Michel, Linda Sutton, and George Banks; former Beatty staffers James Connolly, Evelyn Williams, Dawn Sinclair, and DeLoris Thomas; and 20 other associates or members of his Bedford Democratic Club. Also signing in for two of the three days was Beatty's mentor and chief campaign strategist, Wesley MacD. Holder.

Owens promptly charged collusion in the weekend forgeries by at least some Board of Election employees. Deputy Chief Clerk Leo Barrile told the *Daily News*, "I don't think that possibly could have happened." Barrile was one of Meade Esposito's most loyal district leaders until the reformers defeated him 1976; his wife Antoinette was a "community aide" on Beatty's state senate payroll from 1978 to 1982. All workers at the Board of Elections are politically ap-

Continued on page 43

SLEEPER

Continued from page 40

pointed, but board employees who spoke to the *Voice* insisted they were utterly incapable of supervising the weekend's sudden influx of people. But that didn't explain why the board hadn't certified Owens's win a few days after the election, as is usually the case, strengthening Owens's hand in court.

Enter Judge Berkowitz, actually a civil court judge temporarily assigned to Supreme Court, and a former member of Queens county leader Donald Manes's Adlai Stevenson Democratic Club. Since virtually all judgeships in Brooklyn and Queens are controlled and dispensed by Meade Esposito and Donald Manes, trials that specially interest these two men are often occasions for extraordinary quirks in judicial temperament. Owens has contended with these quirks for many years. Two of his past state senate opponents were validated by Brooklyn judges as candidates, even though residency and other problems manifestly disqualified them ("Better To Know the Judge than the Law," *Voice*, October 2, 1978). Nor has the Appellate Division, to which Owens would appeal a Beatty victory from Judge Berkowitz, displayed a much fairer track record.

Berkowitz at first seemed hospitable to Beatty's claims. He warned Owens's lawyer Gil Holmes that even a one-to-one ratio of irregularities to Owens's 2900-vote margin wasn't necessary—let alone three-to-one—if Beatty could show enough systematic fraud to "shock the conscience of the court." The warning was absurd; even if Beatty could prove Owens had committed 2800 frauds, the court would have to find that Owens had won and refer the question of fraud to the district attorney.

But as the hearings moved forward, court-watchers were inclined to grant

Judge Berkowitz his exasperation and his strictures, given the complexity and confusion of the case. The key test was to come on Tuesday, October 19, when the Owens people would present careful analysis of 10 representative election districts to prove that the bulk of the forgeries couldn't have occurred during the election itself. The judge couldn't simply ignore this weighty evidence.

Indeed, as the hour of decision approached, observers speculated that the sheer scale of fraud meant that the mercurial Beatty had spun completely out of control of the county organization; his suit might force reruns of races which local regulars on his own slate had won. A regular district leader called the suit "outrageous" and said he didn't like having his area saddled with so much serious fraud: "I may be a hack, but I still have to look at myself in the mirror. If there is a special, I think some of us won't lift a finger for Beatty."

Others thought the whole morass was just a message from Meade Esposito: if Owens dropped by to acknowledge who was boss, Beatty's suit would evaporate. Esposito deeply resents Owens's independence; he called in all his district leaders days before the primary to demand they pull out all stops to defeat him.

For years the Brooklyn organization has eroded the credibility of the borough's electoral system; it has politicized the Board of Elections into incompetence if not criminality. And the courts have handled the resulting cases in a highly questionable manner. In Vander Beatty, the organization does seem to have created the Frankenstein's monster it deserves: if records at the Board of Elections can be falsified freely, en masse, those falsifications might just as freely be set aflame when a criminal investigation gets underway. The Board of Elections had better secure itself immediately and see to its arson insurance.

Owens Beats Beatty 'Fraud' Case

There was general rejoicing last Monday at Major Owens's congressional campaign headquarters when the state Court of Appeals voted 5-2 to overturn the Brooklyn county machine's "play-it-again"-style justice on behalf of its losing candidates. But there were also some muted regrets that no special election would be held to give the Owens camp the chance, as manager Bill Lynch put it, "to kick Vander Beatty's ass from here to kingdom come a second time."

Without question, they were ready. The campaign was deluged with support from people around the city outraged at the Beatty crowd's attempt to make Owens's 54-46 per cent primary victory look rigged by presenting to the courts thousands of signatures forged for that purpose at the Brooklyn Board of Elections after the race. Columns by Sydney Schanberg and Earl Caldwell helped get out the truth, while Congressman Charles Schumer, who's represented much of Owens's district and been with him from the start, plunged into strategy sessions with some regular district leaders in all but open revolt against county leader Meade Esposito. Ed Towns, the regular Democratic congressional nominee from the district next door, boldly endorsed Owens. City Clerk David Dinkins rushed to Owens's side, and Carol Bellamy sent money and readied troops. Ten unions, including Local 1199 of the Hospital Workers and District 1707 AFSCME, promised scores of workers, while volunteers ranging from moderate Democrats in Queens to the Democratic Socialists of America poured into Owens's head-



Acting Justice Eugene Berkowitz

quarters. By Monday regular district leaders brought news that Esposito himself seemed to be backing out on Beatty, leaving him only with Shirley Chisholm's silence and formidable elements of the Hasidic community, the black ministry, and the UFT.

Unfortunately, every government agency capable of monitoring the special rerun had contracted a sudden case of jurisdictional modesty, meaning there was nothing to prevent Beatty from hiring, say, 50 people to vote 20 times each in different election districts using the names of voters who hadn't shown up at the polls in some time. Beatty's camp certainly had such names from its raid on the Board of Elections over the Columbus

Day weekend when the forgeries were made on the registration cards of absentee voters.

So the Court of Appeals decision was a welcome relief because it upheld Owens's original victory, after a hellish two weeks in which Beatty had shown the world once and for all what he is, and what he is capable of doing. Her distaste for election day oversight notwithstanding, District Attorney Elizabeth Holtzman appeared to be pressing ahead with a grand jury investigation of the forgeries Beatty had submitted. The Owens people feel it is only a matter of time before the record of this critical struggle for black electoral independence is set straight completely.

The decision by the state's highest court was a stinging rebuke to acting Supreme Court Justice Eugene Berkowitz and the four judges of the Appellate Division who had upheld his order for a special election—James Neihoff, Frank O'Connor, Seymour Boyers, and Richard Brown, the last three of whom, like Berkowitz, are products of the Queens County regular organization. "Never before have we imposed the sanction of depriving a primary candidate of an election victory absent the showing of that candidate's responsibility for the fraud or misconduct, nor does the record in this case warrant the imposition of such a sanction," declared the majority.

Berkowitz's decision had ignored the overwhelming evidence put into the record by Owens's lawyer, Gil Holmes, that

the forgeries were committed after the primary (when the victor had no incentive to commit them) and therefore had no bearing on the race itself. Owens's other attorney in Albany, Victor Korner, reiterated these arguments, and sharp questioning of Beatty's lawyer by Court of Appeals judges made clear that they had read and listened to the record carefully.

Nor did Berkowitz explain how, if the fraud had been committed on election day, the forgers could have shown up in both the all-white and all-black districts where their work was detected. Or why, if all those cards had been forged during the election, not a single real voter had complained of arriving at the polls to find his or her card already signed.

Major Owens's concern throughout the crisis was that "all this fraud and confusion will discourage black voters who've just begun to turn out." To a Brooklyn weekly *Phoenix* reporter he offered a glimpse of the history within him when he remarked that he felt like he was "in some other country—it's like being in Mississippi." After years battling the organization, part of Owens is used to believing that the courts offer no recourse or remedy. Once again last week it seemed that independent blacks had been remanded to the world of force and fraud in the theft of his victory and the prospect of a shoddy special election. Owens's personal response was to forget the clubhouse judiciary and keep telling the voters the truth.

—Jim Sleeper

Ex-Senator Began Dying Long Ago

By Maurice Carroll

He went from the state Senate to state prison, but when he was shot dead yesterday, Vander Beatty was in the midst of trying to gain a new foothold in politics.

A watchful, heavy-lidded man with a goatee, a silent presence in the Senate, Beatty was a flashy figure on the squalid streets of Bedford-Stuyvesant.

He was jailed after trying — successfully at first — to fix a 1982 congressional election. But, a relentless political practitioner, Beatty, 49, was running this year for the job at the base of the political ladder, Democratic leader in the 57th Assembly District.

In Albany, where he was the Senate's deputy minority leader, reporters liked Beatty, who was approachable and had

a sardonic sense of humor.

In the murky corner world where he operated as a power broker, those who watched him painted a different picture. Jim Sleeper, in his new book, "The Closest of Strangers: Liberalism and the Politics of Race in New York," writes:

"Since white society could not be re-deemed, Beatty seemed to be saying, it might as well be ripped off. With his silver Mercedes, bulging billfolds, expensive suits, licensed revolver and impressive connections, he certainly got that message across."

Born and raised in North Carolina, Beatty was educated there and at New York University, where he later taught. In those years, anti-poverty money was pouring into the slums, and Beatty moved into that quasi-political, ill-mon-

itored and often lucrative world.

He was elected to the Assembly in 1970 and, two years later, moved up to the Senate, getting the leadership job in 1975.

His next planned step was Congress. He ran in 1982 against a fellow senator, Major Owens, for the seat vacated by Shirley Chisholm.

After Owens won by some 3,000 votes, Beatty and a swarm of aides went to the Board of Elections to check voter-registration cards, they said. Instead, opponents charged, Beatty's people manipulated the cards and forged signatures. They made a mess, and seeking to profit from their own misconduct, said it proved the election had been "permeated with fraud" and should be re-run.

A Supreme Court justice agreed. But

the Court of Appeals decided to let the original vote stand.

Later, he was convicted of vote fraud and of racketeering for looting an anti-poverty program. Months afterward, clad in his khaki prison suit, he pleaded guilty to income tax evasion.

Yesterday, before hearing of Beatty's death, Owens had sent him an open letter expressing surprise at his candidacy.

"Every American has a right to pay his debt to society and then move on with his life including running for public office," the congressman wrote, "but instead of quietly sneaking onto the ballot, why not make a 'full disclosure' to the voters? Why don't you acknowledge your crimes and publicly ask to be forgiven? Don't return to public life hiding behind lies and confusion."

Former Senator Slain In Campaign Office

BEATTY from Page 3

"It seemed like a real professional job," said Johnny Crockett, who said he was sitting on the stoop next-door when the shooting occurred. "No yelling or screaming, no arguments and no robbery. All it was was just shots."

Crockett said he saw a tall man — about 6-foot-7 — dressed in blue tank top and jeans, walk out of Beatty's office and then return a few minutes later.

"I was looking eye-to-eye at him, and it looked like he was in a hurry to do something," Crockett said. "I thought he might, you know, be running to catch a bus or something. Then he walks back into the office, and you hear a pop, pop, pop."

"It was real fast, just bing, bang, boom," said another witness, Roy Rollix, 16, who was crossing the street in front of the office when he heard shots.

ty was pronounced dead on arrival.

Beatty's body was later transferred to Bellevue Hospital Center, where it was identified by his brother, a city police officer.

Beatty, who served in the Legislature from 1970 to 1982, was convicted in 1983 of election fraud in connection with his bitter, unsuccessful 1982 run for Congress against a former colleague, Rep. Major Owens.

Beatty was sentenced to serve between 16 and 48 months in prison. He later was sentenced to a 1-to-3-year prison term for tax evasion and 4 years for stealing more than \$200,000 from a community redevelopment program he helped establish. He was released from prison in September, 1985.

Roslyn Kalifowicz-Waletzky, who lives down the block from Beatty's office, said she had followed his career with dismay. "In the first three years



Major Owens Asks, *Who's Stealing Your Vote?*



Only You Can Stop Them this Tuesday

On September 23rd, you voted to send Major Owens to Congress by a 2,900-vote margin—a loud and clear 54–46% victory over his opponent.

On Columbus Day Weekend, the defeated Vander Beatty invaded the Brooklyn Board of Elections with 35 members of his ring, including his wife, convicted of 52 felony counts of vote fraud in his behalf in 1974; convicted forger Caspar Yaspar, and others. Thousands of signatures were forged on voter registration cards to make Democratic Congressional Nominee Owens' victory look rigged.

Last Friday, Beatty used those forgeries to get a special election for this Tuesday, October 26, at your polling place.

We Did It Once—We Can Do It Again!

If you didn't vote last time, go to your poll and see...
was *your* signature forged? Don't let them do it again!

Trust Democratic Congressional Nominee

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