

- A minority department head was approached by a commissioner and was told, essentially, not to do his/her job, because it would cast another minority department head in a bad light. This same department head also has been harassed for treating whites and blacks on an equal basis. It has seemed that minority department heads often come under especially intense fire if they are perceived as not adhering to the race-based agenda of certain commissioners.
- One key Finance Department employee resigned their position after being targeted with racist allegations. While the employee would express valid concerns about financial matters in all county departments, this employee was attacked after examining the finances of certain specific (protected?) departments.

We acknowledge again that the problems of racial inequity still exist and clearly recognize that much more must be accomplished. In Augusta, however, politicians are allowed to use race in a self-serving manner. One of the saddest examples of this cynical practice was demonstrated in our nation's capital. This past summer three commissioners went to Washington, D.C., to testify on behalf of the former Richmond County fire chief. In the course of their testimony, these gentlemen suggested that Augusta is still in the 1960s on black-white issues, still fighting the Civil War. They said that problems reported to be associated with the fire chief were racially motivated, and that Augusta presently has a Grand Jury that is part of a larger, racially-biased conspiracy. They also suggested that it is difficult for someone from a minority to function in this government in a position of power.

It is hard to understand the motivation for these comments about our city. On the surface, the commissioners seemed motivated by a desire to help a friend. That is good and fair under most circumstances. However, in this instance, in order to help their friend these commissioners tarnished the reputation of our whole community. Moreover, just as Augusta as a whole did not benefit from this trip, no cogent argument can be made that even the minority community of Augusta benefited. Our elected officials should have had greater allegiance to the community that elected them. Members of the Special Grand Jury feel that the issue of racial inequity should be discussed in an open and honest manner. We also feel strongly that local concerns should be addressed locally. Our community and its leaders must be committed to equal opportunity for all. If the commissioners who went to Washington felt as strongly as their rhetoric indicated, why have they not shown the same passion at home?

We of the Grand Jury have found (and the commissioners also realize) that prejudice is present within county government and is experienced by both blacks and whites, some of it virulent and long-standing. Few want to acknowledge that these problems exist, much less to confront them. The statements made by our commissioners while in Washington, D.C, suggested that minority employees suffer within our system. However, the Special Grand Jury found during testimony that there are several work environments in the county government where the opposite is true. Racial double standards should never be tolerated.

### III. The Structure of the Government