

May 26, 1991

Dear Friend:

We are outraged at the pattern of racist behavior which has become all too frequent in our Boston City Council chambers. Last Thursday there was a disgraceful concerted attack against Councilor Charles Yancey by three white male public servants (sic), James Kelly, Albert O'Neil and Donald Murray. This attack was a deliberate and conscious act whose purpose was to legitimize any and all blatantly racist acts by high public officials, giving an unconcealed message that such acts will be tolerated for all who would do likewise.

If racists can, with immunity, openly and brazenly attack an African-American city councilor in the council chambers, then none of us is safe anywhere, and there is an open invitation for racist, sexist, neo-fascist hoodlums to destroy all the democratic and human rights we have struggled so hard to achieve.

We call on your support to join our campaign to rapidly demonstrate that our sense of outrage is widely shared in the community. We are circulating a petition which we hope you can

The Boston Globe

Discourse turns coarse at council

By John Ellement
GLOBE STAFF

The Boston City Council achieved a new standard of political discourse yesterday as two members exchanged fighting words and a Boston police union official physically confronted a councilor who has been critical of the department.

The Council's Public Safety Committee was hearing testimony on an order pro-

posed by Councilor David Scondras (Fenway) that calls for an outside agency to conduct a management audit of the Boston Police Department. Scondras' proposed order was triggered in part by a recent series in the Globe that found the department does a relatively poor job of solving crime in comparison with other US cities.

The incident involved Councilors Charles Yancey of Dorchester and James Kelly of South Boston, and marked the sec-

ond straight day the two had exchanged heated words.

Councilor at Large Albert O'Neil had just abruptly ended the hearing with a slam of the gavel, a move that shut off a series of questions being posed by Yancey.

O'Neil was standing to the right of the council president's podium in the council chambers and Yancey walked toward him and began protesting O'Neil's actions.

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Councilor James Kelly ripped off his glasses, stepped toward Yancey, and said, "C'mon, let's go."

Kelly then stopped and pointed a finger into Yancey's face while saying, "You're a fucking asshole."

"You're a fucking asshole," Yancey replied.

Kelly responded: "No. You're a fucking asshole!"

O'Neil stepped between the two, telling them the confrontation was over, but not before delivering a verbal shot at Yancey.

"You try to disrupt every hearing," O'Neil said to Yancey. "You know what you are to me? You're nothing, and you're a nothing. You

ought to spend some time here once in a while instead of going to school. Put some time in here. I'm going into your district when you run. I'll tell the people who you are."

At that point, Donald Murray, president of the Boston Police Patrolmen's Association, walked into the group of lawmakers and stepped in front of Yancey, with whom he has feuded repeatedly because of Yancey's critical view of the police.

Towering over Yancey and with just a few inches separating them, Murray called the councilor a fraud and criticized him for accepting a scholarship to Harvard University that was funded by developer Jerome Rappaport.

Murray said: "You're nothing but a carpetbagger. You're a fraud.

You're a fraud. You're a fraud. You are a fraud. You are a disgrace. You are a disgrace."

Yancey's replies could not be heard, but as Murray castigated the councilor, Yancey staffer Joyce Holland became visibly upset and demanded that Murray identify himself. Speaking to no one in particular, she then decried the situation that was unfolding before just a handful of spectators in City Hall.

"I've never seen such a zoo. It is a zoo; it really is a zoo," she said.

Murray, Yancey separated

An unidentified man then came and separated Murray and Yancey and pulled the union president out of the hearing room, with Holland verbally sparring with Murray as he

moved into the hallway.

At about that time, Councilor Thomas Menino (Hyde Park) arrived, seeking to calm Yancey, and the incident came to an end. No punches were thrown.

In a telephone interview afterward, Yancey said that he will not back down from asking questions at committee hearings and he suggested that O'Neil and Murray would benefit from taking courses themselves.

"I'm very pleased to have had the opportunity to study at the Kennedy School of Government," said Yancey, who is studying police management theories. "My only regret is that people like Don Murray and Dapper O'Neil are not doing some research."

About a half-hour after the con-

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Kelly, Yancey, union head in verbal clash

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frontations, O'Neil saw a reporter as he was walking through the City Council chambers. A grin creasing his face, he said, "Come any time."

Yesterday's battle had been preceded by a brief but heated skirmish Wednesday between Yancey and Kelly over a resolution introduced by Yancey.

The resolution for a six-month moratorium on mortgage foreclosures, prompted by Globe stories on alleged lending scams that have victimized elderly and minority residents, was dismissed by Kelly as "another one of those political things." Kelly contended that some foreclosures may be legitimate and not all are part of "some racist scam."

"Stop playing politics," Kelly concluded, scornfully shaking Yancey's resolution. "Don't put this garbage before me."

Bounding to his feet, Yancey responded no

less hotly that the mortgage scams had been well-documented and his resolution was merely "a request that the private sector do the right thing... There are people in my district who are charged 24 percent [interest] for shoddy workmanship," he said angrily.

Other reasons for hearing

Besides the recent Globe series on the Boston police, yesterday's hearing had also been prompted by a television report about a lack of effort by law enforcement to arrest people with outstanding warrants; by a Finance Commission report that found lack of management controls at the department; and by a recent survey of 114 people who reported hate crimes, 37 percent of whom said the police did a poor job of solving them.

Superintendent Joseph V. Saia Jr., chief of detectives, strongly defended the department and repeated its criticism of the Globe series as flawed reporting. He also said the department's Community Disorders Unit, which investigates hate

crimes, has been a model for police departments nationwide.

Saia said there was no need for an outside management audit, in part because Mayor Flynn recently appointed a panel headed by attorney James D. St. Clair to examine the agency.

O'Neil, who is chairman of the Public Safety Committee, ordered the proposal be sent to the full council with the recommendation that it not be passed into law. He also said he will amend the proposal to forbid the city from spending any money on the St. Clair panel.

The matter is scheduled to be taken up by the full council on June 5. Scondras said in a later interview that if he is convinced the St. Clair panel is independent and is able to fully examine the complaints registered against the department he would consider dropping his proposal.

Don Aucoin of the Globe staff contributed to this report.