



**WHO'S FOR MAYOR?:** The last time around everyone wanted to be mayor. Now it seems different. There have been a stunning lack of murmurs of interest, toes dipped in the water, fingers held up to the wind.

The explanation for this has little to do with any wonders of the Barry administration (there have been few and they are drifting into history); it has a

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**DC NEWS AND COMMENT**  
Sam Smith

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lot to do with the nature of DC politics, which is, at its heart, an incumbentocracy. Barry has so far avoided serious trouble over various suggestions of impropriety on his part and not enough people seem to show much interest in the thesis that the number of his subordinates who have gotten in trouble reflects discredit on his ability to govern. Further, the fact that many of the major social and economic problems of the city are being either ignored or covered up with rhetoric and showboating appears to be an irrelevancy to much of DC.

My thinking is that DC is in an early stage of an era that once was used to describe Philadelphia: corrupt and contented. Never have I seen in this town so many so smug about so little. This sort of attitude does not change easily. In Philadelphia's case it lasted 69 years.

At the present time, the only person who might hope to win against Barry, and who deserves to, is John Wilson. There are others who might attempt it, such as Charlene Jarvis or John Ray. But the only possible reason for voting for them is the one cited by Mae West. She said that when faced with a choice between two evils she always picked the one she hadn't tried yet.

Wilson, on the other hand, is the single most interesting politician in town. Although the City Paper dismissed him the other day as a Richard Pryor of politics, those who have been represented by John know



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# DC REPORT CARD

Here's our monthly scorecard on the city council and the mayor. Generally we give two points plus or minus for a vote or mayoral action and one point plus or minus for a public position taken without doing anything or for a bill introduced. On especially important bills we give four points plus or minus. Listed below are the 1985 grades plus the cumulative grades since we began the report card in 1984. A grade of C or score of 0 means the politician did right about half the time. A politician with a + score votes right more often than not; while one with a - score votes wrong more often than not. Here are this month's issues:

**HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY:** The council voted to override the mayor's veto of a bill that gives the council the right to approve projects of the Housing Finance Agency. This is a rare and welcome exception to the council's granting excessive authority to the mayor. Now if they would only take over the role of the zoning commission. . . . Only two councilmembers opposed the override: Polly Shackleton and John Ray lose two points as a result, as does the mayor.

**RENT CONTROL EXTENSION:** Carol Schwartz gets a point for adding her support to the list of those (see last month) supporting extension of the rent control bill.

**AUTOMATIC PHONE SELLING:** Polly Shackleton gets a point for introducing legislation that would ban the use of automated dialing or push-button telephone systems with prerecorded messages to solicit sales or request survey information.

**DEPOSIT BILL:** Hilda Mason gets a point for reintroducing her bottle deposit bill.

**ART IN BUILDINGS:** David Clarke gets a point for his bill that would require that 1% of construction funds for new and substantially renovated District government buildings be used for the acquisition or commission of art work to be displayed in or incorporated into the buildings.

**INDIVIDUAL HOUSING ACCOUNTS:** John Ray gets a point for his bill that would set up a system of individual housing accounts (a local parallel to IRAs), in which individuals and married couples could place up to \$3000 a year (up to \$15,000) in tax-free deposits.

**ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING COMMISSION:** Wilhelmina Rolark gets a point for her bill to establish an alternative sentencing commission to study various alternatives to incarceration.

**PRISON CONSTRUCTION:** Marion Barry and John Wilson lose a point for supporting construction of a new prison in DC. Wilhelmina Rolark gains a point for opposing it. (Please turn to page 42)

NAME	1985 SCORE	CUMUL SCORE	1985 GRADE	CUMUL GRADE
ROLARK	8	2	A	C
CLARKE	7	3	A	C
MASON	6	21	A	B
WILSON	6	12	A	B
WINTER	4	-2	B	C
SMITH	3	-3	B	C
SHACKLETON	2	-8	B	C
SPAULDING	2	-18	B	D
JARVIS	2	-23	B	D
RAY	0	-12	C	D
SCHWARTZ	-3	-3	D	D
KANE	-4	2	D	C
CRAWFORD	-4	-24	D	D
BARRY	-2	-32	D	F
COUNCIL AV	2	-4		

there is a lot more to him than his wit. He, after all, represents the one polyglot ward in the city running from Georgetown to the ghetto, from the Southwest condos to the street heating ducts. A remarkable variety of constituents think highly of Wilson. He is, no doubt about it, very much of a practical politician. And there are some solid reasons why he should not be supported, including his backing of new prison construction and his flirting with a return of capital punishment. But at the moment he seems the strongest and best alternative to Barry that has surfaced.

The odds, of course, are stacked against anyone beating Barry, but even so, it is useful to have a campaign in which someone will help provide the framework for developing a successful alternative. If nothing else, it slows the entropy of the public spirit.

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**RENT CONTROL GAMES:** Don't be surprised at what happens to the rent control bill as it makes its way through the council. Just because council members say they favor extension doesn't mean that crippling amendments won't be snuck in as time goes on. A case in point: talk of defining minimum rent levels for rent control, a device that would have the effect of reducing the number of units covered and, coincidentally, doing it heavily in Ward Three, which to a number of councilmembers is politically expendable.

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**THERE HE GOES AGAIN:** Sterling Tucker, once you add in his non-competitive contract for \$24,500 to advise the lottery on marketing and training, is now up to nearly \$100,000 in city consulting goodies over the past year. Says Tucker: "Somebody in the public may get the impression that I am feasting off the city. I am not. I give full service and more."

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 (Please turn to page 42)



## Roses & Thorns

**THORNS TO MARION BARRY** for planning to spend \$500,000 of city funds on a Chinese arch, with matching aid from the People's Republic, without getting the approval of the people who have to walk under it, namely residents and business folk of Chinatown.

**THORNS TO DC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT FLORETTA MCKENZIE** for shutting down a Georgetown shelter for the homeless (in two vacant school buildings) on extremely short notice — after getting complaints from local residents about noise and other problems.

**ROSES TO THE DISTRICT WEEKLY** in the Washington Post for introducing some real hard news into what too often has been a slush feature-filled section. The Weekly now has a crime log, reports of house sales and zoning actions. Small town papers do this sort of thing all the time, but the biggies seem to think city dwellers don't care what happens down the street. One further suggestion along these lines: a daily box explaining the cause of various traffic jams that readers may have found themselves inexplicably caught in the day before.

**ROSES TO THE HOWARD SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM** for its Community News, a paper that covers 14 communities in its area. A very professional looking and reading job. Too bad they can't cover the whole city.