AT RECENT CONVENTION

NAACP secures voting rights

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Georgia state Sen. Julian Bond was one of a number of distinguished speakers at the 73rd Annual NAACP Convention held June 28 - July 2 in Boston, according to a report by Lafayette chapter secretary, Louella Cook.

The convention attracted an estimated 15,000 people including some 4500 delegates from across the nation, according to Ms. Cook. Besides Bond, other well-known speakers included Walter F. Mondale, former vice-president of the United States; Dick Gregory, author and civil rights activist; Margaret Bush Wilson, chair of the NAACP National Board of Directors and Benjamin Hooks, NAACP executive director.

According to Ms. Cook, one of the highlights of the convention was the signing of the extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by President Reagan.

An issue which received wide attention at the convention was the high percentage of unemployment within the black community. In a special address to the convention, Cook said that Hooks pointed out that the issue has reached "epidemic proportions" and said "this is the worst of times for most black Americans."

In his speech Hooks said that black adults are now experiencing the highest rate of unemployment since the Great Depression.

"About one out of every six black males is now without work, almost three times the rate of white male unemployment," he said. "In most urban centers, more than half of black youths are unemployed, compared with less than one-fifth of white youths," he added.

Hooks called on blacks everywhere to target their resources in 1982 to protect as many civil rights advances as possible.

"In the difficult years of 1982 with a new Administration taking office and a climate of conservatism sweeping the nation's capital, the NAACP has fought to protect the gains that the civil rights movement has made in the past," he said.

Another issue addressed at the convention was the Haitian refugees.

In September, Washington announced a new policy by which the United States and Haiti entered into agreements permitting the Coast Guard to interdict any Haitian vessel thought to be carrying illegal immigrants and turn the vessel back.

Hooks pointed out that this was the first time in U.S. history that such a policy has been carried out.

"This was an opportunity for the Administration to demonstrate its lack of sensitivity to issues affecting black people," he said.

Other issues addressed at the convention, according to Ms. Cook, were the dismantling of federal jobs programs, the slow growth of elected black officials.

Another highlight of the convention, according to Ms. Cook, was the solving of the crisis in Mississippi. This involved a lawsuit against the Association in the Mississippi boycott, Claiborne Hardware vs. NAACP. The Association was successful in getting the $1,250,000 damage award vacated. The case went to the Supreme Court which reversed the funding of liability against the Association.

The Lafayette delegate shares her account of the convention.

The Lafayette delegate share her experience for the kids," said Ms. Cook. "We rented a van, drove to Boston and made stops in New York, Philadelphia and Washington to see some historical sites," she added.

Ms. Cook said the money for the trip came from private donations by Lafayette organizations to the local NAACP.

"And we had an overwhelming response from black businessmen in the community," she said.

Before the close of the convention, NAACP leaders set goals for 1983 which includes combating the retreats that the federal government has made in civil rights. Included are voting rights, economic concerns, school desegregation, housing and the enforcement of civil rights requirements in the use of federal funds.

The 1983 annual convention will be held in New Orleans.