

Black business, politics mixed—often in Jewish alliance

If William L. "Little Willie" Adams has some important business at hand, he may call Councilman Clarence H. "Du" Burns at 3 o'clock in the morning and ask the confidant of Mayor Schaefer to be at his Hanlon Park home for breakfast.

For about two decades now, he also has been able to call everybody who has occupied the Government House in Annapolis, particularly Blair Lee 3d, Marvin Mandel and Spiro T. Agnew.

And although many politicians and journalists privately speculate that Mr. Adams' influence on appointments in Annapolis peaked with the Lee administration, his clout continues in Baltimore city, where he is a friend of Mayor Schaefer and, particularly, of Irvin Kovens, the man the chief prosecutor at the 1977 Mandel trial described as the "single most powerful and influential figure behind the scenes in state and local politics."

Irvin Kovens, the man who helped bring to power Millard Tawce, Michael Grady, Philip Goodman, Spiro Agnew, William Donald Schaefer and Marvin Mandel, took an interest in Mr. Adams, too.

"He was the guy who went to Agnew, Schaefer and Mandel and said, 'Look, things are changing, you have to take this man Adams seriously,'" one longtime observer of Maryland politics comments.

Now, Mr. Adams says politics is over for him.

"I'm through. I'm not involved with Hughes. I was obligated in a certain way to him because he had given me a certain amount of appointments, but it's all over now."

Whether it really is over is debatable, particularly since he lost the first round at home. He tried to persuade his wife, Councilwoman Victorine Q. Adams (D, 4th) to return from politics, but she told him she wanted to be a candidate in this year's election—for one more time.

The first time Mr. Adams recalls showing any interest in politics was in 1935, when Harry W. Nice, immediately after his election as governor, appointed two black liquor inspectors for Baltimore.

Mr. Adams was impressed by Mr. Nice, a Republican. "Democrats hadn't done anything for blacks," he recalls.

Yet, when Mr. Adams joined his first political club around 1940, it was a Democratic club headed by Loyal Randolph, who would later serve as a delegate for a decade.

Mr. Adams' entrance into politics occurred at a time of historic change.

Blacks, who had tended to back the Republican party since the time of Abraham Lincoln, were joining the Democratic party of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in increasing numbers throughout the nation.

In Baltimore, Tom Smith, a Druid Hill avenue hotel owner and the black sub-boss of the white Rainsin-Gorman-Mahon-Kelly Democratic machine, had died in 1938.

It was a major loss for the machine. For decades, Tom Smith had sponsored picnics for black Republicans on election days, taking literally thousands of them to Brown's Cove, on the Eastern Shore. The buses and boats would leave before the polls opened and return after they closed.

In return, Mr. Smith, at various times, held a franchise for numbers rackets and prostitution in black Baltimore. The white power structure also helped purge his police record of a conviction for tampering with ballot boxes—in which he is said to have taken the rap for white politicians—and an arrest in a fight in which a man was slain.

In the late 1930's, another significant change occurred in Baltimore politics. Jews were becoming increasingly active in seeking office and memberships on governmental boards.

James H. (Jack) Pollack had been a rising boss since the 1930's, and in 1950, Irvin Kovens entered the political arena.

He soon fell afoul of Jack Pollack and started a political career of his own that would make him one of the most powerful men in Maryland.

Mr. Adams had known the Kovens family in East Baltimore and he and Irvin Kovens had had business dealings through the 1940's. Now their relationship also developed into a political one, with one ethnic friend complementing the other.

In 1954, Harry A. Cole, a young lawyer, decided to run as a Republican for the state Senate seat in Jack Pollack's Democratic stronghold.

With the help of Mr. Kovens, Mr. Adams and the *Afro-American* newspaper, he won, becoming the first black senator in Maryland history.

Four years later, the Pollack machine would take his seat away, but with a black candidate. For the next decade and more, West Baltimore's Fourth district would be a battleground for the Pollack organization and the Adams-Kovens combine.

Mr. Cole, now a judge on the Maryland Court of Appeals, had been in 1951 among the incorporators of H. G. Parks, Inc., a sausage firm largely bankrupted by Mr. Adams.

Henry G. Parks, Jr., the firm's president, himself became involved in politics—through Mr. Adams' political club.

In 1963, the sausage executive ran for City Council and defeated Max Alpert, then president of the Trenton Democratic Club, headquarters of the Pollack machine. He resigned six years later because of concern over possible conflicts of interest.

Even though Mr. Parks' council work has been hailed by both Mayor Schaefer and Thomas J. D'Alesandro 3d, the former mayor, he now looks back to his years in politics with a degree of regret.

"I hate to say it, but my visibility didn't help in the marketplace," he says.

That seems to be part of the reason why he now is content with being a professional director, a board member of many national companies, and dodges job offers in government.

Some of those offers have been substantial: Both the Lee and Venetian gubernatorial campaigns last year tried to interest him in the lieutenant governor's slot on their tickets, and he was repeatedly offered the post of secretary of economic and community development in the Lee cabinet. Governor Hughes also considered him for a cabinet post.

If Mr. Kovens was instrumental in opening doors for Mr. Adams, so was Mr. Parks, who had the kind of sophistication the former numbers king lacked in his early political dealings.

Another influential friend of Mr. Adams is his wife's cousin, Allen Quille.

He is a parking magnate who operates 22 garages and lots in the city and has current bids in for handling parking at the Atlanta airport and at several governmental complexes in Washington.

A Catholic, Mr. Quille is the only black vice president of the Jewish National Fund. He also is a life member of the Zionist Organization of America and scores of other civic and charitable groups. Currently, he is in the midst of a \$2.4 million fund-raising drive to rebuild St. Francis Academy, a Catholic school in East Baltimore.

His office walls are covered with pictures—many of them autographed—of him with people like Jimmy Carter, Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D, Mass.) and Menachem Begin, prime minister of Israel.

There also are autographed pictures of Donald D. Pomerleau, the Baltimore police commissioner, who is a golfing friend, and the deputy commissioner, Bishop Rob-

inson, the highest ranking black in the department. "To Allen Quille, a great friend," the Robinson autograph reads.

Mr. Quille was instrumental in the appointment of Mr. Robinson, who is regarded highly by his fellow officers.

The parking czar does not want to take the credit, however, and says of Mr. Robinson, "He just happened to be in the right place at a right time with the right people."

Which also has happened to Mr. Quille. In 1976, he formed a partnership with another politically influential Baltimorean, Victor Frenkil, the contractor, to build an eight-story parking garage in the 100 block Gay street, across from the World Trade Center. The city financed them with a \$2.7 million off-street parking loan and funneled \$500,000 worth of urban renewal bond money to the project.

The city later gave the Quille-Frenkil partnership eight more years to pay off the loan, when they complained that business had been bad because of delays in Inner Harbor construction.

In 1974, the city switched its lease agreement for the Memorial Stadium parking lot to the Quille firm from Maryland Sportservice, Inc., a Buffalo-based company. The latter offered terms identical to the Quille company's, but the Board of Estimates decided that the 14 years the out-of-state firm had handled stadium parking were "enough."

Both Mr. Quille and Mr. Adams say it is the former who owns and operates Quille's Parking Center, under which name the firm does business.

But Maryland tax records also list another firm—Quille Parking Lots, Inc., whose president is reported to be Allen Quille and whose secretary-treasurer is Mr. Adams.

"That firm is inactive. I just keep the corporation name because I may need it," Mr. Quille said in an interview last month, shortly after returning from Israel, where he dedicated the Martin Luther King Memorial Forest.

"Where I am today, some Jew guy always helped me. It's as simple as that," Mr. Quille explained, identifying Allick A. Resnick, the city lawyer and one of the leaders of the World Zionist Organization, as a particularly close friend.

Even though Mr. Quille and Mr. Parks have wide influence on their own, "Adams is the godfather, there is no question about it," Walter S. Orlinsky, the City Council president, puts it.

He has helped dozens of aspiring politi-

cians in their careers—including Senator Robert L. Douglass (D, 45th) and Councilman Burns.

Such help is not easy to forget. Consider the recent City Council controversy over whether a McDonalds restaurant should be permitted on land Mr. Adams owns in partnership with two other investors, near Mondawmin Mall.

The restaurant would have been operated by an old business associate of his, but the venture was so vocally opposed by a group of area residents, spearheaded by Senator Verda F. Welcome (D, 40th), that a West Baltimore councilman who was to introduce and fight for the McDonalds bill backed out.

Enter Councilman Burns, an East-sider, who thought Mr. Adams was handicapped by the fact that his wife is a councilwoman and who had been told that the Adams partnership's Metro Plaza nearby had lost \$34,000 the previous year.

Explains Mr. Burns: "Willie is a friend of mine, a very, very close friend of mine ever since he came to Baltimore, even before he made a dime. Victorine could have helped anybody but him. I just wanted to give him the opportunity so that courts could decide."

The McDonalds bill was rammed through. Eventually, though, the courts did decide—against Mr. Adams.

How much clout Mr. Adams has in the Schaefer administration—where the planning commission chairman, George L. Jude, is an old political and business associate—was illustrated last fall.

Julius Sobor, who has operated his Frolic Cafe for 31 years in the 1400 block Pennsylvania avenue, requested permission to move it to the other end of the block in the Upton renewal area.

But Mr. Adams or his wife, who is the area's councilwoman, owns the buildings that house two competing bars on the block.

One of the bars is licensed to Mr. Quille. The other is licensed to Mr. Randolph, the former delegate, who in 1977 co-sponsored a bill that would have forbidden bar owners whose properties are condemned for urban renewal to relocate.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Adams opposed Mr. Sobor's request.

At Mr. Adams' invitation, Mayor Schaefer toured the area. He also sent a representative to testify against Mr. Sobor's application before the Liquor Board.

The Liquor Board ruled in Mr. Adams' favor—though Mr. Sobor won in court.

Examples of Mr. Adams' influence at



William L. Adams
... a phone call to the top

the state level during the Mandel and Lee years abound. Here are two:

• In 1973, when the entrepreneur bought the old Sears, Roebuck store at Mondawmin with two other investors, including Mr. Kovens's son-in-law, the state signed a \$75,000-a-year lease to relocate the city branch of the State Motor Vehicle Administration there. Other state agencies—such as the Human Relations Commission—also moved to the building, which adjoins the separately owned Mondawmin Mall.

• A 1977 probe by *The Sun* showed that the Maryland Lottery Commission had doled out dozens of lucrative daily "Numbers Game" outlets to political figures—including relatives and associates of Mr. Adams and Mr. Kovens. As a result of the report, a lottery commissioner with ties to Mr. Adams was replaced by acting Governor Lee—who named another Adams ally.