

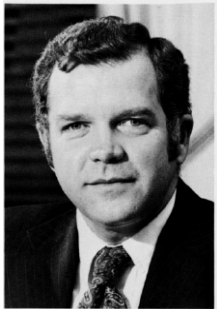
Flashback

1977 - 1980



Georgia Department of Human Resources

Last month, we launched our first of series of communications entitled Flashback. This series will help us to celebrate the history of DHR and recognize its stages of progression. The previous issue highlighted the founding fathers and conception of DHR. In this issue, we will turn another page in DHR's story as we transition towards the becoming the new Department of Human Services. Join with me as we recapture moments from our past. Some information will refresh your memory; some will leave you speechless.



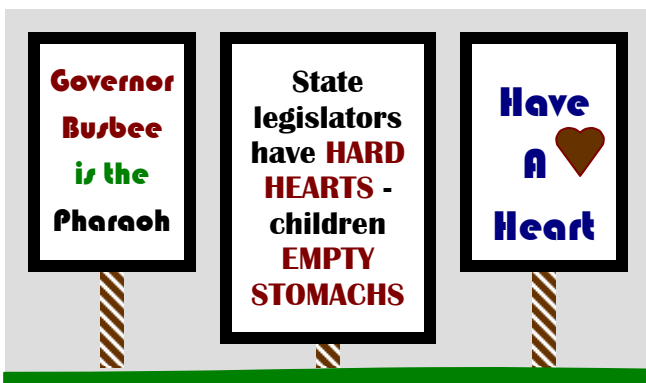
William Douglas Skelton, M.D.
Commissioner
1977-1980

In January, 1977, William Douglas Skelton, M.D. a baseball player once scouted by the New York Yankees leaves his lucrative post as a Psychiatrist to serve as DHR's third Commissioner. When questioned about his career change, Skelton's passion for the job became clear. Skelton, "My experiences working with the prison population after my psychiatric training, dealing with the kids the drug addicts – they touched me" (Source: *Atlanta Constitution*, 9/30/77). In 1980, Skelton decided to pursue his teaching aspirations; and resigned as Commissioner after serving two years. Thirty-one years later, Skelton remains with DHR serving as the District 9-1 District Health Director.

The Coldest Winter Ever: 1977

In January 1977, Atlanta was facing one of the coldest winters it had ever seen. The unusually low temperatures led Atlanta into an energy crisis. Additionally, Atlanta Gas Light was within 48 hours of running out of its gas reserves. The Georgia House Industry Committee proposed a bill to give Governor Busbee power to regulate temperatures in homes in case of an energy emergency.

During the energy crisis, the welfare program experienced a nearly \$3 million dollar budget cut. At the same time, DHR was swamped by a huge influx of food stamp applicants. At least 40 people were waiting in line to apply for food stamps each morning before the office opened. Some applicants had to wait as long as three weeks for relief. The increase of customers and decrease of funding led to a series of protests at the State Capitol. The protestors held signs which read:



Pictured above is a sample of coupon clippings for basic necessities from this era.

continued...

Flashback

DHR Timeline:



"Throwback" Fact from last series-

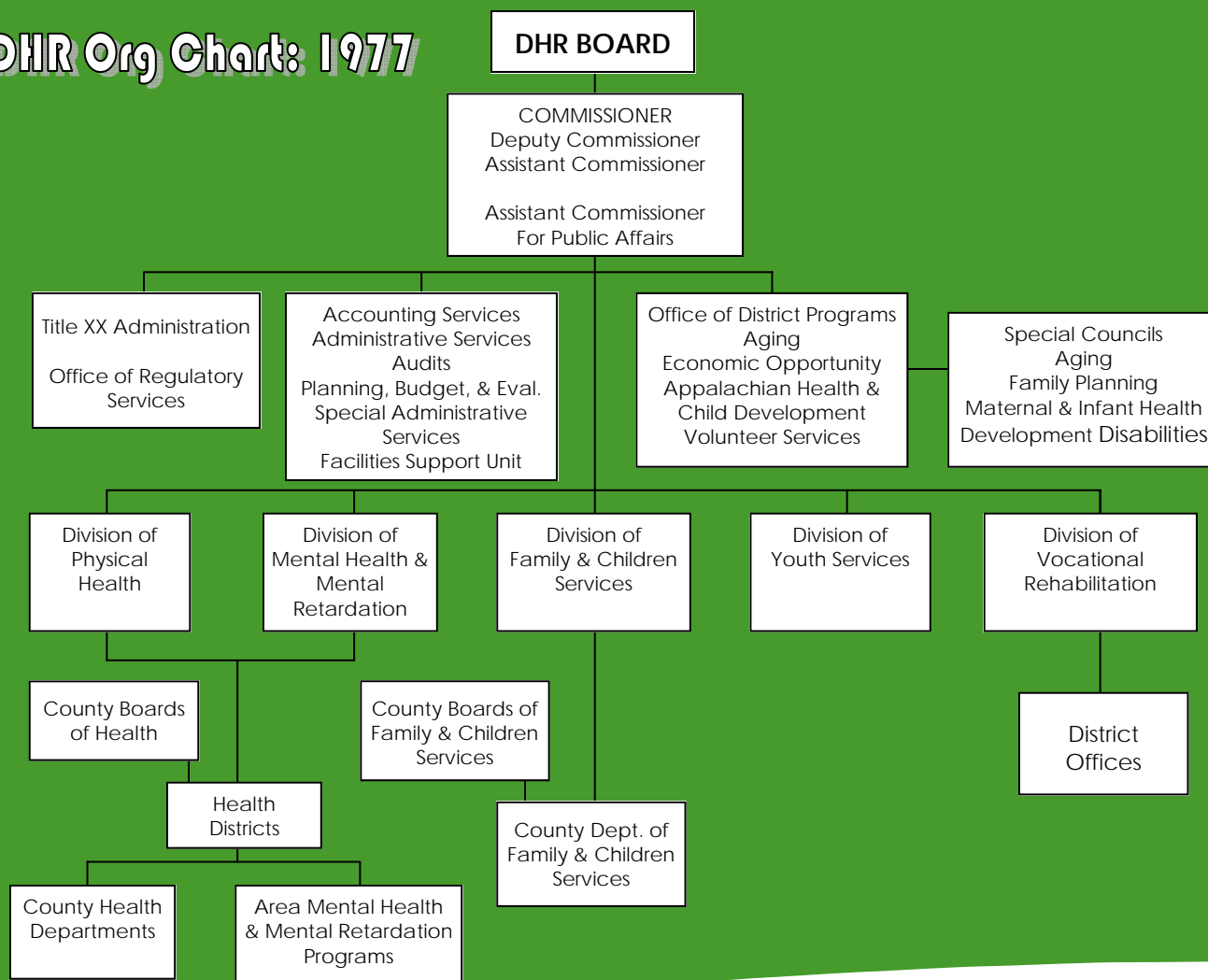
1973 – Elgin Carmichael was DHR's first African American board member. He was appointed to the DHR Board in 1972. Although Mr. Carmichael passed in 2001, his daughter, Patricia Kinnebrew followed in his legacy as a civil servant for DHR for the past 22 years.

Pictured left: Elgin Carmichael, Frankie Carmichael, Patricia Kinnebrew, President Jimmy Carter

1977 - Georgia became the first state to compile a report categorizing diseases and death rates by geographic area. The report was called "Georgia Disease Patterns of the '70s." This report recognized an upswing of lung cancer in Georgia's coastal counties. This revelation led to an investigation by DHR and CDC into some of the air-polluting industries in the Brunswick area.

1977 - DHR received a \$3 million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare for a statewide family planning project. The grant helped to provide: birth control, fertility, sterility, and contraceptive counseling to women in need throughout the state.

DHR Org Chart: 1977



"Skelton has the best blend of professional experience & proven leadership." Busbee (1977)

Flashback

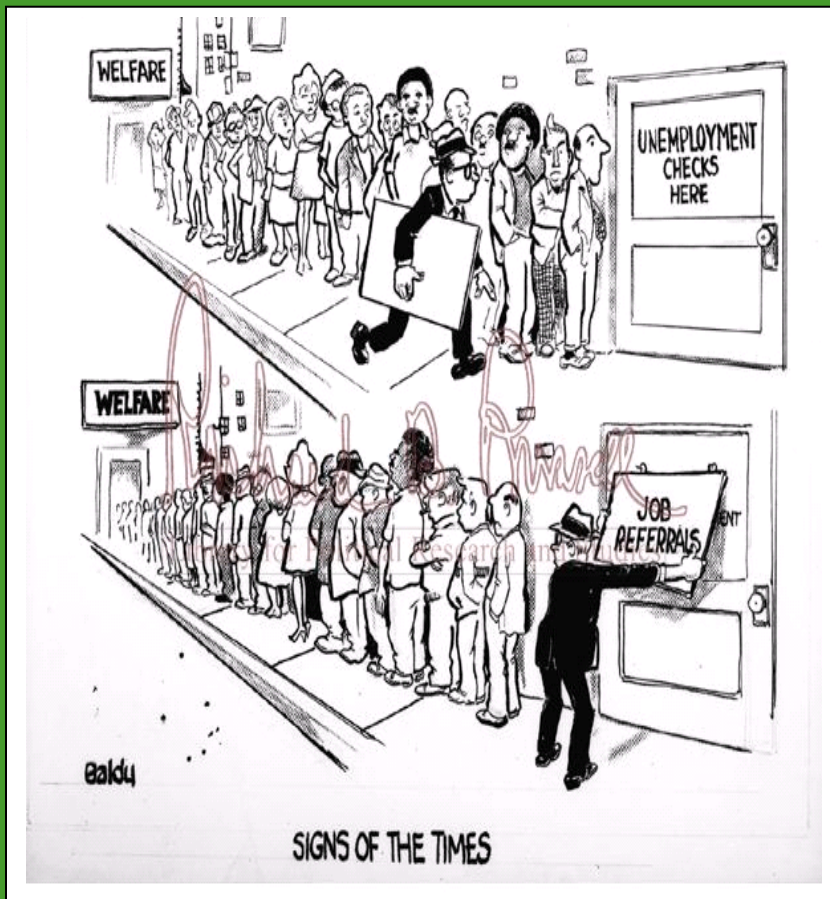
DHR Timeline (continued)

- 1978** - Child Support Recovery Enforcement collected \$5.2 million in child support; up from \$3.4 million the previous year.
- 1978** - 15 Georgia Food Stamp Agents were sentenced for Food Stamp Fraud. The agents plead guilty for trading food stamps for drugs, cars, jewelry, television sets and clothing.
- 1978** - Georgia and Alabama are tied for 50th place, nationally, in aid to the poor; the maximum amount for a family of four was \$148 dollars.
- 1979** - The Georgia House committee voted to remove Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services from DHR and place the functions of VR under a new department.
- 1980** - Joseph N. Edwards appointed as fourth Commissioner of DHR; (3/19/80) →



In the late 1970's there were two papers responsible for reporting on government agencies; the Atlanta Constitution and The Journal. DHR related issues were highlighted with news stories and photographic depictions on multiple occasions.

Public Perception of DHR:



The following is a photographic depiction by Clifford Baldowski with the Atlanta Constitution. This drawing speaks to the general public perception of DHR from October, 1975 (left).

Atlanta Constitution, [Signs of the times / Baldy 1975 Oct. 7] The Clifford "Baldy" Baldowski cartoon depicts two scenes. In the first scene, a line of people wait outside a door labeled "Unemployment checks here." A door in the background is labeled "Welfare." In the second frame, a man have posted a sign that says "job referrals" over the unemployment sign, and the line of people has turned around to face the welfare door.

Clifford H. "Baldy" Baldowski Editorial Cartoons. Courtesy of the Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, The University of Georgia Libraries.

"Our people need a welfare system that treats people with decency." Carter (1977)

Flashback

Across the country... 1977 At-A-Glance

Did you Know ...

The previous pages include factual information regarding DHR in the late 70's to early 80's. To offer a more complete picture of this era, here are some facts of interest as it relates to economic and entertainment industries. During the year of 1977:

1. The average cost of new house was \$49,300.00.
2. The average income was \$ 15,000.00 per year.
3. The Oakland Raiders beat Minnesota Vikings, 32-14 at Superbowl XI in Pasadena, California.
4. The first Apple II computer goes on sale.
5. The World Trade Center in New York City was completed.
6. The TV Mini Series "Roots" was aired on ABC winning top audience figures, 9 Emmys and a Golden Globe. Alex Haley, author of Roots, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize this year.
7. "The King" Elvis Presley dies at the age of 42 from a heart attack.
8. A slow moving storm produced five to nine inch rains across northern Georgia causing the Toccoa Dam to burst. As the dam collapsed, the waters rushed through the Toccoa Falls Bible College killing 39 people and injuring 60 in less than 5 minutes.
9. The #1 song of the year was *Tonight's The Night* by Rod Stewart.
10. Martin Luther King's assassin, James Earl Ray, escaped from prison. He was recaptured 3 days later.

Until next time...

Thank you for taking this journey into the past. By reflecting upon the early years of DHR, it is our hope that you will have a better understanding of the advances we have made and challenges we continue to face as an agency. A lot has changed, some things have not.

To the employees who started with DHR between the years of 1977-1980, we salute you for your continued service and dedication. We ask that all employees send your comments, thoughts, and any facts relating to the next era of communications (1981 - 1985) to dhrflashback@dhr.state.ga.us.

Thank you!

Sources: Atlanta Constitution Archives; Atlanta-Fulton Central Library; Music Outfitters Online - 1977, Georgia Official and Statistical Register, The People History Online-1977, History Orb Online - 1977, Department of Corrections Offender Query.

Please join us next month as we take a look back at DHR during 1981 - 1985.