

S&L's Gift to Library Stirs New Dispute: S&L Gift to Library Stirs Dispute

By Juan Williams
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In a politically controversial move that is being interpreted by one side as an act of human kindness and by the other side as a shrewd strategem, Perpetual Federal Savings and Loan Association yesterday gave \$1,500 to a children's library in the Adams-Morgan area.

Perpetual, which on Tuesday engaged in its latest skirmish with neighborhood groups that oppose the saving and loans's plan to place a branch office at 18th Street and Columbia Road, in the middle of Admas-Morgan, gave the money to the nearby Alley Library at 1734 Seaton Pl. NW.

Opponents of the branch testified Tuesday before the regional committee of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board in Atlanta that Perpetual's mortgage and home-loan policies in the past have led to the deterioration of the neighborhood and are now forcing out low-income residents of the area who are displaced by wealthier families who move in and restore old houses.

Perpetual's opponents were represented Tuesday by spokesmen for the Adams-Morgan Organization, a neighborhood citizens group, and the Adams-Morgan Advisory Neighborhood commission.

The day after doing battle in Atlanta with representatives of the middle- and lower-income neighborhood, which is a mixture of apartment houses and private homes, Perpetual, Washington's largest savings and loan association, yesterday gave the money to a makeshift library that serves the area's children.

The library is loated on Seaton Place NW, a block that is visibly undergoing expensive renovation. The change is currently at the center of a court fight between people who live on the street and Center Properties, a group that bought the houses on the one-block street and is renovating them.

"Perpetual's reputation can stand on its own, said Calvin Rolark, president of the United Black Fund which presented the \$1,500 the check to the library on behalf of Perpetual. "The bank has the most lib-

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Calvin Rolark of Black United Fund talks with Marlon Gopch, who accepted \$1,500 gift to Alley Library. Earl Burton, front, studies.

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eral policy of any savings and loan in the country.
They didn't have to give a dime to anyone to prove anything."

Rolark said Perpetual had conducted a private poll of the area's residents and found that most persons in Adams-Morgan favor the association's plan to put an office on Columbia Road.

"Most black people consider Perpetual their bank," Rolark said as he stood amidst youngsters reading and romping in the old house that has been converted into a library. "I can't think of anything better than teaching young black children how to read."

Perpetual has faced stiff opposition since it purchased the 18th Street and Columbia Road NW property in May from Citadel Corp. for \$350,000. Citadel had sought to put a gasoline station on the site but was stymied by community opposition.

"Their (Perpetual's) policies of making loans which require large down payments and giving mortgages only on properties that have already been rehabilitated cater to the high-income people," said Frank Smith, president of the Adams-Morgan Organization and chairman of the neighborhood ANC.

"They're behind the upheaval in this neighborhood and the widespread evictions—such as on Seaton Place where they're suddenly making a donation," said Smith. "It's a smart move but we won't be bought off."

According to Smith the Adams-Morgan Organization held a vote on Sept. 11 on whether to support Perpetual's request to put a branch in the area.

The election results, Smith reported, found 254 votes against the new savings and loan office, 181 votes favoring the new office if there could be some

agreement between Perpetual and the organization on the savings and loan lending policies and 161 votes unconditionally in favor of the new branch of office.

Smith said Perpetual discounted the vote before the Home Loan Bank Board on Tuesday by arguing that the Adams-Morgan Organization and the area ANC are not representative of the neighborhood.

Because the Adams-Morgan Organization has only 3,400 members, about one-tenth of the people in the neighborhood, Smith said Thomas Owen, president of Perpetual, attacked the group as undemocratic and unrepresentative of the neighborhood when he argued before the federal board in Atlanta. Owen did not return a reporter's phone call yesterday.

The bank board must approve Perpetual's proposal for a new branch because it reviews all new planned savings and loan offices to prevent oversaturation in any community.

The Alley Library, the recipient of Perpetual's donation, began in 1964. It is open two hours daily, between 3 p.m., when the school day ends, and 5 p.m. It provides remedial reading workshops as well as dancing and field trips for neighborhood youngsters.