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. . . integration is the only course which explicitly seeks to achieve a single nation rather than accepting the present movement toward a dual society. . . .[1]

THOUSANDS of superintendents of schools and boards of education across this country must accept a large share of the blame for the conditions leading up to the conclusions of the *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*. But *blame* is no longer important. Achieving *integrated* schools *is* important, however, if we are to divert our present movement toward a dual society.

Millions of words have been written on the subject of school integration. Yet according to Thomas Pettigrew,[2] not more than 20 school systems in this country have effectively desegregated their schools. Why is this? Why do schools remain segregated in spite of the overwhelming evidence which supports the cause of school integration?

This article will attempt to answer this question from the point of view of a practicing school administrator who has been told he "didn't like blacks" by a Chicago-based black militant [3] and has been called various derogatory names by some of his neighbors in a conservative section of Evanston, Illinois, where he lives with his wife and four children. This article will not attempt to describe in detail how School District 65 in Evanston has integrated its 16 elementary and four junior high schools. Such descriptions have appeared in several journals and in the four major Chicago newspapers. This article will, however, present some direct observations and conclusions which have not as yet appeared in print, hoping to shed some light on some less obvious factors obstructing progress toward the goal of "a single nation."

Desegregation Now

The debate over integration should be long since past. The question on today's school board agenda should be how do we achieve school desegregation *now*. True integration will take years to achieve, but the

[1] *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*. New York: E. P. Dutton Corporation, March 1965.

[2] Thomas Pettigrew. "Race and Intelligence." Speech before the Summer Institute for Integration, School District 65, Evanston, Illinois, July 16, 1968.

[3] Russell Meeks. "Black Power and Its Effect on Racial Interaction." Speech before the Summer Institute for Integration, School District 65, Evanston, Illinois, July 17, 1968.

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first step toward it is to desegregate the schools—both white and black.

First of all, boards of education and superintendents must accept the fact that the path toward integration is a hazardous one. Integration represents a major break from the status quo that has existed for hundreds of years in the South and in some northern communities.

The rule of the game is to keep the black people in one area. This phenomenon, a prevalent one in many cities and towns, is known as containment. Frequently natural barriers facilitate the process. In Evanston the barriers are a canal and railroad tracks.

It is this long-standing practice of containment which has established a status quo of segregation in schools.

People generally are resistant to changing the status quo, especially when many fears are associated with such change. Will my property value go down? Will my children's habits, morals, language, and personal values be affected? Will the quality of my children's education be diminished?

These are just a few of the fears which make the issue of desegregation such an emotional—and therefore hazardous—one for school administrators and boards to tackle. Yet tackle it they must.

The decision facing the superintendent is really far easier than that facing individual board members. Theoretically, the superintendent has chosen his profession because he has a deep and abiding interest in educating boys and girls. Moreover, in rising to the superintendency he has demonstrated some of the essential qualities of leadership—intellectual ability, integrity, energy, initiative, and courage. He has been appointed to lead his board of education and his community toward the best possible education for all children in his district. Therefore, if he reads even narrowly in his own professional journals, he has learned that desegregation and eventual integration are essential if he is to discharge the basic responsibility of the job.

There should be no doubt about his commitment to integration. If there is, he does not deserve to be a superintendent. He should do everything within his power to convince his board of education to act on desegregation. To do less makes him unworthy of the role and responsibility he has accepted. If he is unable to persuade a majority of the board of education to legislate for integration, he should resign and let someone else tackle the job.

To Reflect or To Lead

The board member's decision is slightly more complex, primarily because board members seem to hold one of two divergent points of view.

Some think that they have been elected to reflect the wishes of the people—a majority of their constituency. Others, undoubtedly the minority on this issue, accept the fact that they have been elected to lead the people, and to direct the superintendent if he needs leading.

The paradoxical point is that many board members adhere to the second position in all issues except integration. They make and adopt budgets without reference to their constituency; they approve textbooks and curricula, appoint personnel and fix their salaries, build schools, and govern the school system—all without recourse or reference to the opinions of those who elected them. Yet when the issue of integration comes up, they say "the voters don't want it." Board members who care more about being reelected than they do about the results they produce while they are in office, who care more about the status and power associated with the position than about the welfare of the boys and girls in their charge, often are unwilling to take a position in favor of integration. Yet this is the only position which is educationally and morally right for their communities and their country.

If we changed every other institution in the country, the schools alone would perpetuate separation, since it is while children are of school age that they develop the basic attitudes they will carry with them the rest of their lives.

The personal hazard associated with a decision on school desegregation is not the

only reason for the notable lack of progress in this area, although the writer believes it is the major one. Political ineptness on the part of the integrationists is also an important ingredient of failure.

"The Establishment"

School segregation has been and still is perpetuated by "the establishment." Some of these people are elected officials, some are appointed officials, and some wield great influence without holding an official position. Yet all are concerned with a common aim—to protect the status quo, which represents their successes, their accomplishments. When that status quo is changed, *they* want to be the people who change it.

Occasionally a few integrationists are found among the members of "the establishment," but they almost inevitably represent a pitifully small minority. Moreover, if they pursue their integrationist activities too vigorously within the establishment they are very likely to find themselves thrust out.

Generally, the integrationists are disorganized, if not totally unorganized. They are splintered into many small groups, each with its own leader. Some of these groups are white, some are black, and some are integrated—none is a part of a unified whole.

The integrationists generally spend most of their time talking to like-minded people instead of talking to that great uncommitted body of passive citizens. The likelihood of changing the minds of bigots is nil, but bigots are seldom a majority in any community. However, they are often found among the ranks of the establishment, frequently holding influential positions.

The establishment is politically smart. That is how many of its members got there in the first place. Its members are organized, and they have a unifying interest in protecting the status quo. They do not waste time talking to themselves. They continually work for recruits among those currently uninvolved, and continually attack those who would change the status quo.

A major current theme of the white segregationist members of the establishment is to use the black separatists as a pawn and buffer to the black and white integrationists. The white segregationists quote the black leaders who advocate black schools for black children, taught by black teachers and run by black administrators. "That's what they want. Why should we give them anything different?" say the white segregationist leaders.

This argument is especially successful today since it is inadvertently reinforced by the Black Power advocates. "Shake off the paternalistic yoke of the white liberals," they say. "Meet them only as equals and use them as they have used us." This position plays directly into the hands of the groups on both ends of the spectrum. Black radicals on the left and white radicals on the right use it to achieve their own ends, especially in perpetuating segregated schools.

Integrationists must "wise up" if they are to break the snail's pace of their movement. They must openly accept political reality. They are fighting for what has become a political issue in a political forum. They must use the strategies and tactics of politicians.

Organization—unified organization—is crucial to this effort. All the small subgroups must be united at the top in one large group. White liberals should recognize all-black groups and accept them as natural and necessary, instead of trying to absorb them or take them over. A leadership council at the top could unite the efforts of both, and this council might have *either* a white or black leader, or both.

One Community

White groups should work on the uncommitted persons in their communities and black groups in their communities until that day arrives when there is just one community. All the techniques of effective political campaigning should be employed, from precinct organization and doorbell ringing to television and mass-media advertising.

Candidates for the school board should be evaluated carefully in terms of their be-

liefs, and machinery should be established to ensure that these beliefs are known. Candidates need not have party labels, but they are either for or against integration; they are either for or against new programs and the expenditures necessary to support them; and they are either for or against progress in education.

Thus, political naïveté on the part of the integrationists is a second reason for the slow progress toward desegregation and ultimate integration. A third and final reason is the failure of the white community to understand the depth and intensity of the institutionalized racism that exists in our schools today, and the future consequences of it.

Assuming that the Kerner Report and others have spelled out the consequences, let us take a brief look at the depth and intensity of the problem.

Thumb through your child's school books sometime and look at the illustrations. If you are willing to take a little more time, read some of the texts—not just the reading book, but the arithmetic word problems, the science book experiments, and the history book heroes, inventors, and discoverers. It is all white—not just white people, but white situations, white institutions, white frames of reference, and "white is right" conclusions. After 8 or 10 or 12 years of this exposure the child's conclusion can only support the racist notion of white superiority and black inferiority. He has come across little in his schooling to tell him differently, whether he is a white child or a black child.

If he is white chances are he has white teachers, principal, and superintendent, and perhaps a black custodian or cafeteria worker. If he is a black child he may have the same, or if he lives in a sizable city he may have a black teacher teaching a white curriculum made up and supervised by white administrators and overseen by a predominately white board of education. There are few exceptions to this pattern.

Thus the schools perpetuate the evil of white racism which only they can destroy.

A Certain Amount of Courage

Changing this prevailing pattern will take a certain amount of courage—but perhaps even more needed is simple determination to do the job *without delay*, using the skills and facilities already available.

The plan any particular school district formulates will not be the "ultimate answer" to problems of separation; quite likely it will have imperfections. But to wait for the perfect desegregation plan to be created by some presently unknown genius is like debating about whether to make the building dedication a formal or informal program even as the wet mortar hardens and bricks crumble in the sun and wind, waiting to be put together to make the building.

The children cannot wait for all their elders to overcome bigotry and prejudice. They are growing and learning *now*. What they learn, and whether they learn it together, in classrooms where there is respect for and understanding of the differences among the family of man, or separately, fearing and distrusting each other, will determine the course of our nation. □



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