

YOUTH MARCH FOR INTEGRATED SCHOOLS

Presidential Delegation Statement

Recommendations

In the light of the considerations which we discuss below, we respectfully urge that you give consideration to the following proposals which we feel would enable the Federal Government to place its weight behind the movement for the integration of the schools:

- 1) The Chief Executive should make an explicit moral as well as legal commitment of the full resources of the Federal Government to the objective of achieving orderly, effective and speedy integration of the schools.
- 2) The Chief Executive should place his weight behind the passage of a truly effective Civil Rights Bill in the present session of Congress. -- As far as school integration is concerned, we believe that the Douglas-Javits-Celler Bill is by far the most far-sighted and constructive piece of legislation before Congress. This bill is bipartisan in its sponsorship. It deserves, we feel, the full support of the Administration.

The Douglas-Javits-Celler Bill is an historic and statesmanlike proposal. It empowers the Federal Government to move into the center of the school picture and to undertake, on a nationwide basis, careful and constructive planning of the nation's march toward integration. It provides the expert counselling, the financial aid, and the legal authority necessary to achieve this end.

- 3) The Chief Executive should call a White House Conference of Youth and student leaders, chosen from national and regional organizations, both North and South, to discuss ways in which youth may participate in the implementation of the 1954 Supreme Court decision.
- 4) The Chief Executive should intervene in the case of Asbury Howard, Jr., the 18-year old Negro youth from Bessemer, Alabama who has been sentenced to the chain gang for one year for coming to the defense of his father when the latter was attacked by a mob. Cases such as this must be brought to the attention of the nation and of the state authorities if a wrong is to be redressed and justice done.

We make these recommendations in the light of the following urgent considerations:

- 1) Nearly five years have elapsed since the Supreme Court ruled that in the field of education "separate but equal" has no place. But today only some 800 of 2,890 biracial school districts in Southern and Border states have begun desegregation even on a token basis. In five states, there has been no desegregation in public education. In the past two years the number of districts instituting new desegregation plans has shrunk to a mere handful.
- 2) This situation is not acceptable to the youth and the students of the United States. For us, the youth, the question of school integration is the central moral issue of our time. Not only are the rights of minorities at stake; American democracy itself, and the supremacy of our government, the very survival of the Constitution, are at issue.

We must point out that American youth have made strong and repeated affirmations of their support for the Supreme Court decision and the integration of the schools.

In August, 1957, the delegates of over 300 student governments representing over one million students expressed their belief at the United States National Student Association's 10th National Student Congress that

"Segregation in education by race is incompatible with human equality. It is now also unconstitutional. In the face of ethical concepts, legal requirements, and global ramifications there can be no justification for delay in the implementation of the Supreme Court decision."

The Petition Campaign and Youth March for Integrated Schools, with its 20,000 member March, its quarter of a million signatures and its nationwide support, has won more support among the young people than any other national campaign or issue in the past 15 years.

- 3) Concern over the integration of the United States schools is not limited to this country. The delegates from the 75 national unions of students outside the Communist bloc, meeting in Lima, Peru at the International Student Conference this spring, condemned the continued practice of racial segregation in our country. Similar grave concern was expressed at the World Assembly of Youth held in New Delhi last summer.
- 4) As young Americans, we appreciate the difficulties confronting those who work to implement integration of the schools. We commend the efforts of the Courts, the Civil Rights Commission, and members of the Administration such as Attorney-General Rogers and Secretary Fleming on behalf of integration. Yet, if massive resistance has been defeated in Virginia, it is very much alive in South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana. The leaders of the Deep South do not seek time to accommodate to integration, but to block it altogether. They do not wish to discuss compliance with the law but ways to evade it.

It is in this, the continued defiance of the Constitution and the directive of the Court, that lies the deepest political crisis of our nation and of our times. Indignities, terror, threats of violence, mob rule and even dynamite and the bombing of schools face the people of the South who seek to move forward on the path of integration and the enjoyment of their civil rights. Neither youth nor age are spared the terrors of oppression by the enemies of our democracy when civil rights are in question. A singular instance to which we wish to draw your attention is the persecution of the Asbury Howards. A father and son from Bessemer, Alabama have been sentenced to prison and the chain gang for no other offense than working for the triumph of civil rights and resisting mob attack.

- 5) The crisis that centers around the integration of the schools is a national question. It affects school systems and national minorities in all parts of our land. It must, we feel, have the full attention of the Federal Government if a solution is to be reached if the nation is to have the leadership for progress, for the creation of a truer, fuller democracy that it so deeply needs.

In the fall of 1957, you warned that a continuation of open defiance to the Constitution and the law, which was then being demonstrated in Little Rock, would be an invitation to anarchy and the dissolution of the Union. The defiance has continued, and the crisis to our national existence and survival is still with us. It is in this context that speedy and effective Federal action becomes, we feel, imperative.