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AS I SEE IT

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SCHOOL INTEGRATION IN SAN DIEGO

The issue of integration in San Diego City Schools is gradually beginning to arouse the interest and concern of many more of this city's white citizens. At the time that Judge Louis Welsh issued his Memorandum of Intended Decision on September 8, 1980, it seemed that only a relatively few of the more than 850,000 San Diego residents have any significant understanding of the magnitude of this important issue. For some reason, the community in general had not demonstrated its appreciation for the efforts of Judge Welsh, as he has labored to provide direction for San Diego City Schools in this integration case. It appears that the September 8 Memorandum has begun to change that. I now have a distinct feeling that a few more people are beginning to get the message.

I want to say here and now that the Urban League is in full agreement with Judge Welsh. We support the Judge on each of the twenty-four (24) directives of his Memorandum.

It was heartwarming to see the Judge reach the decision that those achievement goals proposed by the School District for students in minority isolated schools are woefully inadequate. In this decision, the Judge agreed with the Urban League's position as contained in the League's Amicus Curiae Brief, filed with the court on June 2, 1980. Judge Welsh has taken the School District to task on this matter

of achievement goals and rightfully so. If minority students in racially isolated schools are to have a chance at catching up with other students in the district goals must be adopted which serve to spur district staff on toward the provision of quality education for these students. The Board of Education must insist that all staff have high expectations for the student. The district's Achievement Goals Program cannot hope to accomplish significant increases in minority student's academic achievement if it is not a sound one. Judge Welsh so ably pointed out several districts across the nation that have demonstrated success by use of sound learning programs. San Diego City Schools should take note.

While the Board of Education, the superintendent and his staff must take primary blame for the fact that no progress toward integration has been made during the 1979-80 school year, the white community must accept a large portion of the blame, for it is they too, who have failed to support the voluntary integration plan. There has been some talk, but not a lot of action. Everyone knows by now that blacks and other minorities shoulder the larger burden of integrating the twenty-three (23) minority isolated schools.

The majority white community has not been a significant party to the school integration effort. For those who are actively contributing by putting their sons and daughters on a bus headed for one of the twenty-three (23) schools, I stand in recognition of their fine commitment. An aggressive Race-Human Relations Program in the schools, implemented by the most competent and caring administrators, in a no-nonsense atmosphere, will do much to help change the attitude of white staff and students.

Parents of these students can benefit likewise. Two other elements that are missing from the existing Race/Human Relations model are staff training requirements and accountability factors. A systematic approach to staff training should help teachers and others to be effective in their day-to-day involvement with each other, with students and parents. All staff must be accountable to some authority. And there must be a consequence for failure to be effective. The attitude of uncaring and untrained staff in many ways influence the white majority parents of the community.

It is the white majority who say that they have good intentions. Good action is what is needed. If the court ordered busing for integration tomorrow, it would be the good intentioned, non-active white majority who would have caused that order to be issued, not the minority community.

The new assignment for the Chamber of Commerce by Judge Welsh would seem to provide another opportunity for this business group to move a few steps ahead toward the fulfillment of its commitment to the integration program. The quality of some previous Chamber efforts at a few schools have been questioned by some of us. However, the Chamber ought to be able to provide a great deal to help the court and the school's administrative staff. Something meaningful must result from this. We cannot afford to have this assignment to the Chamber evolve into another layer of bureaucratic inertia. Certainly Judge Welsh does not intend for that to happen.

As the Chamber proceeds it should understand that its work is to have a useful purpose. And that it must avoid the risk of creating a perception of being the

great white savior to whom blacks must turn for the real solution. Blacks and other minorities must be appointed to Chamber committees. Everything about integration must be integrated.

As I look more closely at the needs for success in the future, one compelling thought comes to mind. Since the superintendent of schools is the one person having the largest responsibility for success or failure of integration in this district, and given his posture on integration planning over the past three years the thing that is needed most now is for Tom Goodman's peers, the silent good intentioned white leaders of the community, to take him to the woodshed and say to the superintendent that "we want these schools integrated and we want them integrated now through a voluntary method. Now you get about the business of doing that. You have our support." Should this occur, voluntary integration in this town will be a reality, not three years from now, but this year.

In reflecting back on the integration effort, it is easy to see that much of the community has arrived at the point where the Urban League was five or more years ago. We said it would take a long time to integrate the schools voluntarily. It has, and it will continue to take a long time under the present administration setup.

What this whole thing has boiled down to is simply this. The ball is now in the white folks court. With a new dedication and teamwork, successful voluntary integration can be accomplished. Urban League will settle for nothing less. The time is now.