

LOCAL EDITORIAL COMMENT

A Fight For Local Control: When Will It End?

The United States Department of Justice has asked the federal court to imprison the Franklin County School Board. As far as can be determined, this is the first time in the history of this country, the federal government has threatened to lock up a duly elected and constitutionally established body of the people's representatives.

The five members of the Franklin Board of Education were chosen by a vote of the people. Each are elected county officials. This Board, as those before them, is made up of men of good character, dedicated to the service of their community. None serve for the small monetary reward.

Even in this day, when actions by federal authorities have ceased to

shock the populace, this latest threat is somewhat surprising. The Department of Justice seems determined that it and it alone will operate the schools of Franklin County. It has, on several occasions, presented its own plan of school operations to the courts. Indeed, Franklin schools are today operating under a court ordered plan which was, for the most part, written by the United States Justice Department.

It is not enough for the Justice Department, that Franklin is the only county in this section with a fully integrated school system. It is not enough that neighboring systems continue with freedom of choice plans and token integration while Franklin was made to integrate fully in nine

days. It is not enough that the Justice Department has had agents in this county almost continuously since the opening of schools in the hope that they might find some semblance of the violence their attorneys told the courts existed here in abundance.

It is, perhaps, disappointing to them that Franklin, is instead exactly as the School Board represented it to be throughout the long court case. It must be disheartening to the hoards of investigators that instead of finding a violent people, they have found a tranquil community, just as the School Board told the courts they would. Dissatisfied with the federal edict to be sure, the people of Franklin County are notably law-abiding, nevertheless.

The Board of Education has issued a statement terming the charges by Attorney General Ramsey Clark "untrue." Parents of Franklin school children know this. Anyone else who has taken a look at the schools. The strange thing is, that the squad of FBI agents sent here by the Justice Department failed to see what everyone else has seen. Since they did not visit the schools, where did they get their information?

The Board also calls this latest action by the Attorney General, "a form of harassment." This hits the nail on the head. This says it all. Washington cannot stand to see this county operating a school system without the troubles it told the courts existed here. It is making them look bad. So, they want to stir it again and to do so, they are picking at straws.

The Board of Education, with the able assistance of a dedicated school staff, fully integrated the schools here in a period of nine days. Each student in the elementary grades was assigned according to an established educational test, given the year before and given impartially. In order that every child would be exposed alike to the

teaching in each child's grade, team teaching was installed and each child, assigned to a classroom, based solely on the child's own ability, receives instruction from each teacher on the team, regardless of the race of the child or the teacher. In the high school grades, children are assigned according to the subjects they choose. No race is involved. How much simpler could it have been done? Does the Justice Department say it would be more in the child's interest to have assigned by race. Should Franklin County school officials take one white and one black child and seat them in rotation throughout the system, without regard to the child's ability to learn? Is the Attorney General more versed in education than local school professionals? How far is the federal government going to go. Has the day come when Washington can chose the seats for each child in the system. When will it chose the books, the instructors, and when will it invade the homes?

Franklin County had made the adjustment. Schools are operating in an orderly fashion and while somewhat hampered, children are nevertheless receiving some degree of instruction. The fog had settled. Even the long-harrassed Board itself had settled down to the serious business of planning for future consolidation and upgrading of the county's educational system. Such things as new buildings, land purchases, additional courses of instruction and many other long neglected aspects of education were once again given the attention they deserved.

Now, however, the Board, the teachers, the students, and the people must turn their efforts into swords and prepare for another long and costly battle to maintain some semblance of local control of a school system built, for the most part, by the sweat of their own brows.

And one can only add, when, oh, when, will it ever end?



I ain't never been recognized before. 'Course, some folks recognize me on the streets. They yell, "Hello Frank." That's my name, Frank. But, I ain't never been recognized by no Governor before... and in front of all them people.

I started not to go. I ain't never felt at home in Chapel Hill. But, I knew that the Governor would be tore up if I didn't show up after he went to all that trouble. I figured if he could take the time to get all dressed up and comb his sideburns, I could at least show up.

When I walked in, everybody just turned and stared. I thought at first, they were looking at my overalls. They were new and scratching the life out of me. But, later I found out the Governor was late and they were looking for him. Don't know why they just kept on staring at me... even after the Governor got there. He didn't drink and I didn't neither... so we just talked. Soon's I walked up to speak and be friendly, them dressed up people would move away. I washed my feet... so I didn't have bad breath... but nobody seemed like they wanted to be friendly with old Frank.

I kinda figured they liked my overalls. They were new and they were scratching. I ain't never going to wear new overalls to nothing else like that thing.



Frank With The Governor

But, I think the Governor like them. He smiled when they called me up to get the award. Them Judges... bless them... said this is one of the best columns in North Carolina... coulda told them that long before now.

"How're the cows", I asked the Governor, trying to be friendly. "They're fine, Frank", he said. He read the name on the certificate. He didn't really know me before. He didn't know I seen him reading my name. "How's the little woman and all the children", I asked being as polite as I could. "Fine", said the Governor. "Jessie Ray is over there", he said.

"How're things in Franklin County", he asked as the man with the list kept wiggling like he was in a hurry. "Same as always", I said. "Finest place in the world", we told him. "I like Haw River", he said. "Why'd you move to Raleigh, then?", I asked. "Don't know", he said. "Jessie Ray wanted the kids to see the capital. Figured it'd be cheaper to move, than to visit", he explained.

He begged me to come see him, but I told him I didn't never go to Raleigh. I ain't never felt at home in Raleigh. I know he was dying to ask me where I got my overalls. First stripped ones he'd seen. They's the newest fashion. That's what the store man said. I tried to get some blue ones, but he insisted that if I was going to meet the Governor I ought to wear the latest thing. I bought the stripped ones. Glad I did. They was a big hit at Chapel Hill.

I'm proud of the award. I think it's mighty fine that somebody likes this here column. But, I'm a whole lot prouder of all them comments you folks who read it make. I feel at home with you. And I know you know why I wore them stripped overalls instead of my blue ones. It wasn't to act big or nothing like that. I just wanted to look nice when I represented you folks. Man, did they scratch.

War & Middle East Gold Reserves Up
The Treasury Department has announced the United States increased its supply of gold by approximately \$73 million during the third quarter of 1968. The largest purchase was from France amounting to \$240 million.

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WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

Franklin In School Controversy

Durham Morning Herald

The Franklin County school system deserves praise, not further federal interference, for its efforts to operate integrated schools under court orders. The school system there has experienced more than its share of problems arising from the integration issue in recent years. It has, in the face of difficulties, attempted to solve problems. And to its credit, it has made significant progress in that direction.

Yet the Franklin school system (specifically its five-member board and its superintendent) has again found itself in controversy over the racial issue. The U. S. Department of Justice has charged that racial discrimination exists and has asked the U. S. Eastern District Court to institute contempt proceedings against the school board members and the superintendent.

The school board has emphatically denied the charges. It has asserted in a statement: "All schools and faculties in the county system are fully integrated and there is no racial discrimination whatsoever in any of the schools or on any of the school buses."

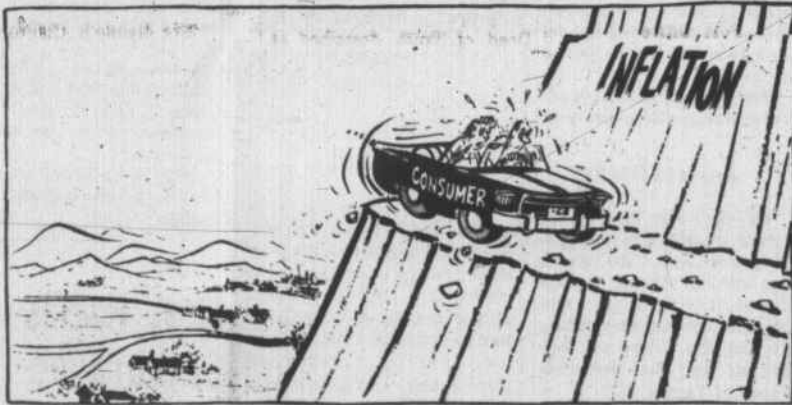
While there may be disagreement between local and federal spokesmen as to what constitutes racial discrimi-

nation, there certainly is no occasion to question the good faith of Franklin County school officials. Although they strongly contested a federal district court plan for school operation, when their appeal was turned down they pitched in with zeal, and despite difficulties, to open schools last September on the court-ordered basis.

The Justice Department, however, didn't help smooth the path. It had FBI agents on hand, it will be recalled, and removed them from the scene only after protest to Washington. Just as the FBI presence then can be construed as a form of harassment, so can the contempt action threat now.

Franklin schools have operated in workable fashion this year, as far as is known. They preferred freedom of choice, but federal officials ruled against that because Negro pupils were choosing Negro schools. They accepted the court-ordered plan reluctantly, to be sure, but also as a fact of life. Progress they have made presents its own case for allowing them to work our problems without interference.

Since Ramsey Clark, as attorney general, raised the latest controversy, perhaps his departure will help clear the Franklin air.



"It's a beautiful country—pity we can't take our eyes off the road to see it."

LETTERS TO

To The Editor:

Being invited to have a one man show of my paintings and drawings at the Ingleside-Moulton Community Club was something I shall always appreciate.

The community merits commendation in creating and developing a center where civic, cultural, and recreational projects can be sponsored and encouraged.

Dedication of time and effort go before the realization of projects such as this one. From the hub of this attractive setting I look forward to seeing far reaching development for the enrichment of all the lives of the community.

Sincerely,
Belvin Finch Walters
148 W. Elm St.
Mt. Airy, N. C.
27030

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