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NAACP Recommendations for Implementation of
Citizens' Committee Report on the
Ann Arbor Public Schools as

65-42

It Pertains to Jones School Recommendations

1. The NAACP commends the Citizens Committee for an excellent report which combines concern for the community's welfare with awareness of the Negro child's special problems. Our comments are made in the spirit of what we think is the most important statement in the Report: "The welfare of the children must always be the central concern." We believe, and the Committee fully acknowledges, what any decent person must know in his heart, that in a society dominated by white people, the welfare of Negro children forced to live and learn in a segregated environment will be adversely affected. However, we are equally wary of forms of integration which result merely in "together, but unequal." Nothing short of full integration as equals can reach into the hearts and minds of Negro youngsters in a way which will repair the damage segregation has already done to their sense of personal dignity and their motivation to succeed and develop their capacities. It is this development of individual capacities which should be the highest aim of anyone who truly cares for freedom and democracy.

2. The Committee Report points the way to full integration in equality. It is a model of that reasoned approach to the problems of social change which the NAACP stands for. We should all be reminded that this is not a Jones School Report. It is a report that pertains to all the public schools of Ann Arbor -- as its title indicates. However we are gathered here this evening in Jones School primarily to discuss those aspects of the Report relating to do with the proposed bussing of children out of the

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Jones School area. The NAACP wants to focus on this issue -- but we also want to emphasize that it is only one aspect of the much larger picture with which the Committee's Report is properly concerned.

In regard to bussing, we believe that the opinions of many will be decisively affected by whether they believe such a policy can be implemented without adversely affecting the children involved. It is for this reason that the problems of implementation ought to be discussed before the Report's proposals are (hopefully) endorsed by the Board of Education. Our comments deal primarily with these problems of implementation. The NAACP fully endorses the Citizens' Committee's rejection of a hastily conceived, crash-program approach to these problems. It is for this reason that we offer the following suggestions and comments:

3. Comments and Suggestions

i. We recommend that the bussing proposal be implemented as rapidly as is reasonable. We recognize that there is a problem of preparing the children and the receiving schools for the change, but we want to remind everyone that the children of Jones School will, in any event, be thrust into an integrated environment when they move from elementary to junior high school. The earlier in their development that these children are integrated the better.

ii. There is much that can and should be done in the short time before implementation of bussing to ensure the success of the move.

(a) In the intervening period, steps should be taken to strengthen the Program at Jones School. Every effort should be made to ready the Jones School children for the change. Anyone intimately aware of conditions

at Jones School knows that much can, and ought to be done.

- (b) The program director recommended by the Committee should be appointed as quickly as possible. We should not, of course, sacrifice quality for speed - but we believe that the probability of success will be greatly increased if the right sort of person is quickly put in charge of planning the details of change.
- (c) Affected parents and children ought to be involved early and often in the process of planning this change. We means, of course, not only the Jones School parents and children, but parents and children in the receiving institutions. Perhaps some sort of orientation visit can be arranged for a period prior to the actual move. This would, of course, require that pupil assignments be made wherever possible, sometime before the changes are instituted. The Board, as well as Parent-Teachers Organizations and interested, informal groups, would have the responsibility of explaining the reasons for the change, describing the problems likely to be encountered, and enlisting all persons of good will in the effort to achieve success. For one thing that can result in failure is the existence of a widespread expectation of failure.
- (d) We recommend a program designed to prepare administrators, teachers, counselors, and visiting teachers in the receiving schools for the change. Qualified personnel should be given key roles. It is tragically true that many persons who are professionally competent are yet not fit to participate in such a program.

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It is not only the Negro who has been adversely affected by three centuries of discrimination and segregation. Special effort ought to be made to bring more qualified Negro personnel into the school system. Special counseling should be given to Negro children early and often. This counseling should not aim at keeping the Negro child "in his place", but rather at realistically informing the Negro child of opportunities which are becoming increasingly available to properly qualified persons of all races.

- (e) There should be a remedial tutorial program, organized and supervised by the school system. The proliferation of informal tutorial programs testifies to the fact that the need exist and that volunteers are available. However, this important function can no longer be left in charge of individuals who are not accountable to any one but themselves. This program, though it will serve the children of Jones School, should, of course, be city-wide, and should exist for any child, White or Negro, who needs it.
- (f) Of very great importance is that children in the receiving schools, and in the school population generally, have a good understanding of the history and present social and economic conditions of American Negroes. Such knowledge not only helps all to appreciate the contribution that Negroes have made to American society, but it helps the white child to develop insight into Negro and self. We strongly recommend that curricular changes designed to promote such understanding be instituted as soon as possible.

- (g) We view the proposed pre-School program as an important part of the general effort of preparation. This program should be inaugurated in September, 1964. Parents should be involved. The Board should explore the possibility of developing a carefully administered volunteer program. This would, to some extent, mitigate the problem of finding qualified, professional personnel.
- (h) Though we recognize that the entire program cannot be implemented in the Fall of 1964, we strongly urge the Board to explore the possibility of immediate transfer of those children starting 1st grade. The problems of adjustment in the new school environment will be little greater for these children than the problems any beginning child would have. Compelling these children to go to Jones School when it is planned soon to transfer them seems to us to be an avoidable hardship.
- (i) Finally, we urge the Board to consider very fully whether it is desirable to retain a kindergarten class in Jones School, as the Report recommends. We are not proposing that this part of the Report should be rejected, but we are of two minds about it. We can see the advantages - the children are only in school a half day, special bussing facilities would be necessary, mothers like to have these tots close to home. But against these considerations must be weighed the fact that the initial school experience is a very formative one. If, as everyone expects, the vacated space in Jones School should be converted

into offices, the kindergarten child would be isolated in a sea of administrators. With all due respect to our fine school personnel, these minnows might be better off placed in waters containing different sorts of fish. However, we do believe that parents of kindergarten children at Jones School should be consulted by the Board of Education before any decision is made.

We hope these suggestions make clear NAACP's awareness of the problems that will exist should the Report's proposals be accepted by the Board of Education. But whatever the strains encountered by the children, there is no doubt that the effects of segregation are far worse. This community has an opportunity to pioneer a solution. It has the intellectual resources and the good will to ensure success.