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Ypsilanti, Michigan

22 July 1964

Ann Arbor School Board  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Sirs,

The Citizens Committee for the study of de facto segregation in the Ann Arbor area schools has long waited to publicly voice the views of the interested parties regarding the situation at Jones School. This should be of prime importance considering the committee's concern for the education of these children. As a teacher in your system next fall, I too am concerned about their education. I am concerned for them as parents attending Jones School and not as children of parents interested in furthering the Negro cause as directed to them by S.O.R.E. or NAACP.

It is the opinions of these parents expressed at the open meeting on 15 July that provokes me to write this letter. They voiced consistent objection against Jones School. They noted many violations of the democratic processes of education. They objected to violations of their children. They intelligently designated the staff and administration of Jones School as the cause for these violations. They brought no objection to the school environment. They made no complaint that their children did not have the motivation to learn, that their neighbors were uninterested in education. They stated continually instead that the teachers in Jones School were failing as teachers and made it clear that this was their area of dissatisfaction.

I would like to pose this question to the Board and to the parents of Jones School children, what type of teachers do they expect in other Ann Arbor Schools? Do they expect that teachers confronted with Negroes for the first time will be sympathetic, will be more willing to take time from their own students than were the teachers at Jones School? I am about to admit that the staff at Jones School is as bad as the parents at this meeting felt. How am I ready to admit that the Board would let such a staff develop if it could be prevented. And if it couldn't have been prevented at Jones School how will it be prevented in four or five different schools?

The concern of the Board and the Citizen's Committee for the education of these children is highly commendable and long over due. It needs to be emphasized that your concern is first off that of an educational interest and not a racial or economic one, and that the ultimate criteria for any decision must be educational criteria. If the cause of underachievement is the staff as the parents suggest, then the Committee has recommended an appropriate solution, an

22 July 1964

enrichment program. If, however, the cause is a negative social environment or a combination of the two, as the Committee has suggested and the parents have not, then dissolving Jones School may be necessary providing an adequate position can be found for these students.

The lines of conflict and indecision are clearly drawn. What guarantee can you give that these children will get an education superior or equal to the education they could get from an enriched program? An answer to this cannot be stated in any certain terms, but must be your decision in terms of your own moral consciousness. I wish to further encourage the Board to consider these children as your own, to consider if you would want to take this kind of risk with your children. If you can answer with a yes, if you feel that closing Jones School will provide these children with a better education, if you feel that this would not be just a pacifying move in lieu of a more necessary non-educational change reaching at the causes of de facto segregation in Ann Arbor, I will support your decision completely. If not, then the uneasiness in your minds will remain in mine also.

Sincerely,

(signed) Kent S. Woodbury

Kent S. Woodbury