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## THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS I

### PREPARATION FOR INTEGRATION

*Dr. Carl F. Hansen\**

In one of the Congressional hearings we have had in Washington — as you know, we are responsible to the Congress — I was asked this question by one of the Congressmen: “What do you mean by going out through the country and telling the people to integrate their schools?” My answer was: “I believe in integration and I’m opposed both philosophically and morally to the practice of saying to children, ‘You can’t come into the school because of your race.’” My primary objective is to tell the Washington story as objectively as I can — I suppose I should admit some bias — in order to counteract the false information, the distorted and unbalanced kinds of stories that have been circulated about us. This is my primary purpose here today — to tell you what has happened as well as I can in the amount of time that I have, and then let you be the judge as to the effectiveness of the procedure.

In the city of Washington many things happened which set the stage for desegregation in 1954. Actually, in a sense, they made the desegregation process sort of historical in character. It might have come about except for certain points of view in the statutory situation which we face there, as a matter of just simply getting into the mainstream of events in the great city of Washington. For example, the federal agencies had opened their parks and had reduced discrimination in employment; the food serving agents, public and private, had opened the doors to all races; the movie theatres and the legitimate stage theatres had opened the doors to all; and Catholic schools desegregated in 1948. I could add many instances to show that actually, in some sense, the Washington school system, as it remained two separate systems under the desegregation program, was out of step with what was happening in Washington. In addition to that we had the power structure behind us. The President, in the 1954 State of the Nation Speech, said that there must be an end to discrimination in the District of Columbia.

The Commissioners, who in a sense govern the city under the authority of Congress, and the President, issued a proclamation against any kind of discrimination in employment or use of public facilities under their jurisdiction. This excluded the schools because they are under special legislation. The Church organizations particularly through the Councils of the individual churches, although they seemed to be overly cautious in Washington, had taken a definite stand on this issue. In addition to that there were many organized agencies around in the community which were pressuring in this

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direction constantly so that the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education were being kept in a constant state of discomfort — at least we might describe it as that — because of these pressures to move in the direction of the elimination of discrimination in the public schools.

In addition to that, there was a great amount of educational preparation for this change. Many of us who served on the staff of the Superintendent — and by the way I should tell you that this is Dr. Corning's story, not Hansen's, he being the Superintendent through all this difficult period — many of us on his staff worked with agencies in the community. It was a sort-of underground operation, unofficially participating in activities which led to a better understanding of the problems of desegregation, improvement of human relations and so on. We had a vast amount of community education going on, prior to 1954, when the Supreme Court and the Board of Education acted within a period of seven or eight days.

Community groups encouraged or organized intergroup educational projects long before 1954. A Citizens' Committee on Inter-Cultural Education held its first community conference in 1950. The Washington Fellowship cooperated with 45 other organizations to present a leadership training series on integration practices in other parts of the country in 1952. The American Friends Service Committee held its first series of seminars for teachers on problems of integration in 1953.

In addition to the unofficial preparation in 1953, the Board of Education and the Superintendent established an in-service program for all of the staff and teachers of the D.C. schools, on the subject of improving human relations. We had, even within our organized staff, on an official basis, an educational preparation for the change which came about.

The Board of Education invited the community to submit recommendations on the mechanics of desegregation, should desegregation come to pass. You note: the Board did not ask "Do you want desegregation in the community?" It asked: "How should it be done?" 160 replies were received. Two-thirds of them offered positive suggestions for making changes. One-third said: we don't think this is a timely question, we think you're premature; we don't want to desegregate. In the meantime, over a year, meetings under Dr. Corning with his staff went on, planning went on so that we would have the mechanics of desegregation ready prepared in blueprint form in the Superintendent's desk if the change should come about.

The Superintendent's office cooperated with the education committee of the National Conference of Christians and Jews in planning intercultural education programs for years before desegregation in Washington. An example is the first seminar on intergroup education held in the public schools in 1949. A handbook, entitled the *Handbook on Intergroup Education*, was approved for all teachers and officers in the district in 1952.

The importance of this discussion, of this part of my report on the Washington story, is that suggested here is the community readiness of a broad kind, an educational program that permeated through all aspects of the community and throughout the school system, and the plan ready for action in case it should be needed. This amount of preparation paid off.

## CHANGES SINCE 1954

When the Supreme Court acted on the District of Columbia case, *Bolling v. Sharpe*, on, May 17, 1954, the Board of Education immediately sought the opinion of the Corporation Counsel as to the status of existing statutes establishing or undergirding the segregated school system. They were told that these were invalid. Eight days later the Board of Education established what I feel to be one of the great statesmanlike policy programs in respect to this issue.

First the Board said: It shall be our policy to appoint on merit, not race. This affects personnel. Secondly, any discrimination against any pupil because of race was forbidden, and the maximum use of all school facilities regardless of race was required. And thirdly — and this is significant — new boundaries were to be drawn for all schools, and new pupils living within those boundaries were to attend their neighborhood schools, regardless of race, unless a transfer out of that boundary was in the public interest or was required by necessity.

The impression seems to be abroad that in Washington we are trying artificially to enforce integration by the intermixing of races through the moving of people from one neighborhood to another in order to get a better balance in racial distribution. This is not the case. We have said publicly a number of times that we are opposed to the artificial imposing of intermixing. What we say is this: if children live in neighborhoods where there are negro children they will go to schools in these neighborhoods. There will be exceptions; these are permitted where there are psychological objections, in order to make adjustments which are in the interests of the children. But the basic principle is that we set up our schools and organize them in relation to where people live, and we say it is a basic principle that every child in any school area is entitled to a maximum education opportunity in his school and to all the privileges and prerogatives of a student living within our city.

The Superintendent's plan to implement integration was approved by the Board of Education on June 2, 1954. The Board's policy stand was clear and has remained basically unchanged since 1954.

In 1954 between May and September 1 plans were completed for the actual desegregation on a massive scale. In September, where there had been no intermixing racially, either among teachers or among pupils, we had mixed enrollments in 73 per cent of our schools. Where we had had no intermixing of teachers we had 23 per cent racial intermixing in September 1954, immediately following the action of the Supreme Court and the action of the Board of Education. In October, 1955, 144 of the city's schools had both negro and white pupils. This was 87.3 per cent of the schools, then attended by 92,273 pupils.

The staff was reorganized; where we had two assistant superintendents in charge of elementary schools, we now have one. I lost my job as a result of that. The person who succeeded me was an outstanding negro assistant principal who was placed in charge of something like 121 elementary schools with an enrollment of 50 to 60 thousand at that time, and a teaching staff, negro and white, of nearly 1,500. I was assigned to the senior high schools

and took over schools which had formerly been in two separate systems. The man who was assigned to the junior high schools was a white assistant superintendent. And the man who took over the vocational schools and adult education evening programs was a Negro. We established here two principles: one was appointment on a basis of merit; and the other was unification of the school system, which brought all the resources under one command, so to speak, and under one unified approach.

Teacher selection was on a single basis — the same standards for all teachers, the same requirements, the same examination. Two supervisory staffs were made one so that we could unify supervisory approaches and the attack upon educational problems under one leadership and with a sharing and diffusion of the techniques of improvement in instruction, both among the former negro schools and the former white schools.

Enrollment at the beginning of the 1958 school year was 74 per cent Negro. Attendance by race was as follows:

White . . . . .	29,569
Negro . . . . .	84,650
Total . . . . .	114,219

Assignment of staff by race was as follows:

2,731 teachers, in 83 buildings, 61.5 per cent of the staff were racially mixed.

278 teachers, in 19 buildings, 6.3 per cent of the staff had all-white faculties.

1,431 teachers, in 67 buildings, 32.2 per cent of the staff, had all-negro faculties.

Totals: 4,440 teachers in 169 buildings.

We found that parental support of teachers follows adequacy of performance. A negro high school teacher, assigned to a senior high school which was predominantly white, was praised in a letter to the Superintendent for spending extra time and effort with her child. Another parent, a colonel in the United States Air Force, praised the work of the director of the reading clinic and one of his staff in dealing with the reading problems of his son:

In connection with the improvement of the school work of my son, I am prompted to write this letter in appreciation of the fine, unselfish and objective efforts of these outstanding persons.

**RESULTS OF INTEGRATION**

There was some evidence that there was an exodus of white families as a result of integration, although may I point this out to you, a point that is rarely spoken of — that Washington was undergoing the same urban experiences of every other major city in the country; great numbers of Negroes were moving into the low rent districts and the tenement areas of the city from the rural south, and white families were moving out into the suburbs — primarily to get better, more open conditions for their children. And may I also suggest to you that negro families do the same thing when they can. As the negro economic status improves, as they can find better housing for their children, they also move out. So I say, rather emphatically, that what we have seen here is a demonstration of a common social phenomenon, rather than a result of integration.

One of the major charges made against us has been that desegregation lowered academic standards. Let me give you the logic behind this situation.

Up to 1954, and including 1954, our school organization consisted of two branches coming together at the trunk under the direction of a single superintendent, each one jealous of its own responsibilities; there was no inter-relationship. We had one system of testing, city-wide, for the white schools. We did not have a city-wide testing system for the negro schools. We had, prior to 1954-55, results only from testing in the white schools. The effect of this is demonstrated in one brief statistic: in 1953 the median grade equivalent in reading for the sixth grades in the white schools was 7.2. This was above the national standard of about 6.2 — one grade above.

When all of the sixth grades were tested in 1954, the grade equivalent for all the children in the sixth grades was 4.9. Who with any sense of logic at all could say that this resulted from integration? Obviously what we have shown is that we faced the facts for the first time. We had the condition, but we didn't discover it until 1954. I think one of the most damning things in this process of segregation is that tendency to sweep the problems under the rug rather than to do something about them.

We are making generally steady gains in improving the scholastic achievements of the children at most grade levels. As we do this the negro enrollment is going up. We are demonstrating a corresponding parallel improvement in academic standards and achievements. But actually, the process should have been something like this: because so many of the negro children come from culturally deprived homes, they come into the schools without the adequate preparation which most white children enjoy. So that, logically, as the negro proportion goes higher we should expect a reduction in standards. We have reversed that trend.

There is objective evidence to show that. For example, in the ninth grade, in Paragraph Meaning, the 1955-56 median was 7.9. In 1957-58 it was 9.0. In Arithmetic Reasoning, 7.8 — 8.5. In the eighth grade about the same thing. Paragraph Meaning, 6.8 to 7.8. Do you see the trend?

An example is the case of West Elementary School for March, 1959, in which we made a special study because of very unusual gains made by the sixth grade over the fifth grade. Here is another point I want to stress and I think it ought to be stressed everywhere when we talk about education: that the real measure of the school system is how far it takes children from the point at which they're found when they come into the school. This is educational horsepower. This does not relate to national standards. This relates to what the school does for the children when they are under its jurisdiction.

One sixth grade class at West School this year reported a median of 8.7 in reading as against the national norm for this testing period of 6.6. When this same group of children — and these are the same children because we traced them back to the fifth grade pupil by pupil — the fifth grade median was 6.3. Tremendous improvement. Class B, the second sixth grade class, had a 7.2 median against last year's 4.5.

Another class, 4.5 last year; 6.4 this year. Now what is the racial composition of these three classes of sixth graders at the West School? The

racial composition of the school, as a whole, is 572 Negro, 84 white. The faculty ratio, 12 white, 8 Negro. Demonstrating, without a doubt, that with concentrated energy under effective educational leadership, these children improve their academic achievement.

I am going to report very briefly on some of the results in our four-track curriculum. We've started what we call an ability grouping program in the senior high schools, and we are extending it to the elementary and junior high schools. We have an honors group, a regular college preparatory group, the general group and the basic group.

We found over a thousand children in our tenth grade in 1955 were reading at sixth grade level or below. Some say this is the result of integration. I say it is more likely the result of a long process of segregation. Nevertheless, it is the problem. So we established this four level curriculum, including an opportunity for the basic students to become better, an opportunity for the honor students to get the maximum educational opportunity at their level. We did this for two reasons: one, to be sure that every child, regardless of his level of achievement when he comes into our school system, would have an opportunity for instruction at his level, and secondly, to make clear to the citizens of the community that no child would suffer academically — white or negro — under the process of desegregation.

I will give you one set of statistics on that, although we have a great deal of information on it. We found that in the present senior class, a large number, 2,481 out of a class of some 3,000, had been tested in the ninth grade. We tested them again, with an equitable test, in the twelfth grade. In basic Social Concepts the median percentile rank went from 19 to 42. 19 was extremely low — in percentile ranks 50 is the midpoint. This group of students moved from this position to 42, which is, I think, almost unbelievable; yet here are the facts.

In Correctness of Expression this group had tested at 54 percentile rank two years and eight months ago. They now scored a percentile rank of 72.

In our present sixth grade class of 7,878 pupils, children have achieved the national median or above in 5 out of 6 test categories: paragraph meaning, word meaning, arithmetic computations, spelling, language and a couple of others that I can't recall at the moment. Three of these median scores met the national norm. Two were above; one was slightly below. And comparing the achievement records of sixth grade classes from 1956 through this year we find a steady gain, step by step, to the point that this group of children have attained, for the most part, the national median level. Percentage of Negroes in this particular class at present is 72. I believe that there is being demonstrated here a highly significant point in education: that, given an opportunity to overcome shortcomings with better educational privileges, all children will respond.

#### EFFECTS ON SCHOOL SERVICES

Integration has made maximum utilization of school buildings possible. Prior to 1954, our white schools were not filled to capacity and our negro schools were overflowing. For example:

Buchanan (white)	64 undercapacity
Payne (Negro)	87 overcapacity
Raymond (white)	358 undercapacity
Park View (Negro)	532 overcapacity
Kingsman (white)	113 undercapacity
Pierce (Negro)	90 overcapacity

Integration has meant equalization of staffs in our schools. In 1954 the pupil-teacher ratio for negro schools at the elementary level was 38.2 and for white schools, 34.5. In 1955 the ratio for all elementary schools was 35.2. We have increased the number of special classes. For example:

Classes for atypical pupils
October, 1954: 74
October, 1958: 163
Classes for social adjustment
October, 1954: 15
October, 1958: 31
Number of reading clinic personnel
October, 1954: 6
October, 1958: 26

In 1954 we had 13 research assistants in psychology; we now have 22. In 1954 we had no psychiatric social workers or clinical psychologists; we now have two social workers and four clinical psychologists.

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SINCE 1954**

The percentage of negro pupils in Washington schools has increased from 60.8 per cent in 1954 to 74.1 per cent in 1958. The negro population of the city has gone from 42 to 52 per cent in the same time period. Per capita income of Negroes remains low:

	<i>White</i>	<i>Non-white (95 per cent Negro)</i>
U.S.	\$4339	\$2410
Urban	4827	2976
South	4428	2425

The effect of low income is cultural and economic deprivation of children. More than 7,000 children are estimated to be in need of free lunches. An extension of school services is needed to raise the educability of children.

We've been charged with having schools in which discipline is a horrible thing: knifings, rapings and blackboard jungles in general. I want to extend a personal invitation to each of you to come out and see for yourself. We have people visiting us from all over the country and all over the world. They walk through our schools and see classes in good order and see teachers working hard.

We have problems — who doesn't? We've been charged with contributing to illegitimate pregnancies because of the desegregation process, which is erratic and irrational. The conditions which have been described result from community and social conditions, lack of opportunities, a different set of mores in homes and different communities. The school is the major source — I say this regretfully because I think the Church fails to do this too often — of hope for these young men and women. Desegregation does not contribute to the problem but helps reduce it.

As a matter of fact, the story on juvenile delinquency in Washington is phenomenal. The Commissioner's report shows that there has been a drop in crimes committed by negro youths in the 5 to 17 age bracket of from 37 per thousand to 21 per thousand. It has been cut almost in half.

The Report of the Committee on the Judiciary of the United States Senate commends the schools of Washington for steps taken to provide a program for boys too disturbed to be handled in a regular school. We have established a special school for them. The report further states:

In addition to these short-range emergency measures which were developed to handle the immediate problems, the subcommittee also feels that the long-range outlook has been intelligently approached in the school system's four-track plan. Within this system, special efforts are made to motivate and to reach children of the lower intellectual and achievement levels. This should have the effect of keeping these children interested and occupied and in school. As we know, it is at this level that failing children tend to drop out of school, and once dropping out, tend to get into further trouble—many times of a delinquent nature.

Thus the long-range outlook looks brighter, as we feel that this program will tend to keep the less gifted children within the school and relatively well adjusted.

The Washington experience proves, I think, that behavior problems are not race centered but pupil problems which are common to all school systems.

#### DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

At first glance it may seem out of place to discuss the effect of discrimination because of race in the employment of youth as a part of a paper on the subject of school desegregation. Consideration, however, reveals clearly the connection between conditions in the fields of employment and educative processes within a public school system.

In the first place education does not take place separately from community factors including the employment problem. The attitudes, points of view, and purposes of children are generally oriented in terms of economic opportunities available to them or as they see them likely to be available in the future. Even in the basic academic subjects, such as reading and mathematics, children's motivations are more constructive if they see that success in the school setting will open opportunities for economic achievement when school days are over.

It is therefore patently clear that one of the mental health problems in the school setting, occurring I am sure whether the schools are desegregated or segregated, has to do with what happens to children if they are consciously or only sub-consciously aware of economic limitations imposed upon them by the accident of color.

In the Washington area it is well known that young Negroes have much more limited opportunities for employment than young whites. This can be spelled out in the fact that there are still limitations imposed by some of the building trades unions in the apprenticeship of Negroes and in certain of the department stores in the employment of negro salespeople, and then along with this many unrecognized but implicit limitations imposed upon the selection of employees by the simple fact that an applicant is Negro.

Thus, it is that the problem of racial discrimination in employment has an adverse effect upon the attitudes of pupils in our schools. It impairs their wholesome personal development and requires the imposition upon them of the capacity to look much further ahead than most of us have to do for opportunities which may open up in the distant future and on the basis of this far-sightedness be motivated to prepare themselves for these opportunities when they are available.

This is asking too much of the average youth, negro or white, because most often aspirations must be fairly realizable and fairly close at hand if they are to serve as a basis for stimulating productive study and preparation.

### *Conclusion*

I think this in essence is the big Washington story. We have said that our job is to educate all of the children that come into our classrooms. This is an American right. This is a moral right. This is a necessity for good community relationships and for national survival. As we have striven through the past years to improve educational opportunities in terms of better budgets — I can't begin to go into that — and as we have unified and stressed educational problems rather than being involved in all this terrific conflict, which is extraneous to the needs of children, our children are making progress.

The claim we make is a very simple one: set up your schools, unify them, teach children, concentrate on their educational needs and moral needs and physical needs; coordinate the community resources toward this end. Do this and these unforgivable conflicts among good people, people who ought to know better, will disappear. Just give people a chance to work together. I think minor miracles, and maybe even major ones, can be performed.