

taken steps such as the following: Are there any Negroes on the teaching staff? Are there any Negroes in any status positions within the staff? Do students have the opportunity to come into contact with Negro leaders in the role of resource people in the classrooms? Are the Negroes active in the PTA? Do Negroes hold any positions of status in the parent organizations of the school? Do teachers find it difficult to work with Negro students? Are human relations workshops made available to teachers so that they can increase their skill in working with people who come from different backgrounds?

The steps in integration are varied. They are the local problem and responsibility of each community in the na-

tion. They are the problem of each individual, Negro and white. As individuals, each of us must examine his desires for superiority, and recognition, and his actions of exclusion and retribution. We must scrutinize our way of work to see whether we are contributing to improved communication, increased understanding and greater acceptance of individuals on the basis of contribution rather than classification.

If integration is to be accomplished, we must each attempt increasingly to understand and to value diversity as a method of enriching culture and living for all of us.

*We have come a long way; we have a long way to go.*

---

GEORGE S. MITCHELL

## Reaching the Hidden Springs

**In working out together the considerable adjustments of desegregation, white and Negro citizens are participating in a constructive effort that will be of benefit to all.**

**F**IRST LET us make some attempts at theory. When a minority people is put off in a special category, scorned and kept out of opportunity and out of participation in public life, and away from self-respect, certain reactions may develop. Many thus injured may resort to the one available weapon—non-cooperation disguised as indifference—a subtle kind of sabotage. Many heroically overcome the system, but most are caught by it. This process has been

going on in the South for two or three centuries, and a lot of people think such an arrangement is foreordained. It takes a bit of a jolt to reverse old habits, and it may be just the good luck of the U. S. A. that the Supreme Court's decisions are the kind of tug that will accomplish the change. For the change can be made. The problem is to reach in some manner the hidden springs of a people's character; to bring to full alertness ambition, purpose, re-

sponsibility. In colonial countries this has come about through the magic energy of national feeling; in the American South there is a good chance that the same result will flow from the Nation's decision to get rid of segregation in the public schools, and hence of segregation generally.

I have thought about the matter a good deal, and the best answer I can give to the problem of reaching the hidden spring is for communities to give significant public and private recognition for equal human dignity. That is the initial tug. And after the first pull, if there is reasonable follow-up on both sides, the whole engine heads in a new direction, toward full achievement.

The Supreme Court intelligently set the stage for this kind of recognition and it begins to happen. Probably it would be impossible to combine schools that had been racially segregated unless there were quite a lot of conferring and fact-finding and joint planning by white and Negro citizens. And this joint planning affords the recognition of equal human dignity. This effort sounds small, but in nine-tenths of the towns and country places of the South there just never has been a time when in a spirit of equality representatives of the two races have sat down together to work out a major public responsibility. In the interchange, members of both groups get absorbed in solving the common problem, forget about race, and work together as friends. And thereafter the town can unravel almost anything that involves racial factors.

In a significant number of places, large enough to amount to a spreading

---

*George S. Mitchell is executive director of the Southern Regional Council, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.*

---

pattern, the local school board is by an official act impaneling a citizens' committee, white and Negro, to find the facts and advise the school board on a course of action. That is it. The two groups work together, judge each other's quality and sincerity, and grow in mutual understanding. More important, for the first time the Negro members of the group, if they have been honestly chosen as brave and forthright representatives of their people, are challenged to reach agreements that everybody will keep. That is the missing item of responsibility. Heretofore, when the whole school board was of one race only, no self-respecting Negro felt that he had any real responsibility to cooperate with the things the school board ruled upon. He was not in on the deal. But when he is brought in, when he is given every opportunity to define and defend his strongest demands (all knowing that these demands have potentially the backing of law), and he agrees to a course of desegregation that in his judgment (checked with his people) is defensible, then he is responsibly involved and so is the great majority of the Negro community thereabouts. And the chances are excellent that Negro citizens who show courage in such committees will in a year or two appear as regularly elected members of the school board itself.

Once a change in community attitudes is begun, the school children can be trusted to show quick adjustment. Admittedly in most places there is

some cultural difference between the two sets of children. And in the first weeks of school such a difference will show quite noticeably. But the incentives will be powerful for the weaker group to come up to the highest standard. That is what has happened in the armed forces. Officialdom used to say that integration would impossibly dilute performance; quite to the contrary, integration in a blessedly short time produced performance all around at the highest going standard. And on the consequent unity still greater efficiency can be based. So it will ordinarily be with the schools, if officials and others make honest and careful effort to help along the process.

### Gathering Momentum

Now exactly where in the South are such things happening? Well, for example, citizens' committees officially advising the local school board have appeared in Houston and Hot Springs, and in Fayetteville County, Kentucky, in Charlotte and Winston-Salem and Norfolk and Nashville and Chattanooga and St. Petersburg, and in other places besides. Obviously people are telling each other that this gets ahead with the job.

As to where desegregation has actually occurred, the answer is--on the fringes of the South. All along it has been the prediction of knowledgeable people that desegregation moves in the public schools would be made first in the easier places. The farther away you get from the old plantation counties, at the heart of the Lower South and in the delta of the Mississippi, the slighter the Negro population. Hundreds of counties within the boundaries of

Southern States have less than five per cent Negro population, and other hundreds have less than ten or fifteen per cent. For example, you may find some hill-country county, with seven Negro families up Jackson's Creek, where there used to be a sawmill. It costs like mischief to run a separate school for the sixteen Negro children. And what do you do about the ones that want to go to high school? Separate and equal staff and facilities? That sets you back around a hundred thousand dollars. Obviously it is sensible to open the white school to these Negro children, and many and many a county school superintendent in those parts of the South is more than anxious to open up the schools in this manner, and save the ten or fifteen thousand dollars a year he knows is being wasted and wishes to put onto the schools in general.

It is in such places, and in dry-land counties of the Southwest, that schools are actually going to accomplish desegregation this autumn. Plus schools conducted on Army posts. Plus Oak Ridge, which has discontinued its Negro high school. In all you may count over a hundred counties in the South in which one or more public schools this fall will open with some children of both races. But not one of these schools (unless under Federal management) is in the old plantation country, and few are anywhere near the edges of it. However, the pattern has appeared, and people will very soon find out that Negro children do pretty well in school, that Negro and white parents working together can improve the running of the school system. So the pattern will spread. I would guess that it

would spread quite broadly toward the more difficult areas, in which to the difference in race is added a heavy inheritance of difference in class status, but that here and there even in the more difficult areas integration would be achieved early, by law or agreement. And the whole process, from easy spots to the harder ones, ought not to take more than a few years.

It is not to be forgotten, and events will not let it be forgotten, that these movements spread of their own gathering momentum. A highly popular resolve to be equal and free cannot be put down. Never mind the examples; look around you at the world today, where colonial management has had to withdraw its hand from country after country.

---

HARRY BARD

## A Baltimorean Reports on Desegregation

This article is a documented report on desegregation in the Baltimore City Public Schools. The account should give courage and assistance to school people and citizens in other communities as they work together to institute similar changes.

**H**OW MAY WE measure success in human relations? One way is through noting the absence of strife, tension and perhaps overt conflict. With this as a measure Baltimore's desegregation program, now one year old, has been highly successful; except for a brief incident, the period has been devoid of controversy. The presence of attitudes of acceptance, sharing, working together, however, is a more positive way of measuring progress. At the end of June 1955 about 2000 Negro youngsters were enrolled in 48 of the 109 schools formerly designated as white. In each of these biracial

school situations, classwork, assembly programs, club activities and PTA functions have gone on as before, except that teachers have used this extension of already heterogeneous groupings to support the view that *American strength comes through diversity*. These successes do not imply that all problems have been solved, or that *integration*, a much more complex process than *desegregation*, has been achieved. Yet the results of the first

---

*Harry Bard is assistant director, Curriculum Bureau, Baltimore City Department of Education, Baltimore, Maryland.*

---

Copyright © 1955 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.