

file

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Charleston, West Virginia, May 5, 1940

Mr. O.L. Emerick, Division Superintendent, and
The County School Board of Loudoun County,
Leesburg, Virginia.

Contentment:

As I have been forced to start South on urgent and public questions of far-reaching import, I find I shall not be back in Washington in time to be present at the May 14 meeting of the School Board. I therefore send this letter so that my absence may be understood. I expect to be in Washington soon after May 15 and will contact Mr. Emerick at the earliest date convenient to both of us for further discussion of the situation, with the hope we may still be able to work out a progressive and cumulative program and avoid litigation which none of us desires.

At the last meeting of the Board which I had the privilege to attend, April 9, I was impressed with the thought that the Board and Superintendent recognized the necessity of a progressive program for ultimate equalization of Negro education, with immediate beginning, and that we were on the way toward working out a solution for first steps. Mr. Emerick's letter of April 11, while it did not go the distance which we believe just and necessary, was definitely a concrete proposal for action along the desired path. I waited hopefully for the action of the Board of Supervisors April 22. No person could have been more shocked or disappointed than I when the Board of Supervisors eliminated entirely the proposed supplementary appropriation for the improvement of Negro education 1940-41 recommended by the School Board.

I do not find myself called upon to analyze the action of the Board of Supervisors, but I respectfully but firmly point out to the Division Superintendent and the School Board that the failure of the Board of Supervisors to make the supplemental appropriation does not for a moment relieve the Division Superintendent or the School Board from the duty of equalizing educational opportunities for the Negro children of Loudoun County. Ways and means I respectfully submit are not my problem, not holding any official position in the County. I had hoped a way had been found, but the Board of Supervisors killed that hope temporarily. We are back now to the position we originally started from.

I sincerely ask that the Division Superintendent and the School Board give the most careful thought and consideration to the problem at the May 14 meeting. No one desires litigation. But if the Negro citizens are forced to court for the protection of their constitutional rights, I hope the officials and white population of the County will recognize that we are fighting to preserve democratic rights in a free country, and that democracy is as democracy does.

Yours respectfully and sincerely,

Charles H. Houston