

**GUEST EDITORIAL**

**NEED FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

By Cranford Crawford

It has long been apparent that parents must become involved with the Clark County School District in seeing that their children receive the best possible education coupled with fair treatment in the classroom. Parents cannot rely on the judgement of teachers and administrators to deal completely fair with their children. Many school officials are too concerned with doing the expedient thing for themselves that they disregard the rights of students, resulting in many students being mistreated and unjustly labelled a classroom problem. Many parents believe that they have no recourse in getting problems resolved with the school system on an individual basis. This is quite true in the majority of cases, but rapidly changes when a group of parents with a similar problem demand positive results with attention being given to the solution of their children's problems. The school district verbalizes interest in doing what is best for the child and his education but never favorably follows through when a Black student is thrown into difficulty with the system, often through no fault of his own. A most glaring example of this occurred recently.

A 7th grade Black student at William Orr Jr. High School was choked by a white male teacher. The incident occurred when four girls (2 Black, 2 white) engaged in light conversation. One Black girl dropped an Afro-comb and the other Black girl stooped to pick it up. At this point, one white girl impulsively tripped her and the Black girl responded by hitting her back. With no further exchanges, the four girls departed.

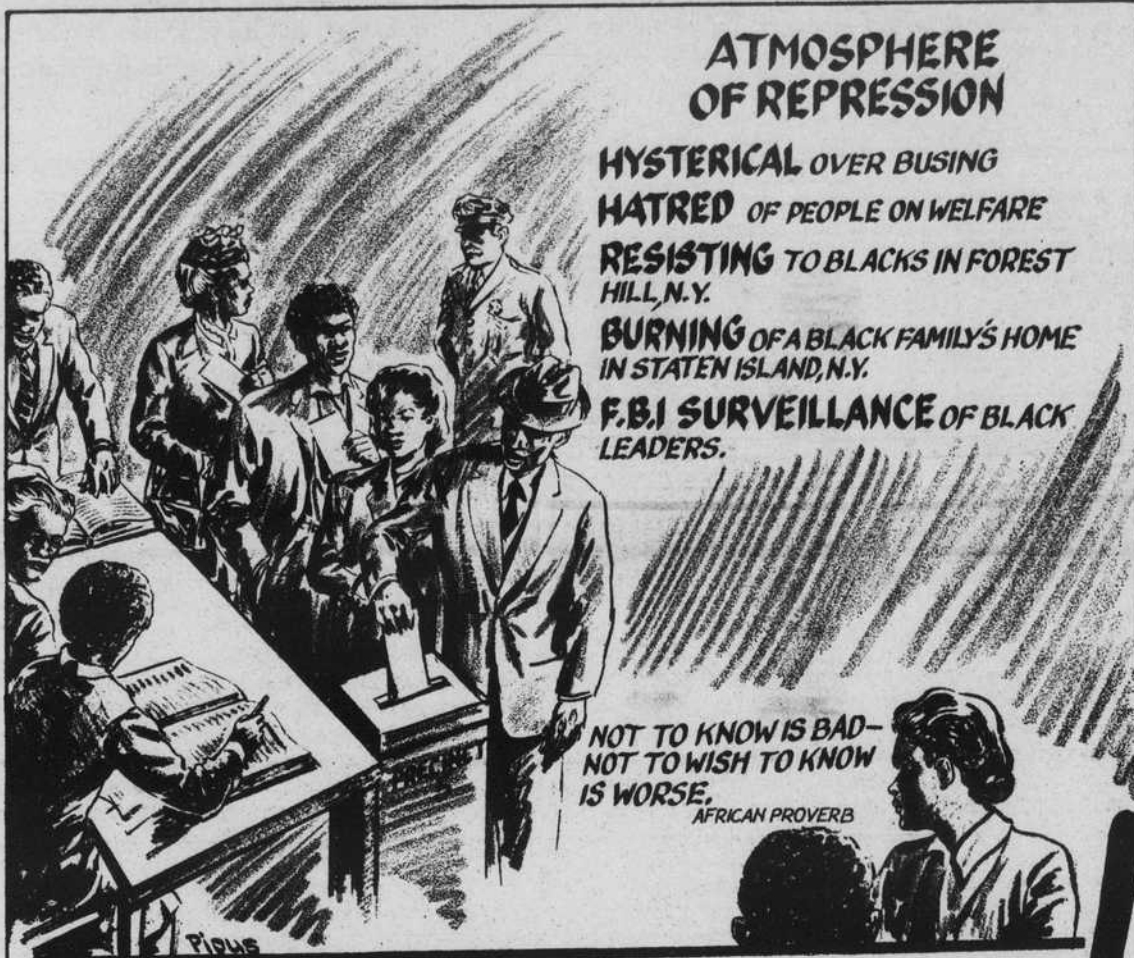
Several moments later, the 2 white girls re-approached the 2 Black girls along with a white teacher. The teacher started questioning the girl who had reportedly hit his daughter. The Black girl explained what had happened; when she looked away from him, he took hold of her neck and told her that he would send her straight to Opportunity School if she ever hit his daughter again.

He then took her into the principal's office and left her unattended, apparently expecting the principal to discipline her. In the meantime, an unidentified student called the girl's home to report that she was being choked by the teacher. When the mother arrived at the school, her daughter was sitting alone in the principal's office crying. When the principal was located, he called the teacher into his office to explain to the mother what had happened. The teacher admitted to the mother that he had taken hold of her daughter's neck, but had not choked her. Later that day, the girl was examined by a doctor who stated that she had been choked. The girl's father visited the school, but the principal refused to allow him to talk with the teacher who had choked his daughter. The mother was subsequently advised to file a criminal complaint against the teacher.

I accompanied the mother to the school to discuss the incident with the principal, but he refused to talk with her in my presence. We then went to the Clark County School District administrative offices, to talk with the principal's supervisor. Since he was unavailable, we talked with the Director of Pupil Services who assured us that the matter was under investigation and would be reviewed by the proper persons for action. At a later interview with the principal's supervisor, we were again assured that the matter would be handled and the mother would be notified of the results of the investigation.

It was also stated that the principal was acting on the supervisor's advise not to discuss the incident or any such incident with persons who were not the legal guardian of the children involved. He never adequately answered why the principal did not talk to us, even though the mother had requested that I accompany her there.

Several days later the mother heard from the principal that the teacher had been reprimanded and if any incident like this happened again, he would be terminated. Since the sheriff's department was waiting on the School District to discipline the teacher, to the best of our knowledge



**REGISTER-VOTE!**

as of this date, they have never arrested or even questioned the teacher regarding the incident. The only way the mother could get any satisfaction in this matter was to hire a personal attorney even though she first appealed to the normal procedures required by the School District.

A detailed written account of this entire incident was forwarded to the members of the Clark County School Board and they responded by reaffirming the action taken by the principal.

What does this say about justice in the Clark County School District? Will every parent who has a legitimate complaint against a school have to fight through court to get justice? What happens to the children who are mistreated and whose parents cannot afford an attorney?

Black parents have no recourse unless they combine their collective strength and monitor the schools for the best interests of their children. Parents must become more involved in knowing what happens in their children's schools and organize to see that those schools act justly with the welfare of those children. Those persons interested in working for better educational experiences for their children should contact Cranford Crawford, Black Community Developer, 648-2880, 648-2660. There is a lot to be done and parents should be totally involved!

**SOCIAL REFORM, NOT "BLACK" SOLUTION**

By Bayard Rustin

The National Association of Black Social Workers has recently issued a policy statement which could have detrimental implications for Black Americans and for all who are concerned with social progress. The statement, made in the form of a resolution at the organization's national convention, denounced the placement of black orphans with families for either adoption or foster care, calling the practice "a growing threat to the preservation of the black family."

I do not intend to dwell at length on the practical consequences of such a position. It is necessary to comment only that the adoption of this policy by child welfare agencies would deprive thousands of black orphans of any possibility of the benefits of a family environment.

But the issue is important on another level for it reflects, in a fairly dramatic manner, a growing mood among black professionals to de-

fine the problems of the black poor as somehow separate and distinguishable from those ills which afflict the rest of society's impoverished and seek solutions based on race, rather than economic or social reform. As if the problems of drug addiction, unemployment, illegitimacy and disease could be solved if everyone turned white overnight.

This philosophy has in turn led to the formation of separate black organizations in a growing list of professions--teachers, policemen, reporters and social workers to name just a few as well as black caucuses within trade unions.

The leaders of these organizations are often talented and ambitious. They are disturbed by the pace of black progress generally, but they are equally disturbed about their own professional status. They have incorrectly, I believe, mistaken their ambitions for the needs of the Negro masses. The result is to project solutions limited to a given discipline rather than an overhauling of the economic system.

They perceive, correctly, that society has failed and is failing the black child despite anti-discrimination laws and federal programs. But the crucial question for all black people is why has society failed? And is it only black children with whom society has dealt harshly?

I would suggest that society's shortcomings are not the result of an inherent, deeply-imbued and oppressive racism, although prejudice and discrimination are still important problems to overcome. But poverty, and all the evils attached to it, is not due solely or even largely to racism, but to an economic system already weighted to those with wealth and power. And poverty, let us not forget, is color blind; it pursues the Appalachian farmer as relentlessly as it pursues the black child.

(See SOCIAL REFORM, page 9)

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