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Decision Has Been Expected

It could be said of the Morganton city school board that in voting for pupil assignments which will integrate four local schools it did only what it had to do and that failure to act at this time would have brought the compulsion of court orders as the next step.

But the negative air of such an appraisal is unfair to members of a board who obviously have devoted much time to consideration of a problem in the light of law and local conditions.

We would prefer to consider it in a more positive approach as an action that is right, as well as inevitable, and which demonstrated aggressively such good faith as would be expected from intelligent representatives of what we like to consider an intelligent community.

The Board of Education deserves commendation, with no room for criticism, for meeting headlong an issue which had to be faced. Morgantonians have known for some time that assignment laws and court precedent have removed all justification from a practice of requiring, for example, some small Negro children to walk from one end of town to another to go to school when at least two other schools were nearer their homes. Under present conditions, that could not be expected to continue. All thoughtful residents of the community have realized it.

For whatever consideration it is worth, there is reason to believe that applications for reassignment did not represent a well organized integration move on the part of Negroes generally. If it had been, students involved would have been handpicked by the planners for high intelligence to assure successful scholastic work to make a good showing. But because geography was a primary consideration, the group must be classed as "run of the mill," including those of such capacity they should have no trouble with their studies and others, as would be found in any group regardless of race, who will have to work hard to keep up with their class.

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This would apply to a comparable number of white students but the reassigned Negro students, along with their families and friends, will naturally be watched with extraordinary interest by white and colored alike because their transfer will place them in a situation in which their attitude and industry, as well as grades, will make either easier or more difficult their personal adjustment and shape the public attitude toward this phase of non-segregation.

The Negro community must recognize that the Board of Education acted in good faith and in a spirit of good will and it is up to them to reciprocate. There should be no hypersensitivity either to discipline or grading. If there is in their number a student who gets a low grade—(and it would be surprising if there aren't some in such a group, whether white or Negro)—there should be no feeling of discrimination or persecution over a grade which would be accepted as a matter of course in their previously segregated school. Herein Negro leaders can exert influence toward an attitude that the school board has given their children an opportunity for a non-segregated education, assuring them equal treatment in all respects, and what they do with it is up to them.

There is need for all thoughtful Morgantonians to consider how they can cooperate in an atmosphere of good will toward a smooth transition into this new venture in education. Parent-Teacher Associations, civic clubs, the Human Relations Council, business groups and all others interested in promoting the welfare of Morganton should ponder how they can actively promote the positive acceptance of a step that marks, even in token form, a departure from the past.

It is not enough to say hopefully that Morgantonians are too mature and too enlightened to engage in petty display of racial prejudice and bitterness. It should go beyond that to the creation of an attitude of good faith and good will which should prevail throughout the community when the school term begins over two months from now.

The school board could do no less than what it did. And it has the right to expect that an earnest, thoughtful citizenry of both races will accord it nothing less than full cooperation.