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Tentative

ONE DISTRICT FOR ATLANTA AND FULTON COUNTY SCHOOLS?

Studies of public education in the Atlanta and Fulton County school districts have been underway most of the time since the early years following the close of World War II. The continuous and rapid growth of the Atlanta metropolitan area and the character of this growth have focused attention on problems and issues many of which strongly influence the public schools. The desire of citizens to provide educational programs of high quality has stimulated constant concern for the satisfactory resolution of these problems and issues. The quest for better schools is a thread which runs through all of the various special studies of education during this period.

Some of the studies were authorized by one or both of the local school boards, while others were authorized by the General Assembly of the State of Georgia. The latest of those initiated by the General Assembly was authorized in 1963. It created a Local Education Commission composed of nineteen citizens from the two school districts. The Legislature empowered the Commission "to study the desirability and feasibility of combining the school systems of Fulton County and the City of Atlanta, including the portion thereof lying in DeKalb County; to provide that said Commission may draft a plan or plans for the combining of such school systems and submit same to members of the General Assembly from Fulton and DeKalb Counties."

This Commission can profit from previous studies by taking into account their findings and conclusions as they relate to consolidation.

BRIEF REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

The question of whether or not the Atlanta and Fulton County school districts should be combined into a single district has been debated for a good many years. The Local Government Commission of Fulton County gave considerable attention to the consolidation issue in a report of its studies which was issued in 1950. The Commission did not recommend merger of the two school systems because of (1) the "huge cost that would be involved in raising the county system up to city salary and kindergarten standards", (2) the "vast physical job involved in consolidation."

However, the Local Government Commission did not set forth educational reasons as a justification for not recommending consolidation. The report stated that its proposals should not stand in the path of ultimate unification of the two school districts and expressed the view that it would be easier to effect consolidation after changes had been made which minimized the differences in the two school systems. The Commission further expressed the view that combining of the schools would be made easier "if in the meantime the tri-cities and the rural areas would assume a larger share of their school costs."

However, the Commission did recommend certain changes which have had a profound effect on education in the Atlanta-Fulton County school districts. The report, known as the Plan of Improvement, recommended greatly enlarging the city limits of Atlanta and the consolidation of certain city and county services. This plan, as later put into effect by the General Assembly, resulted in the transfer of about 40 Fulton County schools and nearly half of the school enrollment in the County district to the school district of Atlanta. Furthermore, 72 per cent of the taxable wealth to support schools in the County district was included in the annexation. These changes took place in 1952.

Even though the two separate school districts remained in reality, a substantial step toward consolidation took place because of the reduction in the number of schools and in enrollment in the Fulton County district and the subsequent increase in the Atlanta district. Unfortunately, severe financial problems were created in what was left of the Fulton County school district because of the large proportion of taxable wealth to support schools which was transferred into the city district. The financial woes of the Fulton County schools have increased steadily since that time.

The General Assembly of Georgia created a Local Education Commission of Atlanta and Fulton County in 1958 to make a study of their educational systems and to draft a plan or plans for their improvement, submitting the plan or plans to the members of the General Assembly from Fulton and DeKalb counties. The Act stated that "such study shall give full consideration to the position of such systems within the total educational system of the State of Georgia, and the plan or plans shall include any changes in political and administrative and fiscal structure of either or both of such systems which the Commission deems desirable and feasible." Thus, concern for consolidation appears in this legislation and in the assignment of duties to the Commission.

This Commission first gave attention to the legal problems which would be involved in consolidation. Mr. G. Stanley Joslin, Professor of Law at Emory University, was commissioned to study the legal considerations which would be necessary if consolidation were undertaken. Mr. Joslin prepared a memorandum for the Commission on these matters.

The memorandum emphasized an important technical distinction between merger and consolidation, thus indicating two distinct ways in which unification might be achieved. Merger would involve one system becoming a part of the other, thus taking on all the powers and limitations inherent in the system which absorbed it. Consolidation means a completely new school system which would be

created from the present Atlanta and Fulton County districts. These districts would cease to exist when the new district came into being. The newly-created district would be new in every respect, including provisions for a board of education, school taxes, debt limitations, administrative officials, and operational procedures. Mr. Joslin stated that the new system could be constituted in a way that would permit the addition of other school systems or parts of such systems when and if the citizens affected so desired.

No major legal difficulties need be involved in consolidating the two systems according to Mr. Joslin. He recommended that if a decision is made to combine the two systems, consolidation would be better than merger. If merger were to be decided upon, fewer legal difficulties would be involved if the city system joined the county system rather than if the county system joined the city system.

The Commission then turned its attention to other aspects of the consolidation issue. Considerable research was conducted to determine the economic and financial advantages and disadvantages of unifying the two districts. The Commission became greatly interested in the educational implications of consolidation. Thereafter, it viewed consolidation primarily in terms of opportunities which could be provided for improving education in the metropolitan area.

After a careful study of the advantages and disadvantages of consolidation, the Commission decided that "consolidation is neither desirable nor practicable at this time." It went on to state that "consolidation will be much more feasible, in our judgment, if and when (a) the two separate systems have adopted similar policies with respect to kindergartens, (b) teacher pay scales of the two systems are either identical or at least much closer together than at present, (c) citizens of the Fulton County school district have voted to eliminate the Homestead Exemption for school operating tax purposes, and (d) the Atlanta-Fulton

County area has successfully passed through the impending school desegregation crisis." Stated another way, the Commission found itself favorably disposed toward consolidation but did not believe the time was right for the transition which would be required. It stated that mere consolidation of the two school districts per se would be neither good nor bad. The values of such a move lie in whether or not better schools could be provided for the metropolitan area than could be provided by two separate systems, and as economically.

However, the Commission did not drop the idea of improving schools in the metropolitan area by means of improved organizational arrangements. It concluded that a number of the advantages of consolidating the school systems could be achieved through the creation of machinery for joint action and for the development of joint programs by the Atlanta and Fulton County boards of education. Separate and independent action of the two boards on matters involving common interests lack the strength of joint action and would be less economical in cost. The search for ways to improve schools convinced the Commission that continuous research and experimentation were necessary if the improvement program it recommended was to be successfully executed. Furthermore, the demands on education are such that continuous research and experimentation are essential for a school program which is sufficiently up-to-date to meet current needs. These are examples of undertakings which would be more productive if engaged in jointly by the school systems rather than if each system developed its own separate programs.

To achieve these purposes, the Metropolitan School Development Council was created as a separate entity to serve both school systems and to be controlled jointly by them. The Council is the instrument through which many recommendations of the Local Education Commission have been achieved in full or in part. Its success is a demonstration of the ability and willingness of the two boards

of education and their professional employees to work cooperatively for better schools. The Council was viewed initially as a possible intermediate step toward eventual consolidation. This assumption is supported by the success of the Council.

The financial position of the Fulton County Board of Education rapidly deteriorated following the annexation program of greater Atlanta which was completed in 1952. After annexation was complete, only 28 per cent of the former taxable wealth remained for the education of Fulton County public school students, while the number of students remaining was 50 per cent of the total prior to annexation. School population in the County continued to increase at the rate of about 7 per cent each year, thus creating capital outlay problems as well as the necessity of increasing operational budgets. By 1963-64, the Board of Education found it necessary to reduce school support because there was no longer tax leeway for increasing the school budget. All bonding capacity for building purposes had been utilized, also. This dire situation prompted the Fulton County Board of Education to appoint a Study Commission of ten citizens of the County to find ways and recommend ways to the Board for alleviating the financial crisis which gripped the schools.

The Commission projected school enrollments, capital outlay needs, and operational budget needs for the Fulton County schools through the 1972-73 school year, assuming that schools of at least present quality were to be maintained. Eleven different possibilities of financing the schools were considered, all of which proved to be inadequate, if taken singly. It recommended a combination of alternatives for financing the schools of Fulton County, but it expressed grave concern for the future and recommended that the "study of what would be involved in merging the Fulton County and Atlanta school districts should be continued with a view to effecting such a merger when it is feasible."

All of these studies gave serious attention to consolidation and without exception they concluded that the directions toward which the two school systems should move lead to consolidation. As stated in one of the reports, the question seemed to be not whether there should be consolidation, but rather when should consolidation be effected.

DIMINISHING BARRIERS

In the meantime, certain of the barriers to combining the two school districts which were identified earlier have been either overcome or minimized. The State Minimum Foundation Program has been modified in ways which will not require a financial sacrifice in state aid should the two districts be united, as would have been the case earlier. The only loss would be the state allocation for the salary of one superintendent, about \$6,700, and there may be gains which would offset this loss, depending on the kind of new district to be created.

The level of financial expenditures of the two districts has been brought closer together, although troublesome differences remain. Questions concerning kindergartens are perhaps the most difficult.

The trends in school desegregation appear to be clearly established. While citizens generally seem to accept desegregation as a reality, problems which accompany the actual integration of schools are profoundly complex and their solutions are unclear. However, whether one or two school districts exist in Fulton County may be viewed as largely immaterial with reference to desegregation.

Perhaps the most important change is the growth of the two systems toward the same basic assumptions concerning education and the increase in productive cooperative efforts between the two systems. This is progress toward the kind of unity which is essential to physical consolidation.

NEW IMPERATIVES

Meanwhile, other transitions of great importance have been taking place. Foremost among these is the widespread recognition that the provision of education of increasingly high quality is an essential requirement of all districts if its people are to remain in the mainstream of modern civilization. Neither the schools of yesterday nor the schools of today will be adequate for tomorrow. Cultural transitions are taking place at a rate of speed which quickly render obsolete much of current education. Intensive efforts to find the best ways of providing the needed education are underway in many school districts. The national government is keenly aware of these needs as is evidenced by its increasing support of education at all levels. Education is now recognized as the only effective way of eliminating poverty, achieving worthy personal objectives, and developing more satisfactory communities, states, and nations.

The continued rapid growth of the Atlanta metropolitan area is another major force which deeply influences the schools and how they should be organized. A population of three million people is projected for the area by the year 2000. The basic structure of local government in the area has thus far been relatively unaffected by this growth, except for the annexation program completed in 1952. These units of government, including those for schools, become increasingly archaic as the metropolitan area continues its growth and development.

A major aspect of urbanization is the fact that as size increases so does cultural diversity. This complexity of interests and abilities necessarily increases interdependence because a metropolitan area permits many kinds of specialization which are supplementary to each other and when taken together constitute the entire area. Hence, the status of a given unit in such a complex affects the whole.

This is why no part of a metropolitan area can afford a second-rate school system. Therefore, the present fiscal condition of the Fulton County school district is a concern of the entire metropolitan area and not simply of the Fulton County school district alone. As pointed out above, a major imperative is the inability of the present Fulton County school district to sustain an adequate program of education. Since nothing has been done to alleviate the crisis in school finance underscored in the 1963 study, this imperative becomes more compelling.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT

Before taking a closer look at the question of consolidation, a brief discussion of school districts and their proper functions may be in order.

The American concept of public education includes provisions for substantial control of schools by local communities. The local school district, a creature of the state, was invented to enable people served by the schools to have a voice in their purpose and government. There are thousands of local school districts in America. These districts vary greatly in size and in population. They are easily classified into different types according to the kinds of schools they provide.

Much study of school districts by authorities suggests the following criteria for an adequate district:

1. It should have enough children to educate to enable schools to function effectively and economically.
2. It should be a reasonably complete social and economic unit.
3. It should have taxable wealth adequate to provide healthy local support.
4. It should have adequate bonding power for needed and anticipated capital outlay.

5. It should have tax leeway for both current operations and capital outlay.
6. It should have reasonable fiscal independence.

These criteria were applied to the Fulton County school district in the 1963 study. It was found that the district could meet only the first criterion. It, therefore, by no stretch of the imagination could be judged as an adequate school district. On the other hand, the Atlanta school district meets all of these criteria to a reasonable degree. Atlanta has already recognized a degree of responsibility for the Fulton County school district by supporting a $1\frac{1}{2}$ mill countywide tax for support of Fulton County schools. If the two districts were combined, the single district would be a sound and adequate district, if established on the basis of proper legal provisions.

REASONS FOR CONSOLIDATION

The foregoing discussion traces the historical development of consolidation as an issue and reviews the findings and recommendations of previous studies as they bear on the question. Current developments and trends are also identified and interpreted in relation to their impact on the structure of education in the Atlanta metropolitan area. These facts point clearly toward a single school district.

But the really persuasive reasons which should be considered in making a decision are concerned with consolidation as an instrument for achieving better educational programs for the metropolitan area, a more equitable support basis for the schools, and the provision of structural and procedural arrangements which will facilitate the economic use of personnel and financial resources in the ongoing development of more adequate education, and finally with the provision and stimulation of the research and experimentation which are essential

in the continuous improvement of education in the metropolitan area. These educational advantages to consolidation are listed and briefly discussed in the following pages.

A Better School District

Will Be Provided

The discussion above concerning the proper functions of a school district and the characteristics of a sound district clearly justify this conclusion. Furthermore, sound principles of political science as they relate to units of local government support this conclusion. In addition, maintaining and fostering good relationships with other units of local government would be enhanced by a single district. These factors are obviously related to the ease and convenience of governing the local schools.

Educational Opportunities Can Be

Equalized More Easily

The American dream has long stressed the right of every individual to secure an education. We now believe that every individual has the right to an education appropriate to his purposes, interests, abilities, and needs. Equality of educational opportunity, therefore, does not mean the same education for all, but it does mean the same level of quality for all insofar as is possible. The extreme diversity of cultural interests and socio-economic backgrounds which are found in the metropolitan area of Atlanta, and in any other metropolitan area, require a wide range of educational programs adapted to these basic differences in people. The current nationwide concern for providing more realistic educational programs for children in slum areas is an indication of this kind of need. The Atlanta district is vastly heterogeneous in composition, while

the Fulton County district is more homogeneous. Combining the two would make it possible to provide the variety of educational programs needed in a more economical and efficient manner.

The equalization of educational offerings in the present school districts of Atlanta and Fulton County seems virtually impossible. A single district would contribute much to making this a manageable task with minimum difficulties.

New and Needed Educational Programs Could
Be Provided More Economically

Neither school district has yet provided post-secondary education programs for which there is great need. Perhaps the fastest growing trend in American education is the development of comprehensive junior colleges. These institutions provide two years of academic work either for terminal purposes or for transfer to a senior college. They also usually offer programs in vocational-technical education and in adult education. It is increasingly clear that continuing education is a must for the adult citizen of tomorrow. Furthermore, the kind of world in which we live requires increasing amounts of education. A recent Educational Policies Commission report takes the position that we must provide two years of education beyond the high school at public expense for all high school graduates.

Fulton County is not financially able to provide junior colleges. It would not be the most economical plan for each district to provide its own junior colleges. A program for the metropolitan area would provide the best means of meeting this emerging educational need. The two districts have already found it profitable to cooperate in the provision of vocational education as reflected by the new vocational school which is to serve both districts and provisions for a second such institution.

More Adequate Curricula for Special
Student Groups Can Be Provided

The variety of curricula required to meet the diverse educational needs referred to above means special educational offerings for small groups of selected students. Reference is made to groups of children with serious physical handicaps, those suffering from severe mental retardation, children with extreme emotional difficulties, the exceptionally bright, and those with unusual talents. Since such programs are needed for only small numbers of children, they can be provided more economically if the student population to be served is drawn from the entire metropolitan area rather than if the two present school districts offer duplicate programs. Furthermore, the educational quality of offerings can be more readily improved in a unified district.

Certain Educational Programs and Services
Can Be Provided More Satisfactorily

The richness and depth of both teaching and learning are being enhanced by new discoveries concerning human growth and development. The contributions of science to the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes is increasing at a rapid rate. Integrating into curricula the accelerating flow of new and useful subject matter which the modern school program must offer if it is to remain effective is an increasingly difficult problem.

The modern school must be staffed by professional personnel who keep up with these continuing developments that affect their productivity. Systemwide continuous career development programs for personnel have become a necessity. This is one type of educational service which can be provided better on a metropolitan-wide basis rather than in terms of the present separate districts. The development and use of various learning resources and the appropriate utilization of

technological advances in teaching can be stimulated and fostered better through a single school district.

Required Improvements in Educational Quality

Can Be Achieved More Readily

The search for better schools is a common thread running through all considerations involved in deciding the consolidation question. Unless the ultimate consequence of unifying the two school districts is a better quality of education, there is little need to pursue the issue. Improvements in financing schools in administrative and supervisory services, and in the scope and variety of educational offerings can be justified only in terms of their educational import. The concept of a metropolitan area which is basic to the considerations of this paper demand an educational program for the Atlanta metropolitan area and not a series of separate and structurally unrelated programs.

The search for educational quality is now both universal and continuous. The pursuit of quality is complex in that it is concerned with everything that has a bearing on the educational programs offered by a school district. The unification of such efforts would certainly strengthen the opportunities and resources for enrichment of educational offerings.

Comprehensive, Long-Range Planning

Can Be More Effective

The increasing magnitude of educational responsibility has been stressed. The quantitative aspects of this problem will continue to increase. Projections which have been made through the next several years show no letdown in the rate of population growth. The indicated increase in the educational load calls for the most intelligent planning of which the people responsible are capable.

Since this growth ignores school district lines, adequate planning for new enrollment must also ignore these lines insofar as actualities permit. Comprehensive, long-range planning cannot be satisfactory if it is segmented on the basis of school district lines which have no constructive significance in the context of the metropolitan area as a whole.

More Effective Solutions to Common
Educational Problems Are Possible

Educational problems are not confined to areas marked off by school district lines, as has been emphasized. Some educational problems are unique to certain types of districts, as is true of Fulton County and Atlanta. But many such problems are common to the districts of an area, state, region, or nation. Those which are common seem to be on the increase. The school district which embraces as nearly a self-sufficient socio-economic unit as is possible provides the best structural framework for the consideration of educational problems. Solutions to these problems should not be restricted by artificial district lines which ignore the facts of life. A unified district would provide for a more constructive approach to problem solution than does the present dual approach. This is all the more important since most of the educational problems to be faced are common to the two districts.

More Effective Research Programs Can
Be Stimulated and Executed

As good schools have become more central to personal and community advancement, the place of research in education has become more apparent. Sound analyses of existing programs, the identification and description of strengths and weaknesses, and the determination of grounds for change require research. Planning

ahead so that there will be adequate classrooms and teachers for the children in school at the beginning of a given year rests back on sound research. School systems without strong research programs cannot achieve their maximum effectiveness. The complexity of a metropolitan area and the interrelationship of roles of its different segments require comprehensive research programs based on trends and needs of the entire area rather than of subdistricts which are separate school districts. Furthermore, economy and wise management dictate the metropolitan-wide approach to research.

Needed Experimentation and Educational
Invention Can Be Achieved More Readily

Major advances in our society depend heavily on invention and experimentation. This fact is well recognized in the world of science and technology. The role of invention and experimentation in the improvement of social institutions such as the schools is equally critical. Schools like the world in which they exist must change as their clientele changes. New curriculum materials must be developed and tested on experimental bases. New knowledge of human growth and development must be applied to teaching and learning on experimental bases. New teaching procedures and methods must be tested through tryout and evaluation. Heavy reliance upon invention and experimentation are crucial to needed educational advancement. There is no need for the school systems within the metropolitan area to engage in separate programs of this nature. The interests of both can be served better by unified programs, to say nothing of economies which could be effected.

More Extensive Use of Selected Educational
Facilities and Learning Resources Are Possible

Centers for acquiring, creating, distributing, and servicing curriculum materials, filmstrips, video tapes, films, and the necessary equipment for appropriate use of these materials are becoming common. The creation of teaching materials for local use and on the basis of needs unique to the local situation is an important function of these centers. The use of television in teaching and in professional development programs is increasing. The needed facilities for extensive television programs in the metropolitan area can be centered easily in one location.

It would be foolish to duplicate the above in different school districts serving the same metropolitan area. A single center can provide a constant flow of materials far richer and more comprehensive than would be possible with duplicate facilities in the separate districts.

Equity and Balance of Financial Effort
and Support Can Be Achieved

An axiom of educational finance which is accepted universally is that wealth should be taxed where it is in order to educate children where they are. The most glaring deficiency in the structure of public education in the Atlanta area violates this axiom. The center for commerce and industry is the City of Atlanta. Contributions of most Fulton County citizens to the economy of the metropolitan area are made largely in the City of Atlanta where they do their work. This wealth enriches Atlanta primarily, although the earnings paid to the individual may be spent wherever he chooses. The contribution of the city to support of schools in the Fulton County district is a $1\frac{1}{2}$ mill property tax. The industrial

wealth of the metropolitan area which is a major source of school revenue lies largely within the City of Atlanta.

No equitable system of financial support and effort is possible which does not take into account these economic facts. A single tax program for schools in the metropolitan area with the revenues distributed according to educational need is the only satisfactory answer to the financial dilemma of the Fulton County schools. This is Atlanta's problem as well as Fulton County's problem because of the previously stressed interdependence of the metropolitan area. A single school district would be the most simple and prudent way to achieve this goal. It should be pointed out that a new tax plan would be needed, for Atlanta is approaching the situation of Fulton County under its present tax system.

Greater Financial Stability is Possible

The disadvantages of heavy reliance on the property tax for the support of schools are well known. The primary advantage is that revenues from property taxes fluctuate less than do revenues from more sensitive barometers of economic health. Desirable stability in the financial structure of a school system in the final analysis is related to the soundness of the economy and the fairness of the system of taxation. The better balanced the tax program, the more stable the financial base of the schools. The more complete the economic district or area served by the school district as an economy in its own right, the more stable the local tax base for schools.

It goes without saying that combining the Atlanta and Fulton County districts into a single school system would provide a far sounder economic base for year-to-year stability in school support.

Economies are Possible

Consolidation cannot be justified as an economy measure, if this means an actual reduction in expenditures. Any plan for immediate unification of the two districts would really cost more than the sum of the current budgets of the two systems because costs would be equalized upward instead of downward, assuming the same quality of education is to be provided in the entire district. Nevertheless, some financial economies are possible because of the elimination of duplicate programs and services which can be handled better through single systems. In this connection, special reference is made to experimentation and invention, research, certain district-wide programs and services, specialized curricula for small student groups, and others enumerated in the listing above. These programs could be provided at higher quality levels on a unified basis at a lower unit cost than would be possible in dual programs.

However, the greatest economic gain to consolidation would be in the creation of opportunities to purchase more with the educational dollar rather than in the utilization of fewer educational dollars. This kind of economy is certainly to be sought and is of much greater importance than the mere saving of money. A good test of a school district is not how little money it spends, but how much education it buys for its expenditures.

The above identification and description of advantages to consolidation are predicated on certain assumptions concerning the new school district. Among these assumptions are the following: an adequate legal base for the new district will be provided; an administrative structure which will make possible the necessary leadership for educational advancement in the metropolitan area will be created; an adequate plan for financing the new school district will be adopted, and emphasis on continuously improving educational quality and extending educational services will be continued. Consolidation as such is of no value. It

is valuable only as it results in educational advancement, but it will not guarantee such advancement.

EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGES OF CONSOLIDATION

Educational reasons why consolidation is not desirable must be viewed against the backdrop of advantages. It will then be possible to weigh the two sets of reasons and determine the course of action which offers the most promise for educational advancement in the metropolitan area. It will be noted that reference is made to educational disadvantages rather than to other disadvantages or handicaps which might have to be faced in effecting consolidation.

A careful study of the educational problems which might result from consolidation indicates that such problems are related primarily to the factor of size of the district. Some of these problems are discussed below.

Difficulties in Maintaining Local Control

The capacity of schools to make needed adaptations which take into proper account the educational needs of their neighborhoods is related to the size of districts. Considerable uniformity of educational programs within districts has been traditional. As a rule, the larger districts offer a greater variety of educational needs which require much variation in offerings. This makes uniformity particularly undesirable in these districts. Current efforts to develop more realistic school programs for children in slum areas of cities is an example of the need for different kinds of programs according to community backgrounds. A reasonable degree of control must be vested in the local school community if these variations in educational needs are to be met. Neighborhood control generates local responsibility, interest and initiative which are essential to good schools.

Unhealthy Reliance on Bureaucracy

Where local control is missing, decisions are removed from the local scene. Instead of the healthy exercise of community responsibility for schools, directives from the central office take the place of local initiative. Thus, bureaucratic controls grow up which inevitably stress uniformity and discourage the community autonomy which has been one of the great strengths of public education in America. There is evidence to show that the larger the district the more dependence is placed on unhealthy control from central offices which are far removed from the people.

Inadequate Invention and Experimentation

Many very large school districts have been notably lacking in educational invention and experimentation. Some of the major current educational ills of our country are in the slums of large city districts where until recently little effort was made to create and try out school programs which would serve these areas more realistically. Innovation is difficult in situations which do not encourage the exercise of individuality. Uniformity and invention are not compatible. Excessive use of rules, regulations, and directives inhibit creativity.

Poor Communication

The difficulties of maintaining satisfactory channels of communication increase with the size of a school district. The threads which hold a school system together become tenuous as the district grows larger. Greater dependence must be placed on formal and impersonal means of communication in large districts. Opportunities for misunderstanding and conflicting opinions are greater where personal and informal contacts are missing.

Too Much Centralized Decision Making

The disadvantage of bigness in utilizing democratic participation in reaching decisions stems partly from the lack of an adequate structure to permit such participation and partly from the slowness of action characteristic of large units of government. The fact that both the soundness of decisions and an adequate understanding of their meanings are enhanced by participation in their making is of great importance in effective teaching.

Loss of Personal Identity

Many studies have shown that a close relationship exists between the productivity of a person and the degree to which he feels himself to be an integral part of the enterprise which provides his employment. The more he is made to feel that he is but a mere cog in a machine, the more he acts as though this were true. There is no substitute for maintaining warm and personal relationships in achieving satisfaction and success in one's work. This kind of environment is very hard to maintain where large numbers of persons are involved.

The Atlanta and Fulton County school districts, if combined, would be about eleventh in size among all districts in America. In 1963-64, the total school enrollment in the two districts was 157,140, about one-sixth the enrollment in New York City which has more than one million pupils and enrolls more pupils than any other district in the Nation. Both the Atlanta and Fulton County districts have already reached the size of school systems which have suffered from the ills described above. Therefore, combining the school districts would scarcely create problems of bigness beyond those which already exist, if the proper safeguards are observed in the creation and establishment of the new district.

Just as creating a single school district would not guarantee the educational advantages discussed in this paper, neither would the ills described inevitably follow. Knowing the disadvantages to avoid should be sufficient forewarning to assure the provision of an adequate legal base for the new district, satisfactory administrative leadership, and sufficient financial support.

DIFFICULTIES IN ACHIEVING CONSOLIDATION

Transitions in political and civil structures are painful and tedious at best. Existing systems cling to life tenaciously and carry with them the strong support of tradition and custom. Creating a new school district is simple compared to abolishing existing districts.

Basic difficulties fall into three classes: legal, attitudes and understandings, and operational. There may be numerous variations in each type of difficulty in a particular situation where consolidation is undertaken.

Legal difficulties inhere in the necessity for making changes within the limits of legal freedom to dissolve a given district and to create the necessary legislation for establishing and setting into operation the new district. This problem is one which members of the legal profession must solve with the aid of the General Assembly of the State in passing the legislation which has been determined as being necessary.

The handicap of conflicting attitudes and understandings is probably the most difficult to overcome. The question of consolidation must be resolved by the electorate, in the final analysis. Any move to consolidate will be interpreted in many different ways by citizens who already hold varying points of view on the issue. Any plan advanced to effect consolidation will be subjected to abuse without understanding by interests who think their purposes will be served best by maintaining the status quo. Consolidation will be viewed as a

threat by many, even though the typical citizen and the average student will scarcely know the difference after consolidation is achieved. Children will be attending the same schools, which will be operated essentially as before and taught by the same teachers.

Overcoming handicaps of this nature depends largely on the widespread dissemination of adequate information and the stimulation of discussion and examination of relevant facts. One of the great strengths of our democracy rests in the fact that people when properly informed on problems and issues will make wise decisions. Therefore, major tasks, if consolidation is undertaken, will be the planning and carrying out of public information programs and arranging for public discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed plan.

The third difficulty is creation and implementation of needed operational plans and procedures for the new school system. The responsibility for this phase of consolidation necessarily lies with the professional staff of the school system and the board of education. The function of the board of education will be to provide adequate policies for bringing the new district into full bloom and continuing its operation on a sound basis. The professional staff will have many separate but related tasks to undertake in effecting a smoothly functioning new district where two separate districts existed before .

While the two districts have drawn closer together in recent years and have worked cooperatively on numerous projects and programs, there are still differences in operational patterns and policies of the two school systems. Some differences are in pension systems, retirement provisions, leave provisions, sick leave policies, employment practices, salary schedules, pupil-teacher ratios and, as pointed out earlier, differences in educational programs and services. The new district would have to develop new policies on these and many other matters. These policies would have to be put into practice before the

consolidation move is completed and a success. This constitutes a tremendous professional job for the staff and requires infinite patience and careful planning.

None of these difficulties are insurmountable. Good will, good judgment, and hard work are the essential ingredients of success.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW DISTRICT

The Atlanta district consists of 128.395 miles of which 8.420 miles lie in DeKalb County. The Fulton County school district includes 420 square miles of territory. Therefore, the two districts, if consolidated, would make a single district of 548.395 square miles of which 539.975 square miles would be in Fulton County proper.

The new district would have had a population of 632,600 on April 1, 1964, of whom 126,400 were in Fulton County and 506,200 in Atlanta, including 43,900 who live in DeKalb County. School enrollment for the fall of 1964 would be about 145,000 pupils. Professional personnel in the district would number nearly 5,500 individuals. Other school employees would add up to just under 3,000 persons.

The district would contain 170 elementary schools and 35 high schools, plus two night high schools. The elementary schools are now located as follows: 118 in Atlanta, and 52 in Fulton County. Of the regular high schools, 24 are in Atlanta and 11 in Fulton County.

The school budget would be nearly 60 million dollars per year, based on bringing expenditure levels of the present Fulton County School District up to current Atlanta levels, including the provisions of kindergarten.

The school tax digest would be \$1,355,500,000. This is currently divided as follows: \$151,500,000 in the Fulton County district and \$1,203,500,000 in the City of Atlanta.