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EOA Forum on Schools Turns Into Political Rally

By JUNIE BROWN

Atlanta Journal Education Editor

An Economic Opportunity Atlanta (EOA) subcommittee meeting, which began as a forum for discussion of educational complaints, ended as a political rally.

Despite EOA's regulation about political neutrality, two persons announced at the meeting that they are candidates for the Atlanta Board of Education and a third person advised those present to "begin political action to unseat certain board members." The occasion was a meeting of the education subcommittee of EOA's Citizens' Central Advisory Committee Monday night at West Hunter Street Baptist Church.

THE SUBCOMMITTEE meeting ostensibly was called to discuss a controversial report and set of recommendations for improvements of the school system which the group had drawn up during the four years of its existence.

Dr. John Letson, superintendent of Atlanta schools, raised the ire of subcommittee members by rejecting an invitation to appear at the meeting and discuss the report. Instead, three members of Letson's staff fielded questions from those present.

Early in the four-hour meeting, Mrs. June Cofer announced she will run for the board of education from the 1st Ward against incumbent Ed Cook, and Dennis Jackson said he will be a candidate for the 2nd Ward seat held by Mrs. Anne Woodward.

The Rev. Mance Jackson, director of the Urban Mission Project in the "Lightning" area of Atlanta sponsored by the Interdenominational Theological Center, told subcommittee members they are "really too patient with this bureaucratic red tape."

"**THE BOARD** of education has no respect for us as a community," Jackson said. "We play white people's games year-in and year-out, and we get the runaround."

"I would hope we would eventually get to the point where we would not write letters and beg them to come. I recommend that the subcommittee entertain political action to unseat those who won't come to see you," Jackson said.

"You sit in a most powerful position. You are not aware of the power you have. This subcommittee has the power to change the complexion of this whole city," Jackson said.

"You beat 'em to death on rapid transit, and you can do it again," Jackson said.

JACKSON ALSO called for Dr. Darwin Womack, assistant

building and construction, to be replaced when he refused to agree with the parents in the audience that enlarging Price High School would be detrimental to the Negro neighborhood it served.

"Somebody ought to be recommending for this man's job; he's not responsive to the needs of the community and ought not to be in that job," Jackson said.

In answer to a complaint from committee members that the community is not involved

enough in the planning of schools, Dr. Womack responded: "You won't like me for saying this, but the difficulty with bringing people into planning is that they want veto power."

"I think the community has the right to have veto power," Jackson said. "And he ought to know that he has to answer to the people," Jackson said of Womack.

"IT'S QUITE obvious that

he's doing patchwork planning. They are just thinking about September, they're not planning for the future of the community."

Jackson said: "Every day you can hear ambulances coming down Bankhead Highway to pick up a child who's been hit by a car walking to school." He

blamed the repeated accidents on "poor planning" by Womack's office.

Mrs. Maggie Moody chairman of the EOA subcommittee on education, will take the report and the 13 recommendations before the full board of education Monday night at the regular monthly briefing session.

EOA