

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION  
1203 City Hall  
Atlanta, Georgia

Special Meeting of the Community Relations Commission, September 14, 1967,  
City Hall.

Members Present: Mr. Irving K. Kaler, Chairman  
Rev. Samuel Williams, 1st Vice-Chairman  
Miss Helen Bullard, 2nd Vice-Chairman  
Mrs. Fred W. Patterson, Secretary  
Mrs. Eliza K. Paschall, Executive Director

Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan  
Mr. Robert Dobbs  
Mr. Jack Sells  
Rabbi Jacob M. Rothchild  
Mr. Hamilton Douglas, Jr.  
Dr. Robert E. Lee  
Mr. R. Byron Attridge  
Mr. T. M. Alexander, Sr.  
Mrs. Sara Baker  
Mr. M. O. Ryan

Mr. James Pilcher, Associate City Attorney  
Mrs. Ann Moses, Executive Secretary to the Mayor  
Alderman John M. Flanigen  
Alderman G. Everett Millican were present.

Mr. Kaler opened the meeting with a statement that the Commission had called the meeting acting under the Ordinance which authorizes the Commission to "act as conciliator"; that the Commission had "intervened prior to the crisis" and at this time was calling upon responsible persons and those "whose testimony is pertinent".

He announced that members of the Board of Education had been requested to attend, and recognized Mr. Tom McWhirter, Assistant School Board Attorney, Mr. McWhirter said that the School Board was in session at the time, at a special meeting called previously for a special personnel matter, that they regretted the breakdown in communication.

Rev. Williams asked about 1962 and 1965 bond issues and promises to Vine City. Archbishop Hallinan said that the talk about "double session sounds like double talk".

Senator Sells announced that he was requesting the legislative counsel to draw a bill calling for the election of the Atlanta school superintendent.

The following persons spoke:

Rev. Elroy Embry: "Yesterday we went to Dr. Letson's office, asked for a meeting with the Board, were told only two methods for calling a meeting - by President Cook or majority of the Board. We asked him to contact members of the Board, he said, he didn't know if he could contact them...Board, Dr. Letson need to know they are working for us".

Mr. Robert E. Baldwin: "Took eight days to get appointment with Board, knew ten years ago schools overcrowded. When child gets off at 12, that's a half day. If I work till 12, get paid for ½ day. Unless Board acts, this is going to hurt white children too. Uneducated people lead to poverty. It has helped to have this meeting, Turner High has been two weeks without books.

Rev. Amos Holmes: "We elicit your support for our requests; during 1959-60 asked Board to face problems, urged against token assignments; this has been taking place since 1960; patience has a right to be exhausted; we want to be reasonable, but the Board demonstrates that rising radicalism might be justified. If Atlanta faces riot, could happen on this issue. Never seen anything that has unified people so. Simplest thing Board can do is to meet".

Miss Helen Bullard: "Is that the priority, failure of Board to meet"?

Rev. Amos Holmes: "Not just meet but that is most crucial".

Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan: "In complete agreement, this is no time for delay. If we can assure you of a meeting tonight, is there enough confidence to withhold action"?

Rev. Amos Holmes: "If we had been given assurance the other night, would have waited".

Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan: "Have asked for a meeting, asked citizens to withhold taking action until Commission has exhausted all means".

Rev. Amos Holmes: "Not here to put Commission between us and the Board; to see if Commission will act with us. Board should be willing to commit themselves to a certain case.

Rev. Samuel Williams: "What do you really expect"?

Rev. Amos Holmes: "Every request could be met in 24 hours".

Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan: "Commission has much at stake".

Rev. Amos Holmes: "After Dixie Hills, you reported fairly".

Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild: "What would you accept as a compromise"?

Rev. Amos Holmes: "In a conference with leaders, we would respond".

Mr. Robert Dobbs: "Want to speak about priorities, for mother of eight children, who goes to Buckhead and leaves here children at home to get themselves to school. Dr. Tate asked to correct this. Board knows the problem of bonding, should be leading fight to get this changed, have Board members who never visit schools".

Mr. T. M. Alexander, Sr.: "Consequential damage can disrupt the whole town. When children are involved, parents are not patient; this can disrupt the community, consequences must rest on their shoulders".

Rev. Joe Boone: "Here representing my daughter, 79 in class, 2 teachers; have worked with Breadbasket, got Regency and others to open jobs, can't find qualified people, people have to "limp your way in"; got to tell Letson, Allen people not satisfied; tired of policies; no white pupils at Agnes Jones, whites at Harris Homes go to another school; Whites at Harris Homes go to Brown, Negroes to Washington. You all wouldn't have had this meeting without what happened at the Board meeting".

Rev. Samuel Williams: "Commission did meet with Letson".

Mr. T. M. Alexander, Sr.: "Commission was meeting Monday night, very time of your meeting with Board, voted to meet with Board".

Mrs. Dorothy Bolden: "Have three girls at Washington High, have to leave home in the dark, not going to put my girls out in street at that hour".

Rev. Howard Creecy, asked Rev. Williams to read the demands: copy attached

Rev. Creecy: "We have been psychologically barred; want to balance the schools; we did not force our way into Letson's office".

Mr. Robert Baymes and Rev. Ward also spoke, emphasizing the point that if "we must have burdens, we (Negroes & Whites) should bear them equally".

Mr. Kaler asked Mr. Attridge to go to the meeting of the School Board and ask if any member of the Board or the staff would come to the meeting, and to request a meeting with the Board within 48 hours. Mr. Attridge returned to say that he had conveyed the request; answer was that "last evening the Board promised the Summit-Leadership Conference an answer in two weeks; will go into Executive Session to consider points and will contact their leadership; their attorney will contact the chairman; need time to consider the points".

Mr. Alexander said, "we asked not to meet to hear them restate their position, but to discuss matters with them".

Archbishop Hallinan moved following resolution, which was passed:

"The Community Relations Commission, appointed by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of Atlanta and representative of the community of Atlanta is convinced that the Board of Education fails to grasp the urgency of this education situation, and again the Commission urgently requests that a meeting be held between the Commission, the Board of Education and the Superintendent, within 48 hours (5:30 p.m. Saturday, September 16)". (Message was telegraphed to President of the Board Ed S. Cook immediately following the meeting, with copies sent to members of the Board and to Dr. Letson)".