

# The Times-Picayune

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## Dreadful Day Comes at Last

The day most New Orleanians had dreaded for six years came Monday.

During the morning four Negro children were entered in first grade classes of two public schools which formerly were all white. They were placed in these schools by the Orleans parish school board under orders from the federal district court. The district court, of course, acted under directions from the United States supreme court in Washington, whose 1954 decision brought a legal end to the practice of "separate but equal" facilities in public education.

In inaugurating a pupil placement plan, the school board majority chose between two alternatives. It had to choose schools integrated through this plan or closed schools.

We have said several times that we believe the board made the correct choice. We hold the opinion that integration of the schools will damage them but that this damage will not be as bad as would have been total destruction.

Last-minute efforts in Baton Rouge to block integration were unsuccessful. The intent of the Legislature in attempting to fire the superintendent of Orleans parish schools and the legal advisor of the Orleans parish school board and the intent of the state superintendent of education in declaring Monday a school holiday were obvious. They sought to circumvent the order of the federal court that first grades of New Orleans public schools be opened to Negro pupils Monday.

As we observed Saturday, it seems to us that the federal courts can knock out as unconstitutional laws passed by the Louisiana Legislature just as fast as they are passed—provided it is obvious that these laws were enacted to circumvent federal court decisions and orders.

There now seem two avenues which the state may follow in seeking relief from the orders for forced school integration. It can test fully in the courts its right to interpose itself between the federal courts and the schools. It can seek legislation from the Congress.

Further attempts by the Louisiana Legislature to fire Orleans parish school officials or to assume administrative responsibilities which traditionally have been discharged by elected school board

members, we believe, will be futile. We applaud the actions of members of the Legislature who have opposed drastic legislation which violated the principles of home rule. We add the comment that legislators who vote to fire school superintendents selected by elected boards may find other legislators voting to fire deputy sheriffs selected by elected sheriffs in their parishes.

The Orleans parish school board, the governor, the attorney-general and members of the Legislature have worked hard to avoid even token integration. We join more than a million fellow citizens in Louisiana in regretting that their efforts did not achieve complete success.

New Orleans is not in an ideal situation, but it appears to be a situation which we must face and with which we must learn to live.

Violence, disorder and intemperate actions of any kind, in our opinion, can do nothing to improve the situation which we face. Economically, the state can suffer heavy damage if violence occurs here and other sections of the nation read of that violence—which they are bound to do if we permit violence to occur. Already, in our opinion, some damage has been done our reputation abroad by threats that the schools might be closed.

Two facts, we believe, deserve the thoughtful consideration of Louisiana's people.

Voters of this state gave to the Kennedy-Johnson ticket a majority of their ballots, despite the fact that the platform put forward by this ticket contained a strong plank urging a national Fair Employment Practices Commission to push Negroes into all types of jobs and positions.

Another fact worth considering, in our opinion, is that several state-operated educational institutions, notably Louisiana State university in New Orleans, have had integrated student bodies for several years—with little appearance of friction and difficulty.

So far as we are concerned, we don't like school integration any better in 1960 than we did in 1954, when we urged a relentless legal fight against it; but it doesn't do any good to adopt an ostrich attitude and stick our heads in the sands.