

# MILWAUKEE JEWISH COUNCIL

October 13, 1965

623 North Second Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203  
Phone 276-7920

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Mr. John Foley, President  
Milwaukee Board of School Directors  
5225 West Vliet Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208

Dear Mr. Foley:

The Milwaukee Jewish Council has worked in the field of human relations in our community for more than 25 years. We are, therefore, deeply concerned with the crisis facing education in Milwaukee and with the impending school withdrawal planned for October 18.

We believe that these problems have been precipitated, in large measure, by the unwillingness of the Board of School Directors to consider any plan which would meet the needs of all the children in the Milwaukee public schools.

Thus far, the Milwaukee Board of School Directors has failed to take the first step toward relieving 'de facto' segregation in our schools. It has failed to acknowledge that any such problem exists. It has ignored the repeated pleas of many responsible groups which have spoken to the subject. We are disturbed that a majority of the members of the special committee on equal educational opportunity has failed to attend meetings and has precluded a quorum for the purpose of discussing any constructive action by the Board.

The Milwaukee Jewish Council has directed two communications to the Board of School Directors on this subject. As a responsible community organization, we have a right to expect at least acknowledgement of receipt. None has been forthcoming. This, we believe, reflects the unresponsiveness - indeed the rigidity - of the School Board. This rigidity has already contributed toward tension and turmoil. We are deeply concerned what the future may bring.

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This letter is an urgent plea to the Milwaukee School Board to undertake the following:

1. Adopt policies, already standard in most Northern cities, in recognition of the Board's responsibility to relieve racial imbalance in our public schools.
2. Immediately consider the Resolution offered by Directors Holmes, M. Potter and Gerken, which would begin an effort to solve the "intact bussing" problem.
3. Begin immediate and open discussions with responsible representatives in the community with respect to racial imbalance in the public schools.
4. Adopt the proposal of We - Milwaukeeans for a long range study of racial imbalance and its impact upon school children of Milwaukee.

Action by the Board on these proposals is a necessary prelude to the process of bringing all schools and the education of all children up to the high standards, which have been traditional in this city. The continuing disregard of its responsibility by the Milwaukee Board of School Directors in dealing with 'de facto' segregation can only foster increased conflict and inevitably result in damage to the public school system and the entire population of this community.

Yours very truly,

*Eliot M. Bernstein*

Eliot M. Bernstein  
President

EMB/rlp

cc: Milwaukee School Board Directors