

STATEMENT BY
REP. JOHN BUECHNER, MEMBER
MISSOURI ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TO THE
U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS
AUGUST 29, 1977

SCHOOL DESEGREGATION IS REQUIRED BY THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES. THE COURTS AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE HAVE LAID CLEAR GUIDELINES FOR ACHIEVING FULL AND EFFECTIVE DESEGREGATION. BUT HOW WELL DESEGREGATION WORKS DEPENDS UPON THE INITIATIVE OF PEOPLE IN THE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

THE NEWSPAPERS HAVE BEEN FULL OF THE FAILURES AND THE PROBLEMS. TOO LITTLE ATTENTION IS GIVEN TO THE SUCCESSES. KIRKWOOD IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF A DISTRICT WHICH HAS DESEGREGATED COMPLETELY AND WITHOUT WAITING FOR EITHER THE COURTS OR H.E.W. TO SPECIFY HOW THE DESEGREGATION WAS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. BECAUSE KIRKWOOD TOOK THE INITIATIVE, ITS PLAN IS TAILORED TO LOCAL NEEDS AND HAS HAD CONSIDERABLE LOCAL SUPPORT. THE STATESMANSHIP OF THE BOARD AND THE SUPERINTENDENT IN

SEIZING THE CHANCE TO DESEGREGATE MUST BE A SOURCE OF PRIDE TO ALL OF US IN THE DISTRICT.

DESEGREGATION HAS NOT BEEN PAINLESS. THERE HAS BEEN OPPOSITION, BUT THE SCHOOL DISTRICT HAS MADE EVERY EFFORT TO COMMUNICATE WITH ITS PATRONS TO ENSURE THAT THEY WERE FULLY INVOLVED IN THE DECISION TO DESEGREGATE, HAD A SAY IN HOW TO DESEGREGATE, AND WERE INVOLVED IN RESOLVING PROBLEMS ONCE DESEGREGATION BEGAN, IN THE FALL OF 1976.

THE SUCCESS OF DESEGREGATION THUS FAR CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO A RESOLUTE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION. WE ALL KNOW THE DISTRICT NOW FACES AN ACUTE FINANCIAL CRISIS. WE HOPE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS TO ASSURE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS DESPITE THIS CRISIS. WE NOTE THAT SINCE THE COMPLETION OF THIS REPORT, THE SCHOOL DISTRICT HAS IMPLEMENTED THE REMAINING STAGES OF THE REORGANIZATION PLAN. WE HOPE THAT THE COOPERATION OF TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS NECESSARY TO MAKE THE PLAN SUCCEED WILL CONTINUE.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION HAS BEEN DIFFICULT FOR THE DISTRICT, IN THE FACE OF MASSIVE LAYOFFS. WE ARE SURE THE DISTRICT WILL REVISE ITS

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION STRATEGY TO MEET THE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES BUT WITHOUT DILUTING THE GOOD EFFORT.

KIRKWOOD SHOULD BE PARTICULARLY PROUD OF ITS CHILDREN. THEY HAVE SET AN EXAMPLE FOR THE COMMUNITY, THE STATE, AND THE NATION, OF MUTUAL ACCEPTANCE AND UNDERSTANDING. THE LESSONS IN LIVING TOGETHER THAT THEY HAVE LEARNED WILL FORM THE BASIS FOR A FUTURE THAT OFFERS GENUINE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY.