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WHAT PEOPLE SAY OF COLORED REPRESENTATIVES ON THE BALTIMORE SCHOOL BOARD

The Association for the Handicapped, through its manager, Mr. Robert W. Coleman, wrote letters to public school superintendents, educators and people of importance throughout the country. Replies from these letters are nearly unanimous in their opinions favoring colored citizens as members of the School Board. One person, Mrs. Marie Bauernschmidt, was opposed. Dr. David E. Weglein ignored the letter which is indicative of his position.

We quote parts of a few of the letters received by the Association:

"I believe that where we have a large number of children of a particular race in our schools, it is well to have one of their own who does know their needs and can make their problems known to the whole Board."

"It seems to me just and wise to have a Negro member of the School Board. Other minority groups have representatives on the School Board and it seems to me utterly wrong that the Negroes should not have a member also, as we know there is overcrowding in the Negro schools, and many matters that require direct representation on the School Board."

"Inasmuch as the colored group constitutes about one-sixth of the population of Baltimore it would be only fair, equitable and just that there should be colored representation on the governing body of the public school system. Such representation would be in line with our form of representative government and our Constitutional guarantees."

"Fortunately we have an unusually fine Board of Education. Racial and religious problems do not arise because of the high type of men and women who serve on the Board. I regard the presence of an outstanding colored citizen as essential."

"Based on our experience here I feel safe in saying that the having of a colored Board member has a distinct asset to the city as a whole in that it indicates a spirit of fair play, tolerance, and the inclination to uphold the fundamental principles of democracy."

"I wish to say that considering the number of public schools and the fact that said pupils are in separate schools, I feel that a member of the colored race should be on the Board."

"Naturally no one would maintain that in choosing members of the Board, there should be exclusion because of color, any more than there should be because of creed."

"I feel that greater representation of the colored race will be productive of much good to our community, and will also promote a better understanding between our respective races."

"I am unqualifiedly in favor of having a colored member on the City School Board. There are certain unique problems of negro life, just as there are unique problems in the life of any other substantial minority. While you would not have a negro on the School Board solely as a representative of the colored people, it is most essential that an intelligent, broadminded and liberal colored man or woman be a member of that Board, in order that when problems arise concerning the colored people, the School Board may be able to have the benefit of official and intimate and intelligent counsel."

"I understand that some people foolishly object to a negro on the School Board on the grounds that he would represent only the colored people and thus create a sort of sectionalism in that Board. Of course, even if this were so, it is not any real argument against a negro to the Board. But the argument in itself is stupid. The intelligent negro thinks in terms of the community as a whole just as much as the intelligent white man. It is only when a problem arises concerning the negro that the colored member of the School Board might have some specific and unique angle of approach which would be extremely valuable to the entire Board."

"Since the Negro group presents such a different problem and is, as a group, so separated from the majority group, there is great need for the presence of Negroes on the planning and formulatory boards in order that they might accurately and sympathetically interpret the needs of their group to the majority."

"When Negro children are in a society in which opportunity is limited for them, the psychological effect of having the schools which they attend administered by a group responsible to a board on which men and women of their own color serve is most important. The formative years are those spent in elementary and secondary schools. For that reason, it is most important that children see in the school system a pattern which, in its implications, offers an inspiration to them."