

Barriers Eased, But Not Removed: VEA Bids Negroes In, Asks Tuition Grants Out

A STAFF WRITER

New Journal and Guide (1916-2003); Nov 7, 1964;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Norfolk Journal and Guide

pg. 1

Barriers Eased, But Not Removed

VEA Bids Negroes In, Asks Tuition Grants Out

By A STAFF WRITER

RICHMOND — Racial barriers to full membership were eased but not wholly removed by the Virginia

Education Association (white) here last weekend.

Total merger with the VEA, proposed yearly by the Virginia Teachers Association (Negro) for the past 11 years, was "emphatically rejected" by the VEA's board

(For Comment, Turn
To Editorial Page)

of directors. Instead, it was voted to launch limited desegregation in membership.

IN AN unexpected move, the white group strongly de-

manded the repeal of the state's tuition grant law, a thinly veiled pro-segregation tactic under Virginia's "freedom of choice" plan that replaced "massive resistance" to public school desegregation.

The action was taken by 1500 delegates from local education organizations who were attending the 80th annual convention of the association here.

THE DELEGATES adopted a recommendation of the (See **VEA BIDS, Page 2**)

VEA Bids Negroes In, Asks Tuition Grants Out

VEA board allowing Negro members of affiliated local groups to join the VEA.

The membership - opening decision came on a voice vote and the approval was overwhelming. But there was an unusual amount of debate and a flurry of counter-motions beforehand.

But the resolution added that "the VEA board of directors emphatically rejects any plan or merger of the VEA with the VTA."

The VTA is an all - Negro teacher group with about 8,000 members. The VEA has 31,000 members.

BOTH THE VEA and the VTA are members of the National Education Association, which adopted a resolution this summer directing all member organizations to "take immediate steps to remove all restrictive membership requirements dealing with race, creed or ethnic groups."

The effect of the resolution will be to open the VEA to a comparatively small number of Negro members, since most local units of the association are segregated at present.

THE ONLY desegregated units are in Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax and Harrisonburg. They have a total of about 325 Negro members.

In the other development, a surprise amendment offered by James McBlair of Falls Church to put the convention on record as opposing state tuition grants to pupils who prefer to attend private schools rather than integrated schools carried with a vote of 516 to 327.

NORTHERN Virginia teachers, who had traditionally led the fight for integration of the teachers organization, said they were pleased with the step toward desegregation.

In 1962 the delegate assembly permitted local associations to admit Negroes into membership but ruled against allowing these Negro members to join the VEA.

THE VTA, which also held its annual convention here last week, opposed the VEA "desegregation" move as a substitute for outright merger.

J. Rupert Picott, VTA executive secretary, contends that the VEA action will "whittle" away at VTA membership and ultimately destroy the VTA as an effective educational force.

Dr. Picott repeatedly has called for joint action by the VEA and the VTA which will lead to merger of the two bodies.

UNDER THE membership resolution, Negroes who join local associations will receive membership in the VEA. Two years ago the VEA gave its local associations approval to accept Negro members but without membership in the statewide organization. Thursday's action was recommended by the VEA's board of directors.

As a result, the decision whether to admit Negroes remains with the local associations. If they are admitted, however, they gain full rights, including voting, should they be named delegates, in the VEA.

A MOTION to authorize merger with the Virginia Teachers Association — the VEA's Negro counterpart — had been expected from one or more Northern Virginia delegates. This did not materialize.

The question of Negro membership in the VEA has cropped up repeatedly at the association's convention since 1954.

In recommending rejection of the merger, the board said that "merger would deprive the local association of control of its membership."

JOHN MEADE, superintendent of schools in Petersburg, moved that all matters requiring constitutional amendment — as the Negro membership matter did — be tabled. His motion was defeated.

At the same time — for the 10th year — the VTA urged merger of the two orga-

nizations "without absorption." The VTA resolution made it clear the Negro teachers do not want their organization "swallowed up" by the VEA.

UNDER THE VEA's new membership rules, about 300 Negro teachers in Northern Virginia are immediately eligible to join the organization.

The VEA assembly also left in the hands of local organizations the power to admit or turn away Negroes who wish to join.

ASIDE FROM the membership and merger resolutions, the two associations were in accord on recommendations that the state's tuition grant law be repealed.

Mr. McBlair said the tuition grant "does, in fact, tend to undermine this (public free school) system."

STATE TUITION grants are available to parents who wish to send their youngsters to private schools anywhere in the country. They are available to youngsters of all races.

They were primarily designed to permit parents to send their children to private segregated rather than public integrated schools.

THE NEGRO teachers also struck out at what they called a "disgraceful situation" — the segregation of Negro members of the State Department of Education.

A VTA resolution said these Negro employees of the board are "housed in separate and inadequate facilities" despite previous protests by the VTA and said the department should "put an end to this situation."

IN ANOTHER resolution the VTA blamed state and local officials for what it called "a substantial gap" between the education levels of white and Negro pupils in Virginia.

THE VTA Also:
• — Called for a compulsory attendance law.
• — Urged a "more constructive" attitude toward federal aid to education by state and local officialdom.

J. SHELBY GUSS of Bowling Green was installed as the VTA's new president. He succeeds Alfred K. Talbot Jr., of Williamsburg.

PRESENT SITUATION

VIRGINIA thus joins Florida as the only strictly southern state in which the teacher associations are integrated in membership fully or partly.

North Carolina's white association is considering the question of merging with the Negro group, favored by the latter. A vote is scheduled at its convention in April.

KENTUCKY, a border state, has had an integrated teacher association for two or three years, as have West Virginia and Oklahoma, other Border states.

Arkansas is having "conversations" relative to merger or open - admission of Negro members in its educational association.