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Letter, Theodore M. Hesburgh to John C. Stennis, August 1, 1972

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UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

29. Civil Rights
(Gen. Cables)
Washington, D. C. 20425

August 1, 1972

Honorable John Stennis
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

WASHINGTON OFFICE
AUG 4 1972
JOHN STENNIS

Dear Senator Stennis:

In the few weeks left before 50 million American children return to school, Congress will be called upon to enact new and more stringent restrictions on the use of buses to desegregate schools. I and my fellow commissioners remain of the firm opinion that to do so would be dangerous and unwise. It would make sharper -- and perhaps permanent -- the crippling racial divisions that the Commission has spent 15 years trying to heal.

I will not attempt, in this letter, to restate in detail the Commission's position on the pending anti-busing legislation. We have presented our views in testimony and in statements sent to you, and our concern about the Nation's unwillingness to implement the Brown decision, 18 years after it was rendered, has been carefully stated.

I will, however, call your attention to two pieces of enclosed material which might prove useful in shaping your thoughts on this controversial issue. One is a Commission booklet, "Your Child and Busing," and the other is a newspaper article summarizing the booklet.

The article emphasizes the theme of students in Pontiac, Michigan, where busing has been especially controversial: "We can make it work!" As an educator in frequent contact with young people, I have reason to believe that the Pontiac students mean every word of that motto and do intend to "make it work."

The worst thing that we, their elders, could do at this time would be to raise additional barriers against their sincere efforts. Our young people represent a hope and foundation for better race relations in America. Let us now build on

that foundation, instead of tearing it down with new and more destructive anti-busing legislation. Instead of making integration more difficult to achieve, let us give the young people every opportunity to make good on their determination to "make it work."

I hope you find the enclosed material useful. If you would like additional copies, they can be had by calling the Commission's offices.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "T. Hesburgh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

THEODORE M. HESBURGH
Chairman

Enclosures