

5943 – Education in D.C.

Guests: Rep. James C. Davis (D-GA) and Rep. Joel Broyhill (R-VA)

Morphew: introductions...to davis...you were a member of a committee that investigated the conditions of the schools in D.C. and it found conditions were pretty dismal...

Davis: Yes, I was chairman of the subcommittee which was created in 1956 to investigate the integrated schools in the Washington D.C. school system after the schools integrated, subsequent to the Supreme Court decision in 1954. That was a committee which was composed of six members of the House. It was a bipartisan committee, one of the few committees within my knowledge, since I have been a member of congress which was composed of an equal number of Democrats and Republicans. There were three Democrats and three Republicans on that committee. And the report which the committee published after investigation which extended over quite a period was signed by four of those members and the two members who did not sign the report were members who had not attended any of the committee sessions and participated in the investigation, and who therefore, could not have been nearly as familiar with the subject and the facts as the four of us who attended constantly.

Morphew: since then, has there been any change in the Washington schools?

Davis: Oh, yes indeed. At that time it was very evident that the white parents were taking their children out of the District of Columbia and moving to nearby Virginia and Maryland where they could put them in segregated schools. At that time, the trend was very definite and very obvious. Since that time, it has continued and probably has accelerated quite a bit, and last October at the annual school census, the figures showed that the population of the Washington D.C. schools at that time in October 1958 was 74.1 percent colored and going in that direction all the time.

Morphew: to broyhill...you are in the real estate business and can see this influx and out migration of white citizens...

Broyhill: Well, Judge Davis is absolutely correct, Dick, in that many thousands people have been moving out of the District of Columbia into nearby Maryland and Virginia, I have talked to literally hundreds of these people myself who said that they could not tolerate having to send their child to an integrated school and of course, the Negroes are moving into the blocks in which their home is located and they wanted to move into a community where the property values would remain somewhat stable. And incidentally, going back to the committee report to which Judge Davis referred, I think the report of that committee will show full well that integration in the District of Columbia school system is not working, in spite of the fact that most of the newspapers and most, many of the officials have tried to claim that the District of Columbia school system is a model system and showing that integration can work smoothly. And incidentally, a lot of evidence that was submitted to our staff prior to the hearings was not contained in the report. A lot of the witnesses hesitated to reveal all of the information publicly that they

did reveal in Congress to our committee staff. So, I say that we have information that is more of an indictment than what is contained in the committee report which as Judge Davis stated was open, fair, non-partial, non-prejudice, nonpartisan hearing which was signed by four of the six committee members.

Morphew: to broyhill...we have reports that negro children from other parts of the country are coming here to attend these schools in Washington, is this correct?

Broyhill: Yes, indeed. In fact, that is a very serious problem. We have figures from the school officials themselves that state that there are sixteen hundred and forty-five non-resident pupils attending the District of Columbia school system and only one hundred and fourteen of those pupils are paying tuition. In all communities, certainly most communities, in all communities around Washington, a child must be living in the community with a legal guardian or parent in order to attend the local schools, certainly without paying tuition. In the District of Columbia we found that many children are moving in with relatives, aunts, uncles, cousins, maybe distant cousins, maybe piling in a half a dozen or so in a house, and going to the District of Columbia school system without having to pay tuition. Our present law states that if the child is living in the District of Columbia, not primarily for the purpose of going to school, in other words, he could be coming here to work, work in the summertime, then he can go to the school system or attend the schools without having to pay tuition regardless of who he's living with. Now, we have introduced legislation that will require every child going to the District of Columbia or attending the District of Columbia schools who is not living with a parent or a legal guardian to be required to pay tuition. This will prohibit children from all over the country, and at the present time mostly from the South, coming up here and attending the District of Columbia schools free of charge in order to be able to attend an integrated school.

Morphew: how do the school officials feel about this law?

Broyhill: Well, there is somewhat of a mixed feeling there. They officially take the position that all children should be permitted to have an education. Well, we agree with that, but certainly, they should go to the school that they are legally entitled to go to and not come into another community and require the taxpayers of that community to subsidize their education. Incidentally, Dick, the District of Columbia receives, as you know, a payment from the federal government to help operate the District of Columbia government. It's authorized to be 32 million dollars a year and this year the appropriation is somewhere near that amount. So, if we are losing somewhere between a half a million and a million dollars a year by children not entitled to go to our schools to attend the District of Columbia schools, it is costing, let's say in the long run, all of the taxpayers of this nation. I think it's unfair and it should be prohibited.

Morphew: to davis...when the schools were integrated as the nation's showcase the situation reversed almost overnight. Is there a pattern back toward segregated schools in Washington?

Davis: Well, the schools are rapidly becoming segregated again. As the white people move out and the negras move in, the schools are going right back to a pattern of segregated schools. I had occasion just recently to look into that very situation and I found this to be the case, that there are four white schools in the District with no negra pupils whatever, that there are eight white schools with only one, two, three, and four negra pupils, that there are four white schools which have six, seven, eight, and nine negra pupils, and all told, there are nineteen white schools which have less than five percent negra pupils in their membership. Now, on the other hand, where the whites have been moving out and the negras moving in, there are eighteen negra schools with no white pupils whatsoever, there are five negra schools with just one white pupil each, there are seven negra schools with two to four white pupils each, fourteen negra schools with just six to nine white pupils and all told, in the Washington school system today, there are a hundred and twenty-eight elementary schools, of which 75 are either totally segregated or with only token integration. Now, in the course of time, many more of those schools will become totally colored as the whites move out and the negras move in, so that it is getting right back to a segregated system again, for the reason that there are no white children here to push into the schools to mix with the negras.

Morphew: to davis....coming from Atlanta there has been a lot of talk of private schools there, is this the case?

Davis: That is the case. There are quite a few charters being granted now to set up private schools and people are very much interested and they are going at the job with a will to set up these competent, adequate private schools.

Morphew: to broyhill...is this happening in Virginia?

Broyhill: Dick, that has been a trend in northern Virginia for a number of years. All of our private schools over there, and we have a large number, are oversubscribed at the moment and the people who are attending private schools are not necessarily children of the wealthy. People of very modest means are straining their budget to send their children to private schools because they feel they can get a little extra attention and a little extra education by having the special attention that they can get in the private schools.

Morphew: and the parents are willing to sacrifice to give their children the best possible education?

Broyhill: Oh, yes indeed.