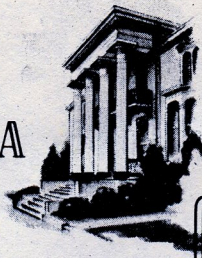


file
Integration

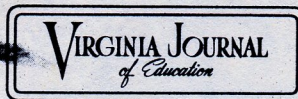
VIRGINIA



EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

ROBERT F. WILLIAMS
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY and EDITOR

T. PRESTON TURNER
ASST. EX. SECRETARY and BUS. MANAGER



Gamble's Hill, 116 South Third Street, Richmond 19, Virginia

June 4, 1956

We are enclosing editorials in connection with the case of the
Appomattox teachers.

With best wishes

Sincerely yours,

Robert F. Williams
Executive Secretary

RFW:ae

The News

Carter Glass and Sons, Publishers

Established 1866

Published daily in Lynchburg, Va.

TUESDAY, MAY 22, 1956

Intolerance

Virginians who believe in the principles of Thomas Jefferson would like to think that the teachers in their public schools are free to hold and express their convictions on the vital issues that occupy the attention of the country. The action of the Appomattox School Board is not calculated to encourage that belief. We are told that two teachers, whose names are given, were dismissed from the teaching staff because they "favored integration." We are also told in the report that a group of patrons attended a meeting of the School Board and asked that "the School Board refrain from employing teachers who favor integration."

The School Board acted thus under public pressure to a certain extent. How far the "group of patrons" reflected the majority opinion of the community is not known. The fact that most of the teachers at the high school did not approve the action of the board and expressed their disapproval in a letter to the School Superintendent Burks indicates that democracy is not wholly suspended in the community.

In this case the question, for anyone who has the rudiments of logic, is not segregation. It is whether a school teacher has the right to an opinion of her own on a question freely debated all over the country without having to fear for her position. Sacrifice of a position is a terrific pressure to be brought against any person. Least of all should it be brought against a teacher under these circumstances. The schools are the source of teaching for democracy and democracy is anything but regimentation. The school board of a county should show some independence in defending the right of its teachers to their opinions and not capitulate at the first effort of the community to regiment them. We would like to think we have on our school boards men who can affirm their own convictions without holding the axe over teachers who differ with them.

majority opinion of the community is not known. The fact that most of the teachers at the high school did not approve the action of the board and expressed their disapproval in a letter to the School Superintendent Burks indicates that democracy is not wholly suspended in the community.

In this case the question, for anyone who has the rudiments of logic, is not segregation. It is whether a school teacher has the right to an opinion of her own on a question freely debated all over the country without having to fear for her position. Sacrifice of a position is a terrific pressure to be brought against any person. Least of all should it be brought against a teacher under these circumstances. The schools are the source of teaching for democracy and democracy is anything but regimentation. The school board of a county should show some independence in defending the right of its teachers to their opinions and not capitulate at the first effort of the community to regiment them. We would like to think we have on our school boards men who can affirm their own convictions without holding the axe over teachers who differ with them.

It is not an isolated case. When the Richmond Times-Dispatch editorially discussed the subject two years ago it received so many letters from teachers in *the State, that it was compelled to say.* "It is even worse to find that so many teachers in the Virginia public schools seem to be afraid to discuss . . . any controversial aspect of the school system, unless their names are kept secret." This is a shameful state of affairs and totally unworthy of the men who founded this Commonwealth.

DAILY ADVANCE

Lynchburg, Va., Wednesday, May 23, 1956

THOUGHT CONTROL

There is an appearance of pressure on teachers in Appomattox either not to express their opinions on segregation-integration, or to express them only as favoring segregation. If they are known to have said they favor ending segregation they are apparently subject to losing or likely to lose their jobs.

This is what Americans call "thought control" in authoritarian countries and what they in part fought in World War II to prevent reaching these shores.

The conservatism in Appomattox is well-known. If it is leading to or tolerated as thought control, then it is not conservatism but extreme rightism which is quite something else.

We need to know more about it, to learn more about what is involved in the case of the two school teachers whose contracts are not to be renewed. What responsible Appomattox citizens are going to tell us about it, tell their neighbors here and in the rest of Virginia what is going on, what it means?

If all the facts are made known, then it will also be made known approximately how many Virginians are against thought control, against that extreme opposite to freedom of speech which the Commonwealth has stood for since its beginning.

DAVID TENNANT BRYAN, *President and Publisher*
 VIRGINIUS DABNEY, *Editor*

Saturday, May 26, 1956

Disturbing Issue in Appomattox

Refusal of the Appomattox county school board to give any reason for its action in failing to renew the contracts of MRS. GEORGIE GURNEY and MRS. GERTRUDE KERR, teachers in the Appomattox High School, has caused concern throughout Virginia.

Unfounded rumors are being spread concerning the reasons for the board's refusal to renew the two contracts. Published accounts say that whereas they themselves believe they were dropped because of "their opposition to strong segregationist views," they declare emphatically that they are "not integrationists."

MRS. GURNEY freely admits having voted two years ago against what she terms an "inflammatory" pro-segregation resolution. She also wrote the school board prior to its refusal to renew her contract: "I believe in the public schools. I believe that nothing should ever lead us to consider abolishing the public schools."

MRS. KERR is the wife of the principal of the high school where she has been teaching, and such an arrangement is considered by many school administrators as objectionable. It could have had something to do with the board's failure to renew her contract. But no announcement to this effect has been made, and both women say they have been falsely attacked as "integrationists."

Both were summoned to SUPERINTENDENT BURKE's office a few weeks before they were dropped, and asked to state their views on integration, and both stated that they are not integrationists. It may well be that Mr. BURKE told them at that time that they were being criticized, but nothing has been made public as to this.

Meanwhile the impression has

been created in the widespread publicity accorded the case that two competent teachers have been dropped, without explanation, and that it is becoming dangerous in Virginia for teachers to express even a mild dissent from majority community opinion on the race problem.

Eighteen of the 19 teachers at Appomattox High protested the dropping of MRS. GURNEY and MRS. KERR, which affords an idea of the regard in which they are held by their colleagues. It was expected, at first, that the local branch of the Virginia Education Association would request an investigation by the VEA central board of directors. But according to MRS. GURNEY:

Those same teachers are being intimidated, and their positions are jeopardized by their actions in our behalf. The school board has gotten letters asking it to dismiss immediately any teacher who sympathized with us. If we call on the local branch to ask for an investigation, all its members would be subjected to the same thing.

MISS VIRGINIA LEWIS, of Culpeper, president of VEA, accordingly announced that she will ask the VEA directors, at the August meeting of the board, to inquire into the dropping of the two teachers, and to waive the requirement that the request come from the local branch.

It is to be hoped that if the VEA directors ask for the pertinent information concerning the dropping of MRS. GURNEY and MRS. KERR, the Appomattox school board will furnish it. If there were good reasons for not renewing the contracts of MRS. GURNEY and MRS. KERR, those reasons should be given to the parties concerned. If there are no such reasons, this fact should be made known, and an end put to the insinuations and innuendoes against these two women.