from Phyllis Schlafly

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St. Louis School Lessons

A news story with national significance about public schools has been unfolding in St. Louis, Missouri, thanks to the work of independent investigators. Twenty years of expensive court-ordered busing for desegregation have had zero results, while all the leading public officials and prominent businesses financed a crooked election to stuff the ballot box and keep the same pro-busing crowd running the school board.

A court-ordered study has concluded that the St. Louis desegregation program has produced no benefit in terms of academic achievement or attitude among participating students, despite expenditures of $1.2 billion to date. The $63r000 study, entitled “Assessment of Student Performance and Attitude: St. Louis Metropolitan Area Court ordered Desegregation Effort,” was prepared by Dr. Robert W. Lissitz of the University of Maryland’s College of Education.

Ordered by the 8th Circuit court of Appeals, the 316-page, two-year study compared the reading, writing and math scores of black city students bused to predominantly white county schools with the test scores of three other black student groups: those attending (1) all-black city schools, (2) integrated city schools, and (3) city magnet schools.

The Lissitz study’s conclusion l9 states: “The correlation of both attitude items and achievement to months in the transfer program is essentially zero.” The Lissitz research design collected data from 11,100 black students in the four groups at grades 4, 6, 8, and 10.

The Lissitz study couched its conclusions in careful academic terms, but the conclusion is clear that “achievement gains of students are not obtainable through a transfer program approach.” The independent study found that there is no evidence that any benefit accrues to students in the transfer (busing) program, no matter how long they are in it.

These results were “a tremendous disappointment,” according to Susan Uchitelle, the $70,000-a-year tax-salaried head of the transfer program. Minnie Liddell, who led a parents group that started the original lawsuit 20 years ago to force

desegregation, said, “We imagined sweeping advances. This has not materialized. It's very depressing. We've missed our goals.”

The St. Louis busing-for-desegregation program is now entering its third decade. When it started, the city's school system had 103,000 children; today it has only 43,000, as a result of white flight to the suburbs.

The federal court order not only requires the busing of black students to the white suburbs, but requires all taxpayers in the state of Missouri to finance most of the cost.

The failed, disruptive and expensive desegregation program has been the major issue in the last several St. Louis School Board elections. It has been widely believed that the election of April 2, 199l was the most dishonest election in the history of St. Louis, and new evidence now confirms that belief.

In that 1991 election, four conservative (anti-busing) candidates for the St. Louis Schoo1 Board were defeated by four (pro-busing) candidates aligned with the liberal coalition that has controlled the board for many years. Evidence of the fraud was uncovered, not by anybody who supported the anti-busing slate, hut by a couple of political science professors at St. Louis University, Dr. Kenneth Warren and Dr. George Wendel, who started to investigate because about 10,000 more votes were counted than were cast in any comparable election.

Two elected judges have now admitted under oath that they illegally cast ballots in the School Board election for others who did not vote, and had been doing this for years. After these two judges were removed, vote totals in their precinct dropped 70 percent in the next election.

In one precinct, 23 percent of all votes cast were fraudulent. Hundreds of felons in prison and on probation (who are not entitled to vote under Missouri 1aw) were found on the registration rol1s, and in a door-to-door canvass of one ward, election officials concluded that 16 percent of those voters should be stricken from the rolls.

The list of corporate, firm, and individual donors to the $350,000 campaign of the pro-busing slate last year reads like a who's who of the St. Louis business establishment. It included Anheuser-Busch, Emerson Electric, Monsanto, May Department Stores, Ralston-Purina, and the leading utilities, banks, insurance firms, law firms, and accounting firms.

So far, they have made no pub1lc demand for an accounting of how their money was spent. The disclosure forms filed with the state simply show all the funds being paid to two public relations firms.

Funny thing, the two Democratic candidates running for Governor of Missouri (who were aggressive backers of the pro-busing slate in last year's school board election) now say that, if elected, they will do everything possible to terminate desegregation. They are now accusing Republican Governor John Ashcroft of failing to take constructive court action to fight the expensive desegregation program.