P.S. to the NEWS
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RELEASE: June 4

SCHOOL INTEGRATION

Among the many thousands of words spoken recently in observance of the 20th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education which outlawed school segregation, one of the most interesting was the interview given by the Reverend Jesse Jackson, black civil rights leader in Chicago. He said flatly that the time has come to abandon the fight to establish a racially integrated society because neither blacks nor whites really want it.

"The whole notion of a melting pot is perverted imagery," the Reverend Jackson said. "It has antagonized white people and black people because the melting pot is the integration concept. ... People resist that. White people don't like to relate to it because of strong sexual overtones. ... That's a hangup. A lot of blacks have a hangup, too, because integration suggests we are inferior, and only by sitting next to white people, having white teachers, can we be somebody."

Reverend Jackson went on to say that black educators don't want to see predominantly black colleges merged with white schools any more than Catholic institutions like Notre Dame are seeking mergers. Reverend Jackson urged applying this same principle to the public school system, so we can end the cancerous racial strife caused by busing pupils to achieve racial integration.

Reverend Jackson charged that "the fundamental question isn't segregation or integration. The real issue was always equal access

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to the best available education." He pointed out that one Chicago school spends $700 a year per student, and another spends $2,300. "If all schools received equal amounts of money for each pupil," Reverend Jackson said, "and if all pupils were guaranteed admittance to any school in the system, there would be no school busing advocates left." People "might want to go to a school with a specialty in science, arts, athletics, or a trade school."

Reverend Jackson said that establishing an open pluralistic society would also ease tensions caused by pressures to integrate neighborhoods. If the same levels of civil services were provided for black neighborhoods as for others, he said, most black residents would rather stay where they are than move into white neighborhoods.

Speaking up for freedom in the classical sense, Reverend Jackson said, "Segregation means being locked out of schools and neighborhoods which is bad, but integration means being locked into something which is bad, because neither one represents freedom. Freedom is where you have the option."

Reverend Jackson's ideas are worthy of rational discussion. The decline in educational standards and the tensions caused by busing show clearly that we have not yet found the formula for harmony and progress in our school system. Maybe we've been striving for the wrong kind of equality. Instead of going for equality of racial percentages, perhaps we should instead go for equality of expenditures and of educational opportunities, so that each individual, regardless of race, creed or color, may find his or her own identity and achieve his or her own individual goal in life.

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