from Phyllis Schlafly

May 9, 1991

How a Big City Was Destroyed

The addition of colored ink to the front page has enabled newspapers to report important information that might otherwise be obscure. A case in point is the maps on a recent front page of the St. Louis Post Dispatch illustrating the population shifts of whites and blacks in St. Louis between the 1980 and 1990 censuses.

The publication of these maps has stirred up a local controversy, but no one disputes their accuracy. People just say the newspaper shouldn't have printed them. So much for freedom of the press when facts are unwelcome!

The maps depicted in red ink the census tracts that lost 500 or more whites or 500 or more blacks, and depicted in blue ink the census tracts that grained 500 or more whites or 500 or more blacks. The maps reveal how, in one generation, St. Louis and other big cities have been transformed from wonderful places to live and visit into dangerous places to escape from.

Thirty years ago, St. Louis had a population of 750,000. Today it has fewer than 400,000 people. The people fled to the suburbs, most of them forfeiting much of the equity in their homes, the biggest financial investment most people ever make.

With a migration of this magnitude, of course there are different reasons for 350,000 individual decisions. But the number-one reason is the schools. The majority of people who fled the city were people with school-age children.

In 1962 the St. Louis public schools had an enrollment of 108,245 students. By 1990 this figure had dropped to 43,800. Desegregation including forced busing is costing taxpayers $160 million a year, while the 1evel of minority students in St. Louis schools has increased from 55 to 80 percent.

So what are the city fathers doing about this? Higher taxes is their only answer. Five candidates are already running for Missouri Governor in the 1992 election, all saying they want to be the "Education Governor," all promoting higher taxes.

St. Louis just had a school election in April. The incumbent politicians and big businesses joined forces to pass two school tax increases and a bond issue, and to

defeat four school board candidates who were pledged to seek an early end to forced busing and other reforms respecting parents' rights. Most of the CEOs who ordered these campaign contributions live in expensive white suburbs and send their children to private schools.

The pro-tax pro-busing candidates spent more than $300,000 (six times what the anti-busing candidates spent) and enjoyed massive support from the politicians and the media. The VIPs who backed. this slate included Congressmen Richard A. Gephardt (D-MO) and William L. Clay (D-MO), St. Louis Mayor Vincent C. Schoemehl, Jr. (now running for Governor), Monsanto Co., Emerson Electric Co., Anheuser-Busch Cos., Inc., and the city's two largest banks.

The anti-busing candidates received more votes than the anti-busing candidates received in the last election two years before. But this year, the anti-busing candidates were defeated by the large unprecedented turnout of voters in the black wards.

The anti-busing candidates were unable to find anyone willing to serve as poll watchers in the black wards, which are mostly on the north side of the city. Election results show that, in the north side wards, the pro-busing candidates received up to 98 percent of the vote, and the vote tally was approximately double that of the election four years ago.

For several years, the local media referred in a derogatory way to the "anti-busing" faction. When pre-election surveys showed that "anti-busing" was a positive, not a negative, label, the pro-busing candidates started calling themselves "anti-busing," too.

The morning of the election, the pro-busing faction distributed an election card that exactly copied the size, type, graphics and logo which had been used by the anti-busing faction through three elections. The card was an obvious intent to confuse the voters, since none of the four candidates on either side had any significant name I.D. and it was difficult to remember who was on which slate.

The anti-busing faction immediately filed a complaint with the St. Louis Election Board, but one member of the Board could not be located all day until about 4 p.m., CT which time the Board voted 2-to-1 to confiscate the misleading card. By that time, the misleading campaign card had done its job.

The school officials, politicians and businessmen are congratulating themselves on a great victory and gearing up for the next tax increases. Any bets on what the census figures in the year 2000 will show?