

Paul Rozycki - "Rumbles from the Bethel Pike Fault" - Vol. II No. 11 pg. 8-9, May 13, 1969

With Ronald Reagan's recent TV appearances being generally limited to midnight cowboy movies, the citizens of that late, great state of California have turned their schizophrenic attention to another natural disaster about to befall them. For the last few months Californians have looked at the earth below them with increasing uncertainty. Songs and stories, hippies, and scientists have turned with curiosity and fear towards that particular aspect of California known as the San Andreas Fault. Sailors are tying up their boats in Idaho. Realtors are selling ocean front property in Nevada and builders are warned against constructing new houses along that part of the state that may split open at any time.

Ah, but fear not fellow Hoosiers! We have Edgar Whitcomb not Ronald Reagan (who doesn't appear in shoot-em-up movies at night...he writes shoot-em-up books. ...Hmm). And certainly the citizens of Muncie and Indiana know better than to build along an earthquake line. That's what we (editorial not royal) thought too.

The bulldozers rumbling north of Ball State on Bethel Avenue grading the ground for the new Northwest High school are chancing a far greater and more dangerous fault than the one splitting California. They are riding over the fault of racism and class hatred that runs deep in American society. The best foundation, the most expert architects' design and the finest brick will all crumble to dust when this fault breaks loose. There are no earthquake proof buildings against this fault. The only cure is prevention and prevention can and must come now.

Whatever the motives and reasons for the choosing of the present site for the Northwest school, the end result is clear--the school will be a racist one, will widen the gap between white and black, rich and poor in Muncie. This is the fault that needs only a bit more pressure before hard tumbling rumbles are heard in Muncie.

The arguments against the Northwest school are not hard to find.

The first, and certainly the most important, are the ethical arguments to be offered against a school of this type and the society which permits it. The basic ethical question is this—Ought a certain group of students by virtue of their parents' wealth, good luck, education, or inheritance have better educational opportunities (and hence a better chance to get wealth, good luck, more education, and more inheritance) than the children of parents who were not so wealthy, lucky, educated, and inherited little?

Obviously, because of the central importance of education in our society, anyone who spends any time talking about 'equality' (this includes YAFers, Young Republicans and middle-of-the-road slobs, too) would have to answer No! to the above question. If we're going to talk in any way about equality in America we're going to have to talk about equality in education. It's painfully obvious that the Northwest school is anything but that. Ending discrimination is not simply the removal of old barriers. There is not time to permit the slow evolution of events to wear down the barriers--the fault lies below us and it won't let us wait. The end of discrimination will come only with positive moves in that direction.

All of this raises the legal ethical question of 'equal protection of the laws.' If a man is not to be denied the vote because of his skin color, income level, or place of residence, should he be denied an equal education (which may be more important than the -vote in terms of increasing one's political effectiveness) because of these factors. If we are to have 'one man one vote' perhaps we also ought to have 'one man one education' with those educations being equal in quality. If the urban dweller is no longer doomed to 1/100 the vote of the rural man should the ghetto dweller be doomed to the education of the split level suburban dweller?

Taken by themselves the reasons presented above should be enough to cause reconsideration of the Northwest school. However the reasons against the school go further. A number of sound educational arguments can be offered against the school (education majors, YAFers, and Young Republicans are you still with me?)

First, in terms of trying to solve the neighborhood vs. central type school conflict the Northwest School takes the worst of both worlds. There is no concentration of students that would warrant the placement of two major schools (Northwest and Muncie Central) so close together. The value of the campus type arrangement are also lost. Facilities, while good at Northwest (as well as exclusive) are not as good as they might be with a campus school. Second, the school board contends that they want schools build for approximately 1200-1500 students. The Brand New Northwest School is being built for about 1200 students--a number the school board considers ideal for good student-faculty-administration communication. So far so good. But plans are that Central will contain at least 2000 students. (separate but equal...Hmmm...ATTENTION...Plessey vs. Ferguson is alive and well in Muncie, Indiana)

Third, the school board contradicts the recommendations of a number of its own studies. It violates state law which requires 44 acres for a new high school of this style. Northwest will sit on a 40 acre plot--23 of which are already taken up by Anthony elementary school. The cost of a single new campus school would be \$4,000,000 less than the construction of both a new Central and a Northwest school. (overtaxed budget cutting Whitcomb Republicans, are you still listening?) The new school will finally act as a drain upon Central's quality teachers and even further widen the gap between races and classes.

Politically, opposition to the new school has been widespread and heavy. Students, teachers, and parents have voiced significant opposition to the plan only to have their voice silenced by Durwood Cory of the school board.

OK...that's the picture...those are the facts...what to do about them? Ball State (institutionally and individually) if there ever was a case in which you had the right and the duty to act it is this one. If there ever was a case where your own expertise came into play it is this one.

You sat around on the Vietnam issue deferring to those who 'knew more about it.' You sat around when the urban crisis came deferring to others. But you can't sit on your hands here. You can't pass the buck to someone else. As an institution (and as individuals) that claim to know something about education, silence in this case would be damning-revealing either stupidity or gutlessness.

One final argument must be added to the case to touch those of you unmoved by the bland niceties of ethical and legal arguments and uninformed or unconcerned by the technical details of the educational arguments. (YAFers, Whitcomb Republicans, middle-of-the-road slobs--hang on just a little longer--this is your paragraph.)

You see, that black kid who may get a second grade education at Central will come to Northwest school. It will take him a little longer of course---give him five or ten years. But this time he won't bring textbooks, pencils, and lunchboxes. No, in five or ten years he will have forgotten all of those things but he will have learned about other things---about guns, and Molotov cocktails, and anger and hatred. And then my Whitcomb Republican friends you will see how expensive cheap education can be.

If and when that ever comes (rumbles from the Bethel fault line) a few people around Muncie will talk about 'outsiders' causing trouble. But even they will know better – outsiders – No!...insiders?...Yes! Insiders who have been inside too long and are going to kick their way out.