



I advise and enjoin those who direct the paper in the tomorrows never to advocate any cause for personal profit or preferment. I would wish it always to be "the tocsin" and to devote itself to the policies of equality and justice to the underprivileged. If the paper should at any time be the voice of self-interest or become the spokesman of privilege or selfishness it would be untrue to its history.

— from the will of Josephus Daniels, Editor and Publisher 1894-1948

Toward true integration

School busing issues often boil down to choosing between racially balanced or neighborhood schools. The choice is less stark in communities committed to racial and economic diversity.

To maintain fully integrated schools, the Wake County Board of Education faces a dilemma: It can build new schools in rapidly growing suburbs that are predominantly white, and require minority students to endure long bus rides. Or it can put schools in more central locations and bus large numbers of white youngsters out of their neighborhoods.

It's a painful choice, one that society's racial and economic divisions force school systems to make. It eventually should be possible, however, to achieve more racially balanced schools without making children spend precious hours riding buses. The key is to focus on the forces that perpetuate so many single-race neighborhoods.

One of the fondest hopes behind school desegregation was that it would help lead to blacks and whites living amicably in the same communities. As it turns out, progress has been deplorably slow. There are praiseworthy exceptions, such as Longview Gardens in Raleigh. But Wake's fastest growing areas are mainly white, and some schools there have only small minority enrollments.

Busing and magnet programs have brought schoolchildren together and are worth continuing for that reason, but there's been little change in neighborhoods' racial makeup. A broader vision is called for, one that encompasses housing policy and development patterns

and includes not just the school board but county commissioners, municipal governing boards and planning departments.

The problem isn't unique to Wake County. The Mecklenburg County school board is grappling with a similar issue of long bus rides and inequities that put the burden of crosstown busing on black students. School systems around the country are looking for alternatives, and as The Charlotte Observer has reported, many realize that the answer is to address segregated neighborhoods directly.

Some places have tried incentives, promising neighborhood schools to communities that integrate themselves — usually by offering a variety of housing styles and prices. Developers are given inducements to mix moderate and low-cost housing with expensive homes. Neighborhood associations recruit minority residents by working with developers and real estate agents and seeking grants for housing projects. One city, Nashville, is considering building neighborhood schools in areas that accept scattered-site public housing.

Not all of these approaches have been successful. But at least they recognize that to have true racial desegregation, there must be economic desegregation as well. The goal is to reach the point where neighborhood schools are integrated schools — and it will take more than a bus ride to get there.