



# Milwaukee Workers And Integration

Since the early 1960's, many Milwaukee citizens have been fighting for school integration as a means of achieving decent education for all children and striking a blow against racist discrimination. This fight included picket-lines, sit-ins, and anti-segregation school boycotts that involved thousands of parents and students. In spite of the unequal burden placed on Blacks and its many other shortcomings, de-segregation remains a precious victory.

## A Continuing Struggle

But in June of 1977, this victory came under a dangerous legal threat. The Supreme Court ordered a lower court to re-examine

the Milwaukee desegregation plan. This court may re-affirm its support of the plan, or it may water it down or destroy it. This legal development teaches us an important lesson about any reform: It is the vigilance and unity of working people that protect justice in our society, not the courts.

The legal decision resulting in Milwaukee School desegregation grew out of the mass civil rights movement. Now, when that movement is less strong and racism is still undefeated, court decisions are reflecting the conservative trend in politics. We can only safeguard integration by building a strong movement that unites black and white working class people around defeating racism and promoting quality education. Already hundreds of parents, students, and working

people have spent long hours working for fair and effective de-segregation. If we can expand these hundreds into a movement of thousands, if we can get our unions to take a strong anti-racist stand, we could change integration from the transfer of bodies into the transformation of the schools.

The Supreme Court's retreat on de-segregation strengthens the fear and resentment in many white people towards bussing. One hears many anti-bussing arguments: "Why should my kids be bussed? I never discriminated against anybody." "I don't think black people are discriminated against--they don't deserve any special breaks!" "I won't let my child be bussed miles away to a dangerous neighborhood." Though few would admit it, racial prejudice often lies behind these arguments. This prejudice has been strengthened by the School Board's deliberate segregation of students, and it must be defeated before any student in Milwaukee will get a decent education. Integration alone won't solve the greatest problems faced by our schools and society, but it is an essential first step. As long as the schools are segregated, minorities will get an inferior education, students will remain ignorant of other cultures, and all working people will remain too divided to win better schools and a better society.

## Segregation: An Intentional Injustice

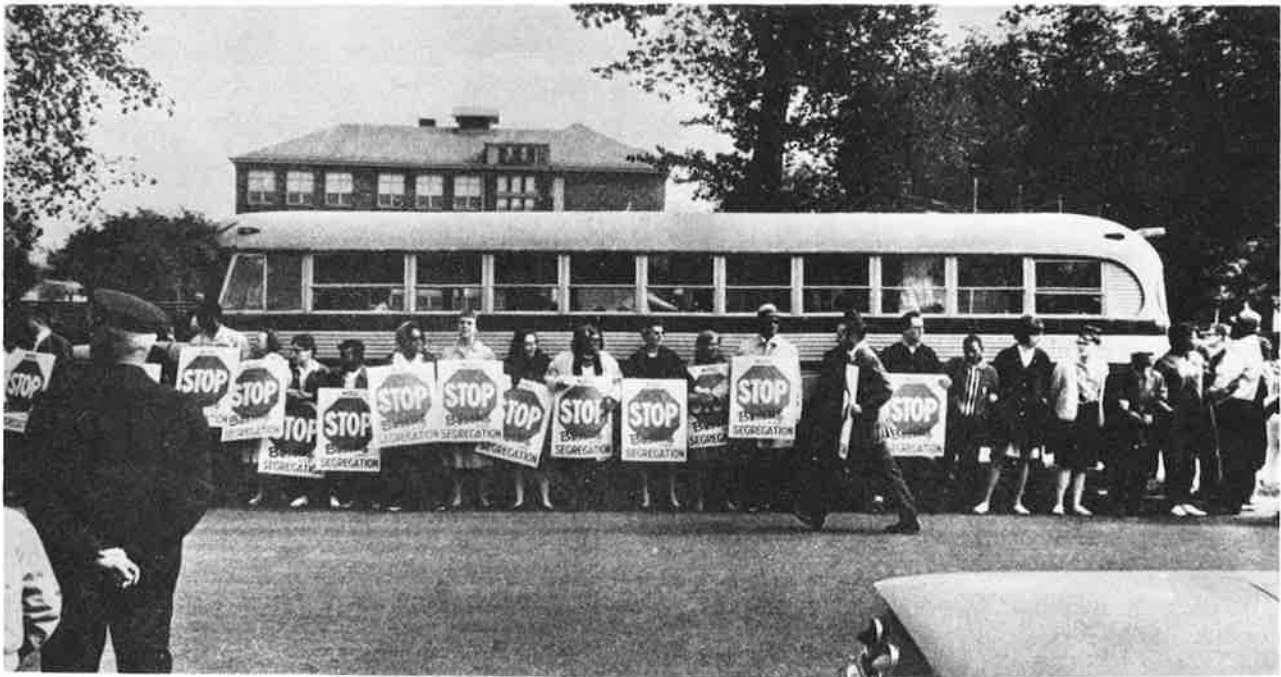
Under the cloak of protecting the neighborhood school, the Milwaukee School Board has spent 15 years trying to keep the schools segregated. In some cases, they drew attendance boundaries in ways that kept whites out of black schools near their neighborhood, or vice versa. They had schools built in locations that insured they would be all black when they opened, rather than integrated. When some black schools became overcrowded, black children were bused to white schools, but forced to eat lunch separately and attend segregated classes. It was this "intact

busing" that led to the massive school boycotts of the early sixties. The latest ploys include the one million dollar appeal of the desegregation court decision, and the "Austin-Hammond" plan. This plan would leave segregation almost completely undisturbed because it would only move a few hundred students in nine schools.

Segregated education is unequal education. Blacks and Latinos have been trapped in the most neglected, over-crowded, and poorly taught schools. For years the old North Division High School was a rat-infested fire hazard. Auer Avenue School is so overcrowded that some students are taught in pre-fabricated metal huts. The average teacher in the black schools has much less teaching experience, than the average teacher in the out-lying white schools.



Clareta Simpson, who was known as "Mother Freedom", was arrested over 100 times in anti-segregation demonstrations in the 1960's.



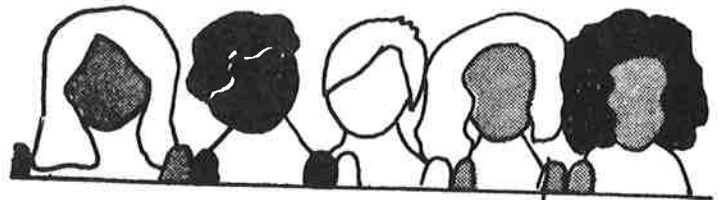
Demonstrators picket in front of bus in 1964. They were trying to stop intact busing.

As long as segregation exists, the School Board and school administration can mask the need for educational reform behind a smokescreen of subtle racism. White parents are led to believe that the problem isn't poor education but underprivileged blacks who lower the quality of the schools. This stereotype makes them cling to the idea that by keeping their school all-white they are defending the education of their children. But studies cited by the US Civil Rights Commission of newly integrated schools in Berkley and Louisville show that both Black and White students did better after being integrated. In Denver, white students maintained their academic level while Black and Chicano students improved.

In reality, integration would mean better education for all children. The main reason this is true is because integration is the only way we can develop the multi-racial unity we need to struggle for better schools. Since segregation has been the main prop of inequality, all of us have to work to end segregation before we can truly be united. Integrated schools make unequal education less likely. For instance, when 4th Street School was

integrated, over \$200,000 of renovation was done before the white children came in. More important than physical renovations are teachers attitudes and expectations. Many teachers have higher expectations of whites than blacks, but an integrated classroom encourages more thorough preparation and more equal expectations. At the same time, the physical integration of a school is no guarantee that the academic problems of blacks will be solved or that racism will disappear.

In addition to breaking down racism, inter-racial schools give students a fuller appreciation and tolerance of other cultures. This means their education is more complete and they are better prepared to live and work in a multi-racial society.



# Segregation: An Injury To One Is An Injury To All

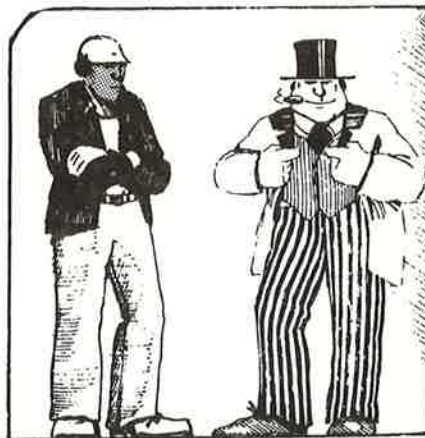
This fight for integrated, quality education is part of the larger struggle of black people for equal rights in housing, employment, and politics. School segregation is a result of a whole pattern of racism in the US, not just actions taken by the School Board. Discrimination in jobs and housing has kept most blacks in Milwaukee trapped in the crumbling inner city and made busing the only way to desegregate the schools.

Racial discrimination is built into all institutions in this society and hurts all of us. The capitalist system uses lower wages and harder working conditions for blacks and other minorities to undermine the security and living standards of all workers.

Race discrimination causes white people to look at minorities as competitors rather than allies in the struggle for a better life. As long as race hatred politically divides working class people, we will be unable to solve the basic problems that confront us in our jobs and other parts of our life. For this reason, workers have a special responsibility and stake in defeating racism wherever it rears its ugly head. Anti-busing sentiment immediately effects the school system, but it can poisonously eat away at the inter-racial unity that the working class needs elsewhere.

One of the most crucial places where racism hurts workers is on the job. How can blacks unite with white co-workers against a brutal company, when they know these workers don't want to send their children to integrated schools? Racism in the schools makes white workers more ready to accept the racism of the employers, who keep blacks in the hardest, lowest paying jobs. The result is a divided work force, less able to carry on the fight for better wages and some control on the job.

In the late 1930's and early 1940's when most of the large industrial unions were being formed and actively organizing, unions



## WHO IS THIS MAN?

### CLUES

1. Lawyer for American Motors in grievance cases.
2. Lawyer for bus company who testified for the last rate hike.
3. Partner in law firm representing Allis Chalmers, Allen Bradley, Briggs and Stratton, Deaconess Hospital, Continental Can, M&I Bank, First Federal Savings and Loan, and many many more.
4. Lawyer for the utility company who testified for the rate hike.
5. Partner in the law firm that holds conferences on union busting.



### ANSWER

Lawrence Hammond, lawyer in firm of Quarles and Brady, who devised the school board's racist plan to stop integration. For this, this ruling class lawyer, was paid over \$130,000 of our taxpayer's money in 1976.

In the political arena, racism is no less relentless in driving whites away from their friends and into the arms of their enemies.

Nixon used racial fears (disguised as "law and order" to get elected. Who benefited from his victory? Only the small class of monopoly capitalists who gained record profits from his corrupt, pro-business regime. George Wallace has built a strong national power base with even more blatant racist appeals. In the 1968 Wallace received over 10 million votes. But as Alabama's governor he has done nothing to help the working class. In Alabama, the average income is \$3300 a year. The state ranks 49th in money spent on education, and Wallace's administration is famous for corruption and hostility to unions.

For the last several years, corporate profits have continued to rise while increasing inflation, unemployment, and social service cutbacks have made the lives of all working people more difficult. We will be helpless to defend ourselves unless we build a strong unity based on completely defeating racism.

saw the need for unity and how this unity depended on taking up the fight against racial discrimination (along with being truly democratic and militantly fighting for the workers interests). For example, in 1943 the UAW led the fight for black occupancy of the Sojourner Truth Housing Project in Detroit. At first blacks were physically prevented from moving in, but the UAW took a firm stand. This strong stand was mainly responsible for the eventual victory and also won the respect of the black union members and the local black community leaders. It is no accident that during this time these unions made the greatest strides in their history.

If schools become places where our children learned to get along with students of a different race and if racial stereotypes were broken down, the next generation of workers will be better prepared to fight corporate exploitation.



## Union Leadership And Integration

As front-line defenders of the working class, unions should be leading the fight against segregation. Instead, most union bureaucrats are giving it backhanded support or openly siding with the anti-busing movement. In Louisville and Boston, the AFL-CIO labor councils passed resolutions opposed to busing. Also in Louisville, the UAW local leadership played a leading roll in the anti-busing movement.

Here in Milwaukee, COPE (the political arm of the AFL-CIO labor council), the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association political arm, and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Local 48 all endorsed the most conservative, anti-integration candidates for the 1977 School Board. (COPE did endorse Peggy Kenner, one of the progressive candidates.) These candidates--Jesmok, Bussalachi, and Michalski--were all incumbents who had supported the racist Hammond plan.

Although many progressive union leaders support bussing, the union bureaucracy cannot be depended on to challenge educational segregation. It is up to the rank and file unionists, in alliance with other progressive people in the city, to insure that desegregation and quality education are seen as two inseperable goals of the labor movement. We stand together against the company's racism and for equal and better working conditions for all. We must also stand together for equal and quality education for all students. The rank and file worker best understands that blacks and whites are both economically exploited and that our interests are essentially the same.



## The Fight For Quality Education

If parents, students, and teachers were united and racism was defeated, no force could stop us from winning the changes that would mean a decent education for everyone. A united working class could demand that money now wasted on such useless things as the one million dollar appeal of the de-segregation decision be used to improve underfunded, overcrowded schools and re-design academic and vocational programs so they better serve the needs of students.

A united movement could fight for these important reforms:

- 1.) The teaching of basic skills. An end must be put to having students go through 12 years of school without learning the skills necessary to find a job or even how to read and write.
- 2.) Equal Education. Racial, sexual, and economic class discrimination in the schools must be ended. This means that schools must be integrated, offer bi-lingual and bi-cultural programs to anyone interested, and teach history in a way that emphasizes the contributions of blacks, Latinos, women, Native Americans, and working people to building this country.
- 3.) Equal Education means Equal Busing. Up till now blacks have borne the greatest burden for de-segregation. Many inner city schools have been shut down or turned into speciality schools closed to neighbor-

hood children. As a result, many more blacks have been bused than whites. The last two years of integration should be carried out in an equal manner and the School Board should be forced to develop a plan to re-build and renovate inner city schools.

- 4.) Socially Responsible Education. Our schools will have to undergo many profound changes before they can provide our children with the self respect, pride in the working class and solidarity with others that they should feel. Though these changes will take many years of struggle to accomplish we can start thinking about them and organizing towards them now. We should eventually expect the schools to give all children a sense of self confidence, to eradicate the feelings of individual failure and worthlessness that thousands of them now feel. At the same time schools should teach

## Who Pays For It All?



Millions of dollars of our money are squandered every year. Like the over one million dollars that the School Board wasted in legal expenses fighting the integration decision and the millions wasted on tearing down houses for a freeway that is never built.

The money for schools comes from property taxes we pay directly if we own our own homes or indirectly through rents. This tax falls most heavily on the working class especially the lower income people, older people who live on a fixed income, and people with large families who live in large houses. Wealthy suburbs can easily afford high quality education. But what about the rest of us?

The choice of quality education for our children or lower taxes isn't much of a choice. The resources must be made available for quality education. They should be provided by those best equipped to pay--the banks, corporations, and the rich. A tax should be levied on all corporate income to fund the upgrading of Milwaukee Schools.

children to feel and act responsible for each other and the whole of society, and to consider a life spent helping others superior to a life spent only helping oneself. Children should be taught to exercise this sense of responsibility by critically questioning what they are told and by solving problems through cooperation rather than competition.

These things can be won if workers struggle together for quality education. We can learn from the students at North and South Division High Schools. Two years ago the School Board announced that they would not build new schools to replace these old worn out schools. Students from both schools walked out of their classes and marched together-- Black, White, and Latino--to the School Board to demand that both new schools be built. And they won their demand.

## What You Can Do

Set up educational forums on the question of integration. Speakers and literature are available from People United For Integration and Quality Education for unions, caucuses, community groups and interested individuals.

Organize support in your union for de-segregation and quality education. Find out where your leadership stands. Introduce a resolution in your union that supports de-segregation. A good resolution could contain these points:

1. We wholeheartedly support the busing of children to bring educational equality to all.
2. We strongly condemn any group or individual, such as the Nazis or the KKK, who try to use the just fight for quality, integrated education as a way to inflame race hatred.
3. We support the formation of multi-racial student-parent-teacher groups to actively fight for quality, integrated education.

Another way you can help is by joining People United for Integration and Quality Education. People United is a city-wide, multi-racial group of parents, students, school employees, and rank and file workers who are organizing a movement that will insure fair, effective school integration. People United sees the fight for de-segregation as a vital first step in uniting people around the struggle to improve the school system. For more information on People United call 372-0754 or write to P.O. Box 92271, Milwaukee Wisconsin 53202.



Written by the Milwaukee Alliance.  
For more information or additional copies of this pamphlet, contact us by writing:  
Milwaukee Alliance  
P.O. Box 12029  
Milwaukee, Wisc. 53212