

Phoenix Board Protests Group's Action; Residents Express Views

Statement by Area Residents Defends Basis for Request

Editor's note: The following statement was submitted by Medford Lawyer Frank Van Dyke in behalf of the residents he represents in the Phoenix school district who have requested to be transferred into the Medford district.

The statement was submitted after the Mail Tribune offered space in which residents of the area could present their views in a reply to the Phoenix school board's letter. Van Dyke represents those residents.

School district reorganization on the state level is not involved in this controversy. This problem, very properly, is strictly a local matter which should be resolved in Jackson county, and Oregon law so provides.

When the Jackson county reorganization committee found that the boundary change was desirable, as it did by a vote of 4 to 2, and that it did not conflict with any contemplated reorganization, the issue of a boundary change was placed before the county boundary board. This board, as its name implies, has always decided boundary changes under Oregon procedure.

The right of Phoenix to pro-

test is unquestioned; but it is interesting to note that so far as the record indicates, Phoenix had not found the Jackson county reorganization committee unrepresentative, selfish or political prior to this final decision, although numerous other questions have been determined by the county reorganization committee affecting Phoenix.

Object to Statement
We strongly object to the statement in the letter of School District No. 4 that "the transfer of this area is quite obviously engineered by Medford real estate interests."

Anyone attending the hearing of July 20, 1960, must concede the housewives, parents, and property owners in the area affected were the ones making and presenting the request for change.

Members of the Jackson county reorganization committee are public spirited citizens whose integrity and fairness have not previously been questioned. These members serve without pay, only two of the members reside within the city limits of Medford, and their considered judgment in this matter certainly does not reflect "selfishness, immaturity and lack of care."

From the letter it is apparent that the greater wealth is located in the center of the valley, and it appears to lessen as one goes south into the Talent area.

Decline To Join
Phoenix voters declined to join the Medford district and chose to associate with the Talent area, resulting in an increased tax burden for them. This indicates their voluntary desire to retain their status as a basically rural district. Such is their privilege.

Conversely, under the American democratic system, Medford people who have expressed so uniformly their desire to participate in the educational, recreational, cultural and religious life of Medford are entitled to do so. Fire protection, police protection, street protection and sewer services of Medford are available to these people. Certainly it is not less important that their children should have Medford educational advantages.

The problems of growth and development pointed up by the Phoenix school board are unfortunately a part of the economic facts of life. Urban problems should be resolved by the urban community with which they are affiliated, as would be the case when the boundary change is made in this instance. The Phoenix district, as a rural unit, will continue on a sound economic basis after the change is made.

Geographically Located
The Rogue Valley Manor is geographically located within the area involved, and was so placed because of Medford facilities available to it. Med-

ford capital and Medford interests have planned, developed and brought to realization the Rogue Valley Manor project. It is an urban development, and not a part of the rural area with which Phoenix has identified itself.

The letter suggests that if the change is denied there would be a more efficient use of public funds. As a matter of fact, Medford's Hoover school is within easy walking distance of the whole area involved in the change. Medford's new junior high school site is also within easy walking distance.

Construction at this time of any other public school structures in this area would be a wasteful expenditure of public funds and an unnecessary duplication of school facilities.

Other Medford school facilities are less than half the distance required to reach Phoenix's nearest facilities. The distance to Talent is four times that required to reach the most distant Medford schools. Obviously, transportation costs to Phoenix are greater.

Option For Land
Phoenix writes of spending \$1,000 on an option for a site for school facilities in the area involved. The Phoenix school board bulletin of March, 1960, indicates on page 15 "The budget was discussed item by item. Motion made by Mr. Harris, seconded and carried to put \$500 in budget for option on property in Barnett Road area for school site."

If the letter in this paper is correct, Phoenix has already spent double the authorized amount for an option on a school site in the disputed

area. This site, by the way, is adjacent to the proposed new parochial school to be constructed in this district.

For a six-room school with gymnasium, cafeteria, library and office of comparable quality to the Hoover school, it is estimated a six-classroom grade school would cost the Phoenix taxpayers \$250,000, if they were to vote such a facility.

So long as numerical superiority is maintained in the southern area of the Phoenix district, as a practical political matter, the actual establishment of these facilities near Barnett rd. in the near future may reasonably and fairly be questioned, if the area should remain in the Phoenix district. The construction of these duplicate facilities is not a more efficient use of public funds.

Equalization of Resources
A point is made about equalization of financial resources. After the removal of this area, the valuation per census child in the Phoenix district would be greater than that of Ashland and Central Point, and it would continue to place Phoenix in the middle so far as valuation per census child in Jackson county is concerned.

Suffice it to say, in conclusion, as time does not permit a blow by blow reply to this letter, democratic principles should prevail. So long as all, or substantially all, of the Medford families in the area desiring the change, have expressed their wishes so manifestly and clearly, to be placed in the Medford district, and their request has been approved by the county school district reorganization committee, the group elected by all of the school boards of Jackson county to handle the problem of school district reorganization, reason and justice, as we know it in the U.S., entitles the petitioners to present and seek approval of the requested change by the Jackson county boundary board.

Letter to Putnam Reviews Problem In Barnett Area

Editor's note: The Jackson county school boundary board has under consideration a recommendation from the school reorganization committee to reorganize a parcel of land in the Barnett rd. area from the Phoenix to the Medford school district.

The action by the committee was protested by the Phoenix school board in a letter to Rex Putnam, superintendent of the state department of education.

The letter follows:
School District Reorganization State Department of Education
Rex Putnam, Superintendent Salem, Oregon
Dear Sir:

We, as School Directors of Phoenix School District No. 4, wish to protest the action of the Jackson County Reorganization Committee taken on July 20, 1960 of approving a transfer to the Medford School District No. 549C of a portion of our newly consolidated district containing 63 pupils and residential property totalling approximately \$500,000.00 assessed valuation.

This newly consolidated district was formed as a result of action taken by the Reorganization Committee on August 25, 1959 declaring that the consolidation of Phoenix School District No. 4 and Talent School District No. 22 was "in line with Reorganization procedure." This consolidation was approved by the Boundary Board on September 25, 1959.

The property in question which the Reorganization Committee approved for transfer out of our district also includes the Rogue Valley Manor, about a \$5,500,000.00 structure with a potential \$1,500,000.00 assessed valuation.

Not Representative
We feel that the Jackson County Reorganization Committee is not representative of Jackson County, being composed of four members from the City of Medford with no representation whatever from the three districts or that portion of the county south of Medford, and that the decision reached was based on political and selfish considerations by the majority urban members, rather than mature and careful consideration of the entire problem involved.

At the time of the consolidation of Phoenix School District No. 4 and Talent School District No. 22, the Phoenix school district had an assessed valuation of \$4,919,779 with a 63.1 mill school levy. Talent had an assessed valuation of \$1,618,341 with an 82 mill levy. Medford had a valuation of \$44,304,547 with a 60.2 mill levy.

We estimate that the school levy for 1960-61 of our newly consolidated Phoenix School District No. 4 will be about 72 mills, but the people approved the consolidation in spite of the millage raise in School District No. 4, because they felt such consolidation would benefit the educational program and facilities for the entire area, and was meeting the objectives of the reorganization law. They did not expect more taxable property to be taken from them.

Per Pupil Wealth
Also, at the time of consolidation the per pupil wealth (ability to support a school) of the Phoenix District was \$4,298, and that of the Talent District was \$2,487. After consolidating the two districts, we emerged with a per pupil wealth of \$3,662.81. At this time the per pupil wealth of the Medford District No. 549C was \$4,432.00.

Currently we now have in our consolidated district an assessed valuation of about \$6,538,121. We have a budget which will require that we raise by taxation \$474,120.00, which will mean a levy of about 72 mills. Should the area we mention be removed from our district it would drop our valuation to about \$6,000,000, raising our millage to over 79 mills. This means a cost of about \$40,000

a year to our district. Should the additional \$1,500,000 assessed valuation of the Manor be denied us it would mean the loss of another \$100,000 or more a year, enough to build a school in this area in less than two years financing, when the number of children warrant it. At the present time the children are being transported 4 miles by bus to our school in Phoenix.

Paid Option
The fact is, we have already paid \$1,000 to take a years option on 9 acres in this section for a school site. We have 75 per cent of our bonding capacity of \$1,330,833.00 remaining, so that we are in a good financial position to build a school when necessary. In the event we cannot take this option up because of the property being transferred out of our district we stand to lose the \$1,000 already paid for the option, plus interest charges.

The transfer of this area is quite obviously being engineered by Medford real estate interests, and not by the Medford school district. The area is just south of Medford, and has recently been included in the Medford city limits. Property has been sold there with the implication to the purchasers that the area would be placed in the Medford school district, and the children then would be eligible to attend Medford schools a few blocks away. The land in the Phoenix school district which was placed in the city limits of Medford has been in the Phoenix district for 12 years. Before that it was a non-high district known as the North Phoenix school district. It includes the hill upon which the Manor is located. The reorganization committee in approving the transfer into the Medford school district of all School District No. 4 property in the city limits was approving the transfer of the Manor itself, which is a retirement home for the elderly, with of course, no children in residence. Understandably, the

Medford school district has indicated that they would oppose annexation of the residence area if it did not carry with it enough taxable valuation to provide school facilities and educate the children of the area. Consequently the Manor was contained in this area approved for transfer, so that the Medford school district would not be opposed to annexing it.

Violations Noted
The state board of education has set forth four specific objectives of school reorganization, and we feel this transfer of property definitely violates No. 2 and No. 4 of these objectives, namely:

(2) A more efficient use of public funds, by creation of administrative school districts which can furnish necessary educational services at reasonable cost.

(4) As great a degree of equalization of financial resources at the local level as can be effected by school district reorganization.

Undoubtedly of particular interest to you are the statewide implications of the gradual absorption of a newly created administrative district. The Phoenix-Talent combined district, currently a sound economic system, is sandwiched between two large school systems - those of Ashland and Medford. Inevitably, our district borders on the two cities. As the cities grow, must our

already small but sound district always shrink? If so, the same policy must be applied to all other small districts in the state which are neighbors of big school districts and big communities. This policy would deny the small districts the opportunity to maintain and strengthen themselves, and they would become increasingly incapable of providing good educations for their children. We do not believe this was the intent of the school reorganization law, and we do believe it could further endanger the entire program for the state of Oregon.

We might add that on September 22, 1958 the Phoenix school district relinquished to the Medford school district a tract of land upon which they had purchased a school site without realizing it was in our district. Again in September, 1959, we gave up about \$230,000 more of assessed valuation to Medford to straighten the boundary and to establish it at what is known as Barnett road. At this time we had an understanding with the boundary board that no further nibbling at our district would occur. We feel it is now high time to take a stand.

We respectfully request that this property transfer be investigated at the state level before final approval of the transfer can be effected.

A statement is enclosed which briefly outlines the program of education set up for the 1960-61 school year by the consolidated Phoenix-Talent school district. It is a program which needs all the taxable support from property that can be provided.

Respectfully yours,
Phoenix School District No. 4
Dr. M. D. McGeary,
chairman
L. W. Newbury
Joyce Goodrich
Allen Harris
Bruce Cyphers
Merle Simmonds
Melvin Lattie

Pomona Grange Takes Stand in Land Issue

The Jackson county Pomona Grange this week went on record "approving the stand of the Phoenix school board that the present school district boundaries be left as they are."

The present boundary between the Phoenix and Medford school districts is Barnett rd., and the Grange felt that since it was approved by both districts through the county reorganization committee that it should remain the boundary.

This week's action by the Pomona Grange stemmed from a recent request by residents living south of Barnett rd. to be transferred into the Medford district. The people live within the city limits of Medford, but are in the Phoenix school district.

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Nixon's Wife to Accompany Him On Campaign

Chicago - (UPI) - When Vice President Richard M. Nixon goes off to the campaign wars in the fall he'll have his wife Pat by his side.

Mrs. Nixon, who attended a "Great Lady Luncheon" as part of the GOP convention whirling Wednesday, said after it was over that "we're not counting our chickens before they're hatched," but she added "we've always been a team and I'll be in there pitching too."

The Vice President's wife said their two children Julie, 12, and Tricia, 14, are having a grand time and that the highlight of the convention so far for them has been the president's speech last night. Of the "great lady" luncheon which she attended today she said "it was thrilling... I was very proud of it."

Following the luncheon she said she and the children visited with Mrs. Eisenhower and the children got to say hello to the president "which is always a thrill for them."

She said they chattered with the first lady and the children had cokes and "really lived it up."

Mrs. Nixon said the children were spunky and bearing up well during the convention confusion.

Curfew Halts Racial Violence

Greenville, S. C. (UPI) - A strict curfew barring everyone under 21 from the streets of Greenville after 9 p.m. apparently choked off interracial violence in this textile mill city Tuesday night.

Mobs of white and Negro youths roamed the streets Sunday and Monday nights engaging in knife and rock battles. The city council, in a five minute session, enacted the curfew law Tuesday at the request of Police Chief P. P. Oakes.

Oakes said he was "extremely well pleased" with the result. He indicated enforcement of the law may be relaxed when the racial temper cools.

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