

**STATEMENT OF SAM W. WOOD, SUPERINTENDENT, CLARKE
COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Mr. Wood. I hold the position of superintendent in the Clarke County School District.

The Clarke County District is a countywide district of, generally, urban and suburban nature. The community has a population of about 50,000, and a school enrollment of about 10,500 pupils.

The University of Georgia is located in Athens, and the general level of education in the community may be somewhat higher than that in districts of comparable size in the State, although there is a wide socioeconomic range, and there has been considerable recent industrial development in the county.

The school system includes two senior high schools, three junior high schools, and 13 elementary schools, with a professional staff of approximately 475, in addition to a vocational-technical school with about 600 students. Exclusive of the vocational-technical school, the average annual expenditure per pupil is in excess of \$400, not including debt service.

The Clarke County School District is involved in programs under titles I, II, and III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and various titles under the National Defense Education Act. And, of course, others that are not involved in the Office of Education.

The Clarke County School District began desegregation in the fall of 1963, before the Civil Rights Act was enacted, under policies established by the Clarke County Board of Education in 1959, pursuant to the Supreme Court decision of 1954, but without court order.

At that time, the first applications were received from Negroes seeking admission to previously all white schools, and five of the seven applicants were accepted. The initial desegregation was carried out smoothly and without incident. The following year the number of approved Negro applications for formerly all white schools was more than doubled.

In 1965, the Clarke County Board of Education continued to follow its policy concerning desegregation, resulting in the acceptance of approximately 40 Negro pupils in formerly all white schools.

It was at this point that the Office of Education required the submission of a desegregation plan and form 441. The form was submitted, with a delineation of past performance and an explanation of the plan.

After an unduly long period of time, notification was received that what had been done was not acceptable.

Two trips to Washington were required in order to determine what would be necessary to placate the Office of Education.

It was at that time that it became apparent that past performance, sincerity of purpose, and forthrightness of approach were of no value to the Office of Education officials. In fact, I was told by an attorney in the Office of Education that statements about what we had done was merely "preamble," and was of no interest, and not worth reading.

The result of the trips to Washington was that the Clarke County Board of Education was required to reopen the "freedom of choice" period. This created considerable confusion, but resulted in some increase in the number of Negroes in formerly all white schools.