"Virginia: Backward March"
Fenwick, Charles R
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I am extremely disappointed at the intemperate language and unfair conclusions set forth in your editorial entitled, "Virginia: Backward March," appearing in your edition of Nov. 14. It shows a complete lack of comprehension of the terrific problems with which the people of Virginia are confronted.

At the outset, I want to pay tribute to the members of the Gray Commission, many of whom were bitterly opposed to integration—and in the face of tremendous pressure, approached this problem with a desire to maintain the public school system and provide assistance to the children of the Commonwealth.

You failed to recognize in your editorial that no recommendation was made in the Commission's report to repeal Section 129 of the constitution (abolish the public school system); that no recommendation was made to repeal the compulsory education law; that no attempt was made to deprive a locality of state funds if integration took place; that no recommendation was made that before a school could be integrated, it would require unanimous action of the school board, county board and a referendum of the people, all of which were demanded and urged upon the Commission.

The report recognizes the right of each locality to meet the requirements of the Supreme Court in accordance with the situation existing in that community.

This was specifically recognized by the Supreme Court in its decision of May 31, 1955, where it said, "Full implementation of these constitutional principles may require solution of varied local school problems."

Again, the Court said, "In fashioning and effectuating the decrees, the courts will be guided by equitable principles. Traditionally, equity has been characterized by a practical flexibility in shaping its remedies and by a facility for adjusting and reconciling public and private needs . . . Courts of equity may properly take into account the public interest in the elimination of such obstacles in a systematic and effective manner, but it should go without saying that the vitality of these constitutional principles cannot be allowed to yield simply because of disagreement with them."

Your whole editorial is based on the false premise that the Supreme Court ordered integration of all schools. The Supreme Court did no such thing. It held that segregation on the basis of race is unconstitutional. Presumably, it is just as unconstitutional to require *enforced* integration as it is to have *racial* segregation

The Commission, at the outset, announced that it would formulate a program, within the framework of law, designed to prevent *enforced integration* of the races in the public schools of Virginia. The recommendation in the report that no child shall be required against the will of its parents, or guardian, to attend an integrated school, is designed to prevent *enforced integration.* The grants in aid recommended would give to that child an opportunity to receive an education.

In the final analysis, the Commission report is designed to preserve the public school system and protect the school child of the state, recognizing that, in order to maintain the public school system, sentiment and conditions in the various areas must be recognized.

In order to bring out a unanimous report it was necessary for every member of the Commission to put personal feelings aside for the welfare of the state as a whole.

CHARLES R. FENWICK,
State Senator, Arlington.

Editor's note: We welcome this expression from Mr. Fenwick, who was a member of the Gray Commission, although we disagree strongly with his description of the impact of the Commission's report. For the record, our editorial did mention that the Gray Commission had avoided recommending abolition of the public school system. It also noted, anent Mr. Fenwick's comment that no recommendation was made to appeal the compulsory education law, that the Commission asked "a legal guarantee that no child be compelled to attend an integrated school." Whether enforced integration would be "just as unconstitutional" as enforced segregation, as Mr. Fenwick implies, is a semantic question for the Supreme Court to settle; but there is not the slightest hint of this in the Court's opinions, nor has the issue arisen in the many areas where integration has long been the practice.

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