

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

SOUTHWESTERN REGIONAL OFFICE

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• June 3, 1977

Dr. Hector P. Garcia
1315 Bright Street
Corpus Christi, Texas 78405

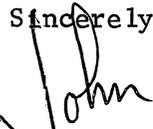
Dear Dr. Garcia,

I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation and gratitude for your participation at the recent press conference in Corpus Christi. Your influence in the community, as well as your stature as a former Commissioner, were vital to the success of the effort.

Attached are some newspaper clippings, most of which you have probably already seen.

Please keep us posted on developments and again, many thanks for your great assistance.

Sincerely,



JOHN F. DULLES, II
Deputy Regional Director

Enclosures

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Civil rights panel backs redistricting

By RONALD OZIO

Staff Writer

In a publication to be released tomorrow, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission's Texas Advisory Committee reportedly will add its voice to those calling for single-member school board districts in Corpus Christi.

And, in a Washington, D. C., meeting arranged by local political leader Hector Garcia, the U.S. Justice Department has been approached about intervening in a federal lawsuit to force the drawing of single-member districts.

The Texas Advisory Committee's much-delayed report, which comes a full year after the group's hearings in Corpus Christi, reportedly accuses the Corpus Christi school board of failing "to respond to the specific needs of the minority community in Corpus Christi."

It will recommend an election method change to single-member districts and suggests that district lines be "meticulously studied and drawn in such a way as to be equitable to all segments" of the community.

School board membership should reflect the ethnic makeup of the district, the publication reportedly says.

A report from the parent commission, issued last fall, was highly critical of the district and its leadership and the Texas committee's report is expected to follow suit.

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Rights

The committee's full report will be released at a press conference tomorrow in Corpus Christi by John F. Dulles, senior field representative in the commission's regional office in San Antonio.

Meanwhile, Joaquin Avila, associate counsel with the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), said yesterday by telephone from San Antonio that Justice Department officials "seem pretty interested in the case."

MALDEF will officially request the department's intervention, he said.

Department officials have re-

quested more information on the case, according to Avila, and he expects to hear in two to three weeks whether the department will continue its interest as a prelude to a decision on intervention.

Avila said the department has not involved itself in such cases in earlier years but, with the change in administration, "I hear they may be getting more interested."

At the meeting in Washington late last week, Garcia, Ed Castillo of the American GI Forum and Mark Schacht of MALDEF met with Gerald Jones, Voting Section chief in the department's Civil Rights Division.

Schacht said by telephone yesterday from Washington that it was a "positive" meeting though Jones did not promise intervention.

"We told them we were very unhappy" with a ruling by Texas Atty. Gen. John Hill that struck down a legislative attempt to implement single-member school board districts for Corpus Christi, Garcia said, and asked the department to look into the matter.

The MALDEF suit was filed three years ago but languished in federal court until last week when Avila announced his intention of dusting it off and "moving on (it)

very quickly."

His action came only a day ahead of Hill's ruling that a bill sponsored by State Sen. Carlos Truan and State Reps. Hugo Berlanga and Arnold Gonzales, all of Corpus Christi, was a constitutionally forbidden special law because it concerned only the CCISD.

The Truan-Berlanga-Gonzales bill has drawn concerted opposition from Corpus Christi school trustees and Supt. Dana Williams who say they favor a modified plan under which four trustees would be elected from voting areas, three at large (the 4-3 plan).

The legislators' bill called for having all seven elected from voting areas.

The relationship between the three legislators and seven school trustees has grown increasingly bitter.

At yesterday's school board meeting, some of the trustees asked Williams about the possibilities of end-of-the-session legislation that would empower them to restructure themselves according to a 4-3 plan.

Board President Cornell Barnard asked the superintendent to check the possibilities and said he favors "anything to keep us out of court. We don't need another court case."

The legislative session ends in less than a week, however, and it seems unlikely to provide the trustees with what they want.

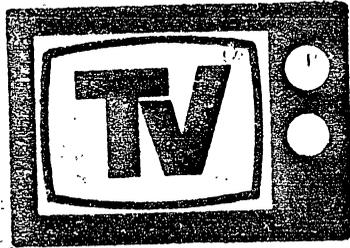
The current trustees are all Southside Anglos though the district's student population is predominantly Mexican-American.

From 1A

corpus christi TIMES

Wednesday

May 25, 1977



today's tip

The fourth Nixon-Frost interview — former President Richard Nixon discusses his last days in the White House, tonight at 6:30 p.m. on Channel 3.

Panel says CCISD is still segregated

The Corpus Christi School District is still segregated despite seven years of court orders seeking to bring about integration.

That is the conclusion of the Texas Advisory Committee to the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights which today issued its report, "School Desegregation in Corpus Christi: Eight Years After Cisneros".

The committee, which held two hearings here last year, also found that the school board and Supt. Dana Williams have repeatedly denied the existence of segregation and instead have sought to delay implementation of any plan unless forced to do so by the courts.

Other findings are:

- That the elementary school computer integration plan does not meet "important educational and social needs necessary to assure a comprehensive approach to desegregation"

- That the district has too few minorities among its professionals and no affirmative action plan for equal employment.

- That the "exclusively Anglo" school board has not met the needs of the minorities.

To remedy this, the committee recommends:

1. That if the federal court "fails to aggressively enforce desegregation orders" then the U. S. Department of Justice should intervene and take the case to the appellate court to obtain a plan "which desegregates the entire school system"

2. That the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare immediately conduct a comprehensive review of the district's compliance with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

3. That the school district adopt single-member election districts



anne
dodson

with equitably-drawn boundaries.

4. That the school district develop a comprehensive integration plan for all schools at all grade levels and begin elimination of all forms of segregation and discrimination within the school system. Moreover, if the superintendent is "unable or unwilling to aggressively carry out this mandate, the committee strongly recommends that he be replaced."

Williams had refused to testify at the first round of hearings before the Texas Committee and three months later was subpoenaed, along with his staff, to appear before the U. S. Commission in a one-day hearing.

The hearings were part of a nationwide study of desegregation in 1,300 school districts conducted by the commission.

After reading a draft of the report last November, Williams told the committee that it contained "many inaccuracies, conclusions not based on fact, and with almost complete bias from start to finish."

He said that the committee's mission was "to embarrass the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education".

The report was released this morning at a press conference called by the Texas advisory committee. The three members present were Milton I. Tavian of Dallas, Dr. Nancy Bowen and Dr. Hector P. Garcia, both of Corpus Christi.

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OVER >

The Texas committee found Corpus Christi to be highly segregated by racial and ethnic groups and by income class. The central "corridor" contains 89 per cent of all blacks and 64 per cent of all Mexican-Americans while nearly 70 per cent of all Anglos live in the southeast area. The central area has 69 per cent of the city's poor and the largest number of sub-standard housing units.

Also, the effects of the lengthy litigation are also described:

"It is important to understand that this community has dealt with the issue of desegregation for more than 20 years, eight of which have been spent in a long and costly litigative process — exhausting friends as well as foes of school desegregation.

"A climate of defeat and despair pervades many sections of the community. The plaintiffs, and many of their sympathizers, are disappointed with what they consider to be weak and ineffectual court orders. The school district and its sympathizers are antagonistic toward federal and judicial intervention in the system of public education."

The computer integration plan left 16 elementary schools which did not meet the court-ordered 75-25 per cent ethnic ratio, the report states. There are 38 elementary schools in the district.

The committee also cited the lack of community involvement in integration plans. Though a court order to integrate the junior high schools had long been anticipated, "there was virtually no public discussion or debate concerning how the desegregation process should be extended until the final hour".

The report points out that the while the district's student population is more than 60 per cent minority, only 30 per cent of the faculty are Mexican-American or black. At the administrative level, there are few minorities among the non-teaching professionals on the central staff. For the 1975 school year, only one black and six Mexican-Americans were in the top administrative positions.

Of the district's 56 principals, 15 were Mexican-American or black, and of the 43 assistant principals, less than half were minorities. Only 11 of the 74 counselors were minorities.

In contrast, of the 810 service workers employed by the district, 571 were Mexican-American or black.

The report includes other recommendations for the district:

- The federal court should establish an advisory committee which would be a cross-section of the community and this group should evaluate both integration

plans and their implementation.

- Since the federal court has found that the system is "severely segregated", the Texas Education Agency should exercise its "statutory authority and court-ordered civil rights responsibilities" to make sure that the district is providing equal educational opportunities for all students.

- An affirmative action employment plan should be written by the district and set a goal of employing Mexican-American and black professionals to match the minority enrollment in the district.

- The school board should take the initiative in helping the "community understand the legal and moral necessity for desegrating its schools".

The report describes the suit, Jose Cisneros et al, filed against the district in 1968 which came to trial in 1970 before U.S. Dist. Judge Woodrow Seals who found the district guilty of both de jure and de facto segregation.

The U. S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan fact-finding agency concerned with the rights of minorities and women. Texas has one of the 51 advisory committees to the commission.

Heading the Texas group is Bishop Patrick F. Flores of San Antonio.