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In the Matter of:

RIVER ROUGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

-and-

RIVER ROUGE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

FACT FINDING OPINION AND RECOMMENDATION

George T. Rounell, Jr., Fact Finder

After sitting as a Fact Finder in school board-teacher disputes throughout the state of Michigan for the past two years, I am at a loss of words to describe the situation that I found as a Fact Finder in the River Rouge Board of Education-River Rouge Education Association dispute. I was shocked to find that in this day of change in our great land, in this day of citizen awareness, in this day of great strides in all social and economic spheres of American life, the citizens of River Rouge have dug their heads into the sand like a great giant ostrich and ignored their responsibilities as American citizens towards the youth of our country, and more specifically toward the youth of their city, who both through scholarship and athletic achievement have brought fame to River Rouge.

In all my fact finding experiences I have never found a more congenial situation between the Board of Education and Teachers. The whole atmosphere of bargaining was to the point and most friendly. There were no anomosities. I have never come across a Board of

*River Rouge Board of Education*

Education more sincere, more devoted to the principles of equal and top education for all. Likewise, I have never found a more devoted group of teachers. And believe me, what an excellent staff of teachers the citizens of River Rouge school district have, men and women of great experience; a large number of whom have Master Degrees and advanced credit beyond the Master's stage.

Also, I was very impressed with the professional administrative staff of the River Rouge schools. The acting superintendent and the acting assistant superintendent showed great insight to the educational problems of River Rouge.

In other words, the administrators, the teachers, and the Board have done their part. It is the citizens that have failed. There was only one issue before me and that was the matter of money.

River Rouge is the wealthiest school district in Michigan. While other school districts have state equalization values behind each student of \$9,000, \$8,000, some as low as \$5,000, River Rouge has \$57,000. While citizens of other school districts pay operational millages ranging up to 48.1 mills, the citizens of River Rouge are only paying 14.9 mills. And to make matters worse, a moderate millage increase would not add too much more to the individual tax payers pockets in River Rouge for 95% of that bill will be paid by the well-established industry in the city who could well afford to pay the tax and who profit from a good school system because good students produce good capable employees.

But the district is \$350,000.00 in arrears. It's broke. Twice in a row the citizens have defeated moderate proposals of 5 mills

increase and of 4 mills increase, respectively while other neighboring communities such as Allen Park have voted an increase of 14 mills. And, Allen Park, for example, has no industry to speak of to help pay the bill.

What has this meant? It has meant that 23 teachers have had to be dropped from the roster of the River Rouge schools. It has meant that there will be one teachers to approximately every 39 students whereas, in many systems the ratio of teachers to pupil is approximately 1 to 25. It has meant that there will be no physical education program in the elementary, no elementary art classes, no special education classes. In other words, to put it bluntly, the good citizens of River Rouge have braked their school system. It is about time that the citizens wake up. I make no apologies for writing this opinion in this manner because these are the facts as I found them.

River Rouge has an experienced teaching staff. This teaching staff must buy bread and food like any other individual. The cost of living is going up. Other districts are paying their teachers more. Yet, in River Rouge, citizens tell their teachers to work for sub-standard salaries. Yet, the same citizens are in unions, who are negotiating substantial increases for them. Yet, when River Rouge citizens are asked to add \$20.00 or \$30.00 to their modest tax bills they refuse to do so, particularly when industry will help pay the tax bill. Furthermore, if industry thinks it is saving money by opposing a modest tax increase, it is sadly mistaken. Who is going to produce the draftsmen of the future, the machinists of the future, the tool and die maker of the future? Certainly not an inadequate school system!

I repeat, that this is the posture that I found the negotiations in. My recommendations need no detailed discussion. It is clear to me that I must recommend the attached salary schedule (Schedule A) for the teachers. It is comparable with that being paid in other downriver communities, and if it means that the School Board must go further in debt, if it means that the citizens must go for a modest 5 mill increase, then this must be done. I cannot over-emphasize that the good citizens of River Rouge when called upon this coming year must if they are Americans believing in American tradition must vote for this school levy increase. They must not let personal animosities, rumors, or personal feelings destroy a fine school system. They must not undermine the fine teaching staff and the hard working Board of Education.

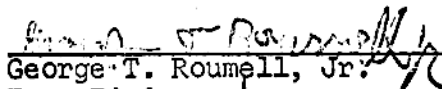
Showing the citizens that I am not recommending a give away, I have recommended that the sabbatical program of the school system remain as is. I have also recommended the attached schedule (Schedule B) for extra duty pay for teachers. It is a moderate increase, an increase that is only consistent with the increases that are given to other school districts.

In regard to preparation time at the elementary school level, I recommend a 30-minute preparation time. This time again is in keeping with that preparation time given in most school districts throughout the state for elementary school districts.

As these are the only matters before me on this contract re-opener, I make no further recommendations.

In closing I again recommend to the citizens that they think

hard and step up to be counted and vote for a millage increase when asked to do so. This is the only way you are going to get your 23 teachers back, reduce your teacher-pupil ratio, and to bring back the needed art, physical education, and other special programs that are the hallmark of a good, outstanding educational system. Remember, a good athletic program at the younger ages could produce the Jessie Owens that brought pride to all America when he showed Nazi Germany in Berlin in 1932 that an American regardless of his race, creed or color could win. A good art program may produce young budding architects or a young budding artist that may bring fame to River Rouge. I cannot over-emphasize that the citizens apparently have been misled and have placed their values in the wrong place. I, as a third party, an outsider, believe that when the Board does ask for a millage increase, and the millage increase is passed even then the citizens will be getting one of the best tax bargains in the state of Michigan. Their taxes will still be low and they will have a fine school system.

  
George T. Roumell, Jr.  
Fact Finder

Dated: September 26, 1968

SCHEDULE A

B. A.

0 - 7,100  
1 - 7,400  
2 - 7,800  
3 - 8,200  
4 - 8,700  
5 - 9,200  
6 - 9,700  
7 -10,200  
8 -10,700  
9 -11,250

M. A.

0 - 7,600  
1 - 8,100  
2 - 8,600  
3 - 9,150  
4 - 9,700  
5 -10,250  
6 -10,800  
7 -11,350  
8 -11,900  
9 -12,450

2d M. A.

0 - 8,100  
1 - 8,600  
2 - 9,100  
3 - 9,650  
4 -10,200  
5 -10,750  
6 -11,300  
7 -11,850  
8 -12,400  
9 -12,950

Doctorate

0 - 8,600  
1 - 9,100  
2 - 9,600  
3 -10,150  
4 -10,700  
5 -11,250  
6 -11,800  
7 -12,350  
8 -12,900  
9 -13,450

SCHEDULE B

SUPPLEMENTARY SALARIES 68-69

Counselor	\$450
Social Worker	450
3/5 Social Worker	270
Service Squad	80
Safety Control	80
Newspaper	325
	325
Choral Director (Sr. High)	175
Choral Director (Elementary)	100
Swimming (Varsity)	700
Swimming (Jr. High)	500
Track (Head)	700
Track (Assistant)	575
Track Teacher (Jr. High)	500
Basketball (Varsity)	700
Basketball (Jr. Varsity)	575
Basketball-Freshman (Jr. High)	500
Cross County (Varsity)	550
Tennis (Varsity)	600
Football (Varsity Head)	940
Football (Varsity Assistant)	700
Football (Varsity Assistant)	700
Football (Junior Varsity Head)	600
Football (Reserve Assistant)	600
Football (Junior High Head)	500
Football (Junior High Assistant)	500
Basketball (Varsity)	940
Basketball (Junior High Reserve)	700
Basketball (Freshman)	600
Basketball (Jr. High)	500