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December 4, 1963

THE PRESIDENT CAME TO SEE US

When the President of the United States announced he was to visit Dallas, the citizens of our community made elaborate, careful plans for his pleasure and honor. School children and parents were advised that the children would be excused to leave school during the motorcade to see the President when requests were made by parents. Thousands of school children lined up along the route of the President to greet and cheer him. One large high school located ten miles from the route of the motorcade reported that half the student body assembled with other greeters.

The people of Dallas were so warm and friendly that Mrs. John Connally, the wife of our Governor, remarked just before the assassination, "Mr. President, you can't say the people of Dallas don't love you today." The President was reported to have been pleased with that remark.

Throughout our School System, radios and television sets in the buildings were turned on to follow the motorcade. As it became apparent that something had happened to the President, principals in the schools began to condition the faculty and the students for what might turn out to be a very sad tragedy. When the fateful moment arrived, the principals tactfully and factually reported over the loud speakers or in person what had happened, insofar as they knew. Uniformly, principals have advised me that teachers and children were shocked, deeply grieved, and unashamedly shed tears. Some of the children expressed deep resentment and anger that anyone would harm the President. There was not a single instance of disrespect or lack of understanding on the part of a class in any school.

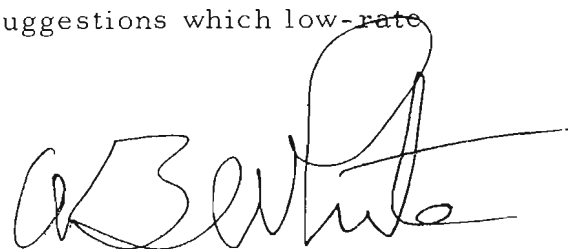
I am aware of the publicity that was datelined in Dallas referring to a fourth-grade class that cheered upon receiving news of the death of the President. I have determined beyond the shadow of a doubt that no class engaged in clapping or other obnoxious conduct. The minister who made the CBS statement regarding a "fourth-grade class in the North Dallas area" refused to talk with me either to confirm or deny the source of his information.

On Friday, November 22, one hundred forty-two thousand children were accounted for as being at school, being at home ill, or being excused to witness the motorcade. Of this number, thirteen showed evidences of not understanding or appreciating the tragedy of the moment. The thirteen were immediately counseled by their teachers, and most of them were helped to attain an acceptable attitude. One teen-age boy was somewhat belligerent. These children were not congregated in the same building, but were scattered throughout the district. The cause of their misunderstanding is undetermined.

It is grievous to think that student bodies in a city of seven hundred fifty thousand who have shown true feelings of sympathy and sadness, because our President was killed in our City by an acknowledged Marxist, should be maligned and defamed. The children's parents and teachers, if we may judge by the behavior of the children themselves, have done a fine job in teaching them citizenship, respect for authority and high officials, and the proper understanding of the sacred integrity of individuals.

The principals and teachers have my highest commendation for the manner in which they calmed the students, sympathized with them in their sadness and resentment, and directed them in the attainment of a frame of mind which enabled them to complete the day and to return to their homes with a feeling of security.

All of us in the schools are deeply hurt and, I fear, resentful, because the teachers and children have been misrepresented as to their behavior in a time of stress. Proud as we are of our community, of the parents, and of the children, we deplore statements or suggestions which low-rate them as to character and decent attitudes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. T. White', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

W. T. White
Superintendent of Schools

WTW:dm