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January 19, 1960

His Excellency  
The Honorable J. Lindsay Almond  
Governor of Virginia

Honorable Sir:

We, the members of the Baptist Ministers' Conference of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Vicinity, do hereby beg leave to express our stand against the practice of closed public schools in Prince Edward County, which, in our opinion, represents a dark blot on the escutcheon of modern Virginia history.

The closing of those public schools was a direct blow to the Commonwealth, a travesty of simple democracy, and the opening of a floodgate of evils which will dog our tracks for years to come. The concept of public education in Virginia which has progressed for nearly ninety years is too important to give way to a hastily conceived system of private schools that will be a handicap in this age of advanced technological development.

We believe that the State has a legal and moral obligation in this matter that even transcends the County's action; which action was taken to prevent colored children from obtaining rights guaranteed to them through the orderly processes of the law, and is adversely affecting all of the children of Prince Edward County.

As teachers of righteousness, we assert that it is patently unfair to impose upon the colored citizens of the State certain restrictions and exclusions not imposed upon others who enjoy full and free liberty. It is unreasonable to expect such colored people to accept these restrictions in a spirit of good will and quiet acquiescence.

Now that the General Assembly is in session and affairs of the State are in focus, may we again state that this school closing belies the true Commonwealth idea, hence is worthy of receiving State action. In the opening session of the Assembly the rights of minority groups of that body, and protection of same was assured. We feel that the principle is applicable in other areas, especially in this case, and trust that you may use your good office and

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influence to bring an immediate end to this abortive effort.

May this Assembly also remove from the pages of the Code of Virginia all jimcrow laws as are now non-enforceable, also all other laws that will wilt with the march of time and the progress of democracy.

BY ORDER OF THE BAPTIST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE OF NORFOLK, PORTSMOUTH  
AND VICINITY, 813 Henry Street, Norfolk, Virginia

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