

## Statement of the Bishop of Atlanta

July 1, 1963

The Lovett School is an independent autonomous corporation, subject to no ecclesiastical control by the Episcopal Church, a fact which has never been questioned by anyone. The Board of Trustees are by their own Charter charged with the operation of all facets of the school.

However, from the beginning of its independent status in 1959, the school by charter provisions has implied a connection with and a loyalty to the Episcopal Church. This connection and loyalty to the Episcopal Church, including the employment of a priest of the Diocese of Atlanta as headmaster, has been entirely at the choice of the Board of Trustees of the Lovett School. As a part of this relationship with the Episcopal Church, The Lovett School has had no policy of admissions on the basis of race alone.

Earlier this year, The Lovett School rejected an application apparently on the basis of race alone. In connection with this rejection the advice of the Headmaster, the Rev. James R. McDowell, was declined when he presented to the Trustees a plan for ~~the~~ admissions without regard to race, which would conform to the principle of the Episcopal Church that segregation on the sole basis of race is inconsistent with the Christian religion.

When this advice of the Rev. James R. McDowell was declined by a majority of the Trustees of the Lovett School, his position as a priest with prior loyalties to the Episcopal Church was compromised. However, on advice of the Bishop of Atlanta, he has remained to the end of this school year as Headmaster, in an effort to help bring The Lovett School into a position of conforming to the principles of the Episcopal Church in its admissions procedures.

The Board of Trustees in early April did adopt a statement of policy in which they declared for the first time in specific terms their orientation and allegiance to the principles of The Episcopal Church, including the principle that segregation on the sole basis of race is inconsistent with the Christian religion. As an autonomous body, The Trustees reserved the right to implement this policy when in the best interest of all concerned they felt the time appropriate for such implementation.

When two applications were made by Episcopalians who were told apparently by accident to report to the school for testing and who sought the help of the Church for the education of their children at the Lovett School without regard to race, The Trustees for reasons of their own thought it not wise to begin the implementation of their policy voted in early April. By letter to the parents of all Lovett School pupils The Trustees declared the Lovett School a "private school" and "instructed" the Headmaster to accept no applications from Negroes. Again the prior loyalties of the Headmaster were compromised.

However, even though The Trustees have declared themselves in principle, their actions have removed the school from the orbit of the discipline of the Episcopal Church. Therefore, the Trustees have forfeited the right of implied or official support for the Lovett School by the Episcopal Church. Until such time as the majority of the Trustees of the Lovett School are prepared to act upon their stated policy, the Episcopal Church can no longer give any implied or official support to the school. The Bishop of Atlanta with the Standing Committee, composed of both priests and laymen representing the entire Diocese, has withdrawn approval for any priest of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Atlanta to act as Headmaster in the administration of segregation on the sole basis of race at the Lovett School. Therefore, the public must understand that the Lovett School is not to be considered an Episcopal School, until such time as it acts upon its stated policy on admissions without regard to race.

Meantime, the Rev. James R. McDowell has resigned as Headmaster as a result of the position in which he finds himself placed by the majority of the Trustees of the Lovett School. As of last week, he has accepted the position of Headmaster of an Episcopal Church School, The Sewanee Military Academy in Tennessee.

It is the hope of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Atlanta, speaking through the Bishop and the Standing Committee, that the majority of the Trustees of the Lovett School will act upon the moral implications of their stated policy of allegiance to the Episcopal Church and that the day will come when the Lovett School will come again within the orbit of the discipline and support of the Episcopal Church.