

CITIZENS LEAGUE REPORT

No. 165

**Minneapolis Public Schools
Construction Program**

January 1964

Citizens League
545 Mobil Oil Building
Minneapolis 2, Minnesota

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APPROVED
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
JAN 15 1964
DATE _____

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Minneapolis School Construction Committee

SUBJECT: Recommendations on the Minneapolis school construction program to be submitted to the voters on February 25, 1964

RECOMMENDATION

The Citizens League strongly urges the voters of Minneapolis to approve the \$18,000,000 school bond issue at the special election on February 25.

DISCUSSION

After a critical independent analysis of the Board of Education's proposed school construction program, we have come to the conclusion that the program and the \$18,000,000 bond issue needed to finance the program merit our unqualified support.

The Citizens League -- through its Minneapolis School Construction Committee -- conducted a long and arduous study of the school construction program recommended by the Michigan State University consultants. As a result of that study, we published a 72-page report in which we urged the Minneapolis Board of Education to "develop and present to the community as promptly as possible the first phase of a long-range school construction and rehabilitation program" and "to submit to the voters early in 1964 the question of authorizing the issuance of bonds to finance that portion of the first phase program which cannot be financed out of discretionary non-referendum bond funds or the Repair and Improvement Fund."

In that report we recommended a number of changes in the construction program recommended by the consultants. The Minneapolis school administration and the Board of Education considered these recommendations, as well as those put forth by a great many other groups and individuals in formulating a program based upon the recommendations of the consultants for submission to the voters. Needless to say, we are pleased that in the formulation of its program the Board of Education has seen fit to accept most of the changes recommended by the Citizens League. Although several of our recommendations were not accepted, we believe that the total program is both necessary and sound. (However, we will continue to urge the Board of Education to adopt our recommendations on those decisions which have yet to be made, such as the decision about the location of the new South High School.)

In the formulation of its program, the Board of Education considered a great many varied and often diverse recommendations, and could not have been expected to accept every recommendation put forth by any one group or individual. The school authorities have accomplished an extraordinary job in formulating a program which reflects the thinking of so many different groups within the community -- a program which is based upon the recommendations of well-qualified consultants who studied the needs of the school district and which truly reflects a cross-section of community opinions and desires. As such, it is a program deserving of support by all of the citizens of Minneapolis.

Since, in our previous report, we have already stated our opinion about each of the projects included in the program, we will not repeat a discussion of the individual projects. However, we will reiterate our conviction that the backlog of school construction and rehabilitation needs in Minneapolis is so substantial that the present rate of meeting these needs is inadequate. If approved, the program will enable the school district to replace: five elementary schools -- Lyndale, Holland, Hamilton, Seward and Grant -- built more than 70 years ago, in the 1880's; one elementary school -- Pierce -- which opened at the turn of the century; a senior high school -- South -- constructed in 1910; and a junior high -- Franklin -- which was built during the first World War. Approval of the bond issue also would permit the school district to discontinue the use of another elementary school -- Warrington -- which first opened its doors when the United States was engaged in the Spanish-American War. After having visited these schools and having compared them to some of the newer schools in Minneapolis and its suburbs, we are thoroughly convinced that these obsolete facilities are no longer adequate to meet the demands of a modern program of education and that they should be replaced. The rehabilitation of existing facilities and the new additions included in the program are also needed.

It is our belief that tax savings which jeopardize the providing of adequate schools, school facilities and equipment, and a comprehensive curriculum, or which discourage the attraction and retention of competent teachers is short-sighted economy indeed. The general health of a community can often be judged by assessing the quality of its schools. Approval of the school construction bonds is vital to the future of Minneapolis. This program is important not only to those who now have or in the near future will have children in school. It is important to everyone desirous of retaining the image of Minneapolis as a desirable city in which to live and raise a family.