



DEMONSTRATORS FROM THE NATIONAL Association for the Advancement of Colored People sit on chairs and the floor as they sing songs during a sit-in yesterday at the Peoria Board of Education building. Mrs. Mame Snyder,

secretary to the director of personnel, works at her desk at left. NAACP President John Gwynn is seated at center. His wife is seated in the chair, facing the camera.

School Board Agrees To Race Meeting After Singing Sit-In Demonstration

By TOM EDWARDS
Staff Writer

A singing sit-in demonstration at the Peoria school administration building was climaxed yesterday with the school board setting a special meeting to discuss with the NAACP its grievances and recommendations.

A broad list of recommendations presented in resolution form by the NAACP is to be the basis for the meeting.

THE BOARD set the meeting for next Monday, when NAACP members pressed for an earlier and more specific time than the "in about four weeks" initially contemplated by the board.

John Gwynn, president of the Peoria branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, led six other Negroes in a sit-in of the administration building, 3202 N. Wisconsin Ave., from 1:15 until the board convened its regular meeting at 5 p.m.

Upon arriving the seven met briefly with two school officials in the board meeting room. Then they walked into the main office, sat on the floor and in chairs, and began singing.

Gwynn and two others moved into the office of Charles Greeley, business manager and acting superintendent while Supt. Mark Bills is on vacation, and continued their songs.

Police were called, and several remained until the end of the board meeting at about 9 p.m. But school officials declined to press any charges, or take other action to evict the group.

The demonstration was bolstered by eight whites, including six ministers, and also two small Negro children about 4:30 p.m., accompanied by three of the demonstrators who had left the administration building at about 3 p.m.

though several of the original demonstrators had left.

GWYNN ATTEMPTED to present the NAACP's demands early in the meeting under new business, but was told by board president Leo Sullivan that communications from the audience are heard after all other business has been completed.

The group sat quietly through the meeting, and a recess of nearly an hour while the board took its usual break for a dinner served in the building.

When Gwynn was finally recognized, the board listened to an opening statement by him and the reading of the NAACP resolution by another member of the group. It then proceeded to issue information categorically denying racial discrimination in school hiring.

RECOMMENDATIONS of the NAACP were:

- Better procedures to insure the employment of more Negroes in administrative and teaching positions throughout the school system, and a positive program for seeking out qualified Negroes.
- Inclusion of Negroes on advisory and policy-making committees.
- Employment of more Negro counselors in regular and special education programs.
- Employment of more Negro custodians, matrons and bus drivers.
- Replacement of "biased, stereotyped school books and classroom aids with newly available books and curriculum materials which accurately reflect in text and illustrations

the history of Negroes and other minorities. . ." in all district schools. (A list of 200 such books was turned over to school officials by Gwynn.)

—Teaching of Negro history per se "as an integral part" of the school systems curriculum.

—Application for federal coordinators and funds available

to set up desegregation programs and revamp curricula applied for.

—Adoption of procedures requiring contractors for school construction to demonstrate their ability to perform on a non-discriminatory basis.

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—That hot lunches be served in all the elementary schools.

—That school boundary lines be changed to avoid racial imbalance.

—And that the board hold weekly meetings "to set up a workable and favorable desegregation program."

Gwynn also presented a "resolution on education" adopted at the NAACP National Convention July 4-9. "Anything on this sheet you aren't doing, we hope you will," Gwynn said.

He also distributed to each of the board members a "Statement of Policies for School Desegregation Plans" issued by the U.S. Office of Education to help implement the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

"SCHOOL OFFICIALS must take steps to encourage community support and acceptance" of school desegregation. Gwynn said reading from the federally suggested policies.

Sullivan flatly stated in reply, "Our hiring practices are non-discriminatory." and have been for many years.

Right now, he continued, "If 30 qualified teachers came in today, everyone would be hired" regardless of race.

Not many applications are received from Negroes for maintenance and clerical positions, Greeley said, but every one that is submitted is given consideration.

Ten per cent, or 14 of the custodial employes are Negro, he continued, with six hired last year. One has been with the school district since 1940.

Two others are employed in the cafeteria, and two in clerical work, both hired this summer. Of the five bus drivers, all have been white, and a Negro has never applied for a driver's job, Greeley stated.

Gwynn retorted he knew one Negro who sought a bus driving job.

William Grant, a Negro recently promoted to an administrative position, said he had offered contracts to seven of 10 Negroes he had interviewed for special education jobs this spring, three had accepted with one pending.

Robert Lynn, assistant personnel director, said of three Negroes interviewed in the last month by him for teaching positions, two were offered contracts, and one accepted.

A total of about three per cent, or 32 of the 1,100 teachers in the school system, are Negro, according to Gwynn.

WHAT IS WANTED, said W. R. Miller of the NAACP, an agricultural research chemist, is a "positive, affirmative recruitment program for minority groups" to achieve a better racial balance.

Referring to the NAACP demands, Gwynn said, "These particular things are important to us now . . . I will go on record: If it is necessary to die for the cause, I will. That is how serious this problem of education is to me."

Demonstrations will not end with the calling of the special meeting, he promised.

Sullivan said only one spokesman from a group is allowed to address the board, but the rule was dropped for the meeting.

Songs sung by the demonstrators included "We Shall Overcome," "Everybody Wants Freedom," "I'm Going to Do What the Spirit Said Do," "Ain't Going to Let Nobody Turn Me Around," and "Come on Up to the Front of the Bus."

One of the signs state that the "school board endorses discrimination by hiring contractors who do." It was apparently a reference to contractor George D. Johnson Jr., who is building an addition to the school administration building.

Sullivan said he has checked with both construction contrac-