

[1964?]

STATEMENT

Mrs. Irene Johnson 44 612 Reden, Ruleville, Mississippi  
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I have lived in and around Ruleville all my life. I have eight children and all have gone to the Ruleville Negro schools. In 1962 my daughter, Ida, was a senior in Ruleville Central High. She brought a corsage home from school one day. She said she just had to sell her corsage. She tried very hard to sell it in the community, but could not. She took it back to her teacher, Mrs. Mitchell, and said she just couldn't sell it. Mrs. Mitchell told her and the rest of the class that she couldn't come back to school unless she sold it. Ida stayed away for part of a day until I phoned the Principal, Mr. Smith and asked him about it. He said to send her over and after a meeting with the teacher and the principal, no more was heard about the corsage.

I think there is more concern for raising money than there is for school work over at these schools. The kids come around here all the time selling cosmetics, candy, doughnuts, tickets and all kinds of things. I don't think they know what they're selling it for - they just say it's for the school. They frequently say that if they don't get the money the teacher will give them F or not pass them or something.

In November my kids come home and get dressed for the field. They say we got to go to the field today. One day in November I remember it was so cold I went out to get my son Eddie from picking cotton. When I got to the field there were the kids picking on a day too cold for grownups. There was a barefoot girl out there that I took in as well as my son. When I took her to the Principal, he said "I didn't know she didn't have any shoes. If she hadn't had any I would have given her some." I told him the kids could get very sick from picking on cold days. He never answered this except to say that there are 1400 students and he couldn't keep up with them all. He said these are volunteers - we don't make them go, we just ask them to go. I said but this is the teacher who asks them. He didn't say much to answer this.

I really don't know where the money goes. I heard about a county bus they were trying to buy by each class raising \$50 or more to get the bus. The kids really worked a lot and they raised a lot. Mr. Smith went out and bought an old beat out bus and it broke down after a time or two. At the same time he got a new car; the kids thought he used their money to buy the new car because he raised much more than the bus ever cost.

My kids often say to me at home, I gotta have some money for school today. They don't know what it's for - they just say they have to have it.

Ever since Smith got in as Principal they have been worrying about money. I don't remember how long ago that was.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Witnesses  
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