

EYEWITNESSES TO HISTORY:

CONTEMPORARY NEWSPAPERS REPORT THE JULIA MURPHY CONTROVERSY

FORT LAUDERDALE SENTINEL

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County Seat

"The Gateway to the Everglades"

Broward County

PEOPLE SUSTAIN SCHOOL TRUSTEES

MASS MEETING LAST TUESDAY EVENING
LARGELY ATTENDED

ACTION OF TRUSTEES MEET WITH HEARTY APPROVAL BY FT. LAUDERDALE CITIZENS BY VOTE OF 181 TO 7

The mass meeting held in Ft. Lauderdale Tuesday afternoon in Rex theatre, for the purpose of ratifying or rejecting the action of the school trustees in refusing to accept Miss Murphy as one of the teachers of our school, was well attended and proved a most interesting meeting. Many ladies graced this occasion.

Both of the Miami papers had reporters present to report the meeting.

Col. R. J. Reed, president of the Board of Trade, called the meeting to

order and after a few remarks asked that a permanent chairman be elected. Geo. G. Mathews was elected unanimously to preside. He stated the object of the meeting and invited all who wished to criticize the actions of the trustees to speak and if any one had felt that an injustice had been done, they were free to fully express themselves. The chairman did not mention religion as the Miami Metropolis said, and this feature would not have been discussed had not F.W. Dames injected that into the discussion. He seemed to be the only Catholic in the room. He made a vigorous fight for members of his church to teach in our public schools. The house proved that they were not in sympathy with Mr. Dames views and several invited him to sit down. Guy Sherman took the floor and wanted to know why the meeting was called, said he could see no reason for it. Rev. Firor spoke in opposition to the trustees and his speech was not well received. J.C. Goodrich made a strong speech in favor of sustaining the trustees and was vigorously applauded.

Ballots were then passed and the votes stood 181 to 7 in favor of the trustees. The Miami Herald has stated that Mr. Dames was ruled out of order, but did not tell that he had spoken twice and that the chairman thus ruled to give others a chance to be heard.

CHAIRMAN ADVISES AUDIENCE

Before the meeting adjourned Chairman Mathews admonished the audience that "it behooves every man and woman to look carefully to the way their children are being trained and to keep abreast of the activities of school, organizations and everything having to do with the children. I could be a friend to the Hindu or the Mohammedan, and shake hands with him, but I might not want my children to embrace his religious faith. I hope the day will come when we will be better organized and in a position to combat more successfully those who seek to encroach upon us in such matters, whether through church organizations or otherwise. While we admire Edison as one of the greatest men of this or any other age, and concede him the first place in American history, and while the names of the great inventors of all ages arouses our profound admiration, we feel that Martin Luther stands first as a benefactor of the human race. He emancipated us from superstition and freed us from the designing hand of the priest.

The meeting was one of the most enthusiastic meetings ever held in Ft. Lauderdale, and adjourned full of happiness and good humor. The trustees are Messrs. Kittredge, Clark, Cosner and Rickard.

THE MIAMI HERALD.

MIAMI, FLORIDA, WEDNESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 25, 1915.

FT. LAUDERDALE WANTS NO CATHOLICS TO TEACH IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mass Meeting Declares by an
Overwhelming Vote in Favor
Religious Discrimination

By a vote of 181 to 7, citizens of Fort Lauderdale, at a largely attended mass meeting late yesterday afternoon, sustained the action of their school trustees in rescinding the appointment of a Catholic school teacher to teach in the public schools of Fort Lauderdale. The appointment was made a month ago by Prof. R.E. Hall, superintendent of public instruction, but when the tax payers of Fort Lauderdale learned that the appointee, a Miss Murphy, was of the Catholic faith, religiously, there instantly sprang up a feeling of dissatisfaction, which culminated in the mass meeting yesterday.

This feeling of disapproval of the action of Prof. Hall was evidenced at the meeting yesterday, when F.W. Dames, an architect, and the only speaker present who voiced his approval of Prof. Hall's appointee, was hissed from the floor and finally ruled out of order by George G. Matthews, who acted as permanent chairman of the meeting. Another speaker who attempted to discourage discrimination was Dr. D.T. Firor, of Lemon City. He too, was hissed.

However, Mr. Dames was allowed to voice his sentiments shortly after the opening of the meeting when he said:

"My reasons for objecting to the letter signed by the trustees and the citizens of Fort Lauderdale, and discriminating against a Catholic girl to teach in our schools, was because I considered it un-American and contrary to the principles and spirit of our constitution.

"I would not sign my name to a similar letter discriminating against any other denomination, either, Protestant or Jew, for all the money in the mints of the world, nor for all the world itself.

"The Catholics pay \$55,000,000 annually for the support of our public schools, and this is one reason why I feel its an injustice to tax them and then discriminate against them."

Mr. Dames' remarks were received with hisses of "Sit down!" "Get out of here!" "Get out of here!" "We don't want Catholics!"

Finally order was restored and several others were given opportunity to speak before the ballots were taken up. Rev. D.T. Firor, of the First Baptist church, Lemon City, declared that he believed discrimination should not be shown in the matter.

"No people have suffered so much as the people I represent," he declared. "And yet we have a right to choose whom we will to teach in

our schools. Other teachers of other persuasions would not think of teaching her views in a public school. I am strongly against this discrimination. I've heard it said that if all of the trustees were Methodists, they'd choose a Methodist to teach in the schools. Let us have teachers who are qualified; no teaching of religious cult in our public schools. I sustain the action of the board in choosing the teacher on her examination."

"The Catholics would not allow a Protestant to teach in their schools and I am opposed to allowing a Catholic rule anything," J.C. Goodrich declared. "Why shall we have Catholics when we have plenty of Protestant teachers eminently qualified to teach in our schools?"

Mr. Dames again sought recognition from the chair, and after considerable difficulty he was permitted the floor, although interrupted intermittently by the audience as he attempted to make reply to Mr. Goodrich's remarks. He said:

"It is true that Catholics do not allow Protestants to teach in their schools, but it is because they are private institutions. If this was a question of teaching in a Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, or other private school, we Catholics would not

want to teach in them. You would have the right to teach in your own private schools, but inasmuch as we pay taxes on our public schools, we have as much interest in them as you, and therefore, the same right to teach." As in the first attempt by Mr. Dames to voice his sentiments, he was interrupted by cat-calls and hisses. The meeting was called to order by Robert J. Reed, a real estate operator, who is also president of the Fort Lauderdale Board of Trade. He immediately called for nominations for permanent chairman and permanent secretary and George Matthews, editor of the Sentinel, was unanimously elected chairman, while H. V. Colver, editor of the Herald, Fort Lauderdale, was elected secretary.

"The purpose of this meeting," the chairman announced, "is to sustain or reject the work of our school trustees, representing us in that capacity. I, for one, feel that they have done their duty, in rejecting the appointee of the superintendent of public instruction. I also invite anyone who has any objection to offer, or other criticism to make, against the action of the trustees, to do so. If there is anyone here who feels that he has been wronged, I invite them to make a motion to sustain or reject the action of the trustees."

Tickets had been distributed profusely among the audience which bore the following inscription:

"Sustain Board - Yes. Sustain Board No."

During the discussion, Chairman Matthews asked of Mr. Dames, if it were not true that marriages not performed by Catholic priests were held by Catholic priests void.

"No sir," Mr. Dames replied, "we do not claim that a marriage performed by other than a Catholic clergyman is not legal. It is, on the other hand, just as legal and correct, as any marriage ceremony. I do not believe that discrimination should be made against that Catholic girl, unless she brings into the public school her religion. I would be just as much opposed to any Baptist, Methodist or Presbyterian, or any other religious organization teaching their beliefs in the public schools."

Several other speakers took

part in the discussion, the sentiment, as disclosed by the votes, leaning against the Catholic teacher in the public schools. While C.D. Kittredge, C.E. Rickard, J.W. Cosner and S.J. Clark, who compose the Fort Lauderdale school board, were present at the meeting, not one of them took part in the discussion.

After the meeting, Prof. Rickard told a representative of The Herald that Prof. R.E. Hall, superintendent of public instruction for Dade county had insisted on hiring the Catholic girl to teach, in spite of objection of the trustees.

"As I understand it," Mr. Rickard stated, "Miss Murphy taught in the public schools in Nebraska and Colorado before coming to Miami. She is a very fine woman. But local people came to the trustees after Prof. Hall had verbally contracted to employ her, and protested, and sent us petitions in which they protested vigorously against employing Catholic teachers in our schools. Before the trustees had learned of Prof. Hall's appointment officially, the taxpayers came to us and then sent a communication in which they insisted on the appointee being removed.

"A committee of the Knights of Columbus then came to Fort Lauderdale, three weeks ago and demanded to know why that letter had been sent, in which discrimination was made against Catholics. However, this committee failed to meet any member of the trustees, although we were all in town at the time.

"After the Knights of Columbus committee had visited Fort Lauderdale, and we failed to meet with them, we told Prof. Hall to announce that we would be in Mr. Hall's office on a certain date and to have them meet us, and explain to them our reasons for rejecting the appointment. But again none of the Knights of Columbus were present and we did not see any of their committee.

"Consequently the trustees considered the incident closed. Later influence was brought from Miami that caused the trustees to rescind the letter and the trustees were bitterly criticised by several Miami persons.

"Then we decided that if there was any doubt in our action in rescinding Prof. Hall's appointment this should be brought before the people with the result that the mass meeting was called."

When he was informed by a representative of The Herald late last night of the action taken at the mass meeting, Prof. R.E. Hall stated over the telephone that Miss Murphy had appeared before the June examinations and had been granted a certificate to teach in the public schools of Dade county. "I recommended Miss Murphy to the Fort Lauderdale trustees for the second grade school," Mr. Hall stated, "and introduced her to Prof. Rickard who expressed himself satisfied with the applicant and I presumed she had been officially appointed, and that everything was satisfactory.

"I never have asked any of the applicants for teacher's positions what church they are affiliated with," Mr. Hall concluded.

Just what the outcome of the meeting yesterday will be is problematical. It is understood that members of the Catholic church are highly incensed over the incident and it is expected that Fort Lauderdale will be severely censured in the several publications issued by members of that faith.

