

DES MOINES PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Department of Secondary Education

FILED

December 29, 1965

JUL 26 1966

TO: Dwight M. Davis, Superintendent  
FROM: E. Raymond Peterson, Director of Secondary Education

F. E. VAN ALSTINE  
CLERK, U. S. DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF IOWA

SUBJECT: EVENTS LEADING UP TO BANNING OF ARM BANDS

The national news media indicated the arm band's original intent was in protest to U. S. government policy in Viet Nam. Later, it was changed to "mourning all the dead." Then, it included pressure for a Christmas truce.

Monday, December 13, Mr. Donald Haley, journalism teacher at Roosevelt, asked Ross Peterson, a student in Roosevelt, to talk to Dr. Rowley, Principal of Roosevelt, regarding an article that he would like to write and have printed in the school paper relating to Viet Nam. Not being able to find Dr. Rowley at that moment, Ross Peterson called Dr. Mitchum asking his opinion about the wearing of arm bands and the publishing of an article in the school paper related to it. Dr. Mitchum asked the student to hold up on this article until someone could talk to him.

Following this telephone conversation Dr. Mitchum contacted me and after some consultation with Dr. Davis, it was decided that I would call a meeting of the senior high school principals for 7:45 a.m., Tuesday, December 14, to ask them their suggestions for handling the wearing of black arm bands which was understood to take place on Thursday, December 16. All of the five senior high school principals were in agreement to follow the procedure as was later outlined in the board minutes of the meeting of December 21, 1965. The decision to which the principals came was the same as that to which Dr. Davis, Dr. Mitchum, and I had come the day before. The principals made this decision without the knowledge of how the central office felt.

After talking to the principals, I called Dr. Mitchum to see if he wanted to talk to the student, Ross Peterson, or if he wanted me to talk to him. He suggested that since I was at Roosevelt, that I should go ahead and talk to the student. Dr. Rowley and I talked to the student and we felt that it was a very friendly conversation, although we did not feel that we had convinced the student that our decision was a just one.

Following the announcement to the students that arm bands would not be permitted, one of the students apparently contacted the newspaper. The reporter then contacted the school administrators for information. The reporter was asked not to write a story.

The secondary principals were called to meet on Thursday, December 23 to see if they thought it would be wise to alter the previous decision. All who were present felt that we had made a wise decision in spite of the public concern over one small aspect of our school program. The following reasons were given:

DEFENDANTS

Exhibit.....4  
Cause No. 7-1818-C  
Date JUL 25 1966

U. S. District Court  
Southern Dist. of Iowa



1. A former student of one of our high schools was killed in Viet Nam. Some of his friends are still in school and it was felt that if any kind of a demonstration existed, it might evolve into something which would be difficult to control.
2. The schools hold appropriate assemblies on Veteran's Day to honor the dead. Also, Memorial Day is recognized.
3. The principals were following standard procedure for what was considered inappropriate dress, haircuts or other actions that attract attention.
4. Students at one of the high schools were heard to say that they would wear arm bands of other colors if the black bands prevailed.
5. Principals felt that since the schools are made up of a captive audience, the other students should not be forced to view the demonstrations of a few.
6. One principal reported a Nazi arm band on a boy who came to school several weeks ago. When asked to remove it, he complied.
7. These students were sent home from school until such time as the students were willing to return without the arm band. No student was suspended for a specified length of time.

The subject of petitions came up for discussion. It appears that petitions are picked up if there is any disturbance. If they are of an internal nature, they are handled within the school. One of the principals stated that the person who originated one of the petitions that contained approximately 20 signatures came to him and asked that he destroy the petition. This petition was not addressed to any official or persons. There was another petition in support of the teachers who were named at the December 21 board meeting, and this petition was also picked up.

At the next principals' meeting, the principals will be informed that the students who were sent home for the wearing of arm bands will be permitted to make up the work missed without penalty.

The following students were suspended:

Bruce Clark - Roosevelt  
Chris Eckhardt - Roosevelt  
Christine Singer - Roosevelt  
Mary Bath Tinker - Harding  
John Tinker - North