Board Rejects Appeal By Mackey, Reaffirms Policy On Local Decision

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The Houston School Board has turned down Professor Louis Mackey’s final appeal to have his son Stephen re-admitted to Lamar High School, sans haircut.

Stephen remains out of school for his second week. Dr. Mackey’s remaining recourse is to the courts.

The School Board considered the case as the first order of business at its regular meeting Monday evening in the school administration building. The meeting room was filled with spectators, reporters, and photographers from local newspapers, TV and radio stations, and wire services.

After Dr. Mackey’s opening statement requesting that the board overrule the decision of Lamar principal Harold Costlow expelling Stephen from school and questions by the Board members, Joe Kelly Butler proposed that the Board “reaffirm its traditional policy” empowering school officials to make and enforce “such reasonable rules as may be necessary to proper functioning of the schools” or will “promote the best interests of the school.”

Readmission Denied

Mrs. Howard Barnstone, chief liberal spokesman for the Board, proposed that the motion be amended by adding that, “since the ruling in the case of Stephen Mackey was not a reasonable ruling, he be readmitted to Lamar High School immediately.”

After considerable flurry and confusion over parliamentary procedure and limitation of debate, the amendment failed. The motion to “reaffirm traditional policy” passed by a three to two margin.

No Formal Policy

Mrs. Charles White expressed concern over the lack of formal school board policy on such things as dress and haircuts, and proposed that the board form a committee of teachers, students, parents and administrators to formulate such a policy and present it to the Board for approval.

“We need some ground rules under which we will uphold our principals but protect the rights of individual students,” she said. “There is some resentment in Houston against principals having unlimited blanket authority.”

Opinion of The Chair

Mrs. White’s motion failed by the three to two margin. In all three votes, the majority consisted of Joe Kelly Butler, Mrs. H. W. Cullen, and J. W. McCullough, Jr., Mrs. Barnstone, Mrs. White, and Asberry B. Butler either voted against the majority or abstained.

Chairman Robert Eckles expressed the majority opinion during the course of the debate on Mrs. White’s motion. Speaking from the chair, he said, “We have appointed our principals, and we believe they are the best men for the job. We should leave it to them.”

The Conservative Opinion

In general, the conservative opinion expressed at the meet-

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ing stressed that the School Board must maintain discipline and authority in the schools. Little conservative opinion was actually expressed during the meeting, but no attention was given to the particular merits of consideration of the Stephen Mackey case.

Dr. Mackey based his case on the fact that Stephen's haircut had not in any way interfered with his academic record, which was excellent, or his conduct record, which was spotless. Nor had the haircut interfered with any of the activities of the school, either in or out of the classroom.

**Haircut Not Interfering**

These facts, he added, were uncontested by anyone during the course of the incident.

Dr. Mackey expressed firm conviction that the schools must be empowered to establish discipline in all matters where such discipline is necessary for the functioning of the schools. He felt, however, that Stephen's haircut did not merit such ac-

tion because it did not interfere with education.

During the course of the meeting, none of the conservatives expressed any opinion that the haircut had any such effects.

**Sake of Authority**

Mrs. Barnstone said near the end of the debate on Mr. Butler's resolution, "Something here smacks of authority for the sake of authority."

During the Board's consideration of the question, Phil Turner, a senior at Lamar and a member of the Distributive Education program, spoke representing the student body of the high school.

He expressed support for the principal, Mr. Costlow, and the desire of the student body to maintain the high standards expected of them by the city, the state, and the nation, because their school is located in River Oaks.

**Reputation Important**

Mrs. Barnstone asked Turner if conformity is "a part of maintaining high standards?" or if Lamar based its reputation on "academic achievement, interest, and learning" rather than conformity in dress. Turner stated that he did not advocate conformity, but felt that students should dress appropriately to their reputation.

Dr. Mackey attempted to gain the floor several times during the meeting. Chairman Echols granted him the floor once when Dr. Mackey clarified a bit the meaning of the words "reasonable" and "discretion." Chairman Eckels interrupted Dr. Mackey and denied him any opportunity to speak further.