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April 6, 1966

The Honorable John W. Gardner  
Secretary, Dept. of Health, Education & Welfare  
330 Independence Ave., S. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20201

Dear Mr. Gardner:

As a former member of the New Farmers of America, a national organization of Negro students studying vocational agriculture, and one presently interested in desegregation of educational programs in North Carolina, I have been particularly interested in and disturbed by the merger or desegregation of vocational agricultural programs in the public schools in North Carolina. The merger or integration of these programs and of the New Farmers of America and the Future Farmers of America (the white counterpart of the former) have raised serious questions as to the role that Negroes are to play in the new system and of the effect of the merger or integration on vocational agricultural teachers and students.

It is my understanding that three Negroes have been appointed as supervisors in the state vocational program, none of whom has been given a specific role or function. It is assumed that white supervisors in the area formerly supervised by Negroes are now to assume the role of the former Negro supervisors. Further, Negro supervisors are customarily assigned to supervise Negro schools. Integration in the administrative staff beyond the supervisor level has not taken place. Negro students in vocational agriculture have not been integrated into the program. Many Negro teachers and supervisors of long experience have apparently been ignored or given positions without clear functions.

With the merger of the student organizations the white officers have continued as such, although the student organization supposedly merged. Negro officers were merged out of existence. Negro board members of the student organization have been hand-picked, and, being small in number have been unable to adequately protect their interests. Former district lines for the Negro and white schools have apparently been continued or at least it has not been made clear which areas are under whose supervision or jurisdiction.

John W. Gardner

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The present program in North Carolina is having a demoralizing effect upon the students and adults and others interested or active in vocational agriculture. We are respectfully requesting that the program in North Carolina be reviewed with the view of according proper respect and rights to the Negro students and adults active in the vocational program.

Sincerely yours,



J. LeVonne Chambers

JLC:rt

cc: Honorable Harold Howe, II  
U. S. Commissioner of Education  
Office of Education  
Dept. of HEW  
Washington, D. C.

Charles P. Carroll  
State Dept. of Public Instruction  
State of North Carolina  
Raleigh, N. C.