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SCHOOL'S OCCUPANTS ASK FOR ELECTRICITY

By Ed Penhale P-I Reporter

THURSDAY, March 6, 1986

Section: News, Page: A3

A leader of an activist group asked the Seattle School Board last night to "turn on the lights" at Colman School, which has been occupied since last November by people who want to turn the building into an Afro-American heritage museum.

Omari Tahir made the request during the public-comment period of the regular school board meeting, but got no response from the board.

The district cut off electricity to the building about six weeks after the museum proponents occupied it Nov. 25 because district officials believed old wiring in the school could not handle the space heaters the occupation group was using, said district spokesman Jim Hawkins.

The district, he added, does not believe it has any responsibility for determining the future use of the school at 1515 24th Ave. S. The school was rendered unusable by the Interstate 90 construction project.

Tahir said, however, that establishment of the museum could help prevent discipline problems among black schoolchildren because "you're going to have behavior problems from any group that is not rooted in their culture."

Hawkins said the request for establishment of a museum is an issue that can be resolved only by Seattle officials and state and federal highway authorities.

The district's concern about the school is limited to its contention that highway officials must take possession of the Colman School and then replace it with a new school on a new site in the same neighborhood, Hawkins said.

In a letter to School Board President Michael Preston, Mayor Charles Royer said yesterday that no discussion about the Colman School property can take place until the school district and highway officials conclude their negotiations.

"Regarding an Afro-American heritage museum," Royer said, "my office is reviewing the availability of existing city properties where programs and activities that help meet the cultural needs of Seattle's black community can take place until a long-range solution can be found."



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