

THE DUKE EMBARRASSMENT

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The election of **David Duke** to the Louisiana House of Representatives following a campaign filled with racial overtones is an embarrassment to Louisiana.

We do not attach any significance to Mr. Duke's narrow 227-vote victory over Republican John Treen beyond the outcome of this special election to fill a vacant seat in Metairie House District 81.

But it is bad enough that a majority of voters in this district, historically conservative, fell prey to one who has consistently preached racial supremacy.

For notwithstanding his public efforts to distance himself from his ties to the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party, Mr. Duke's message was clearly a racial one and remained so throughout the campaign. This message is repugnant, and we categorically reject it.

At the same time, we believe every human being should be given the chance to grow, to change, to see the errors of his ways. This burden today is clearly upon Mr. Duke.

If in the coming months Mr. Duke is not able to show that he is no longer a racist, then every effort should be made to defeat him at the next regular legislative election.

One of the factors that contributed to Mr. Duke's election was the failure of many elected officials to take a strong stand against him early in the campaign.

Among those who did, at some peril to their own standing among voters, were U.S. Rep. Robert Livingston, Jefferson Parish President Mike Yenni, state Rep. Jim Donelon and Jefferson Parish Councilman Bob DeViney. Later in the campaign, Jefferson Parish Assessor Lawrence Chehardy and U.S. Rep. Billy Tauzin spoke out in favor of Mr. Duke's opponent.

For the moment, however, there is no getting around the fact that Louisiana's

reputation - rarely good in recent years - has been dealt a serious blow, one that will take some time to overcome.