

THE RICHMOND SCHOOL BOARD  
AND  
THE DESEGREGATION OF RICHMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
1954 TO 1971

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A Dissertation  
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The College of William and Mary in Virginia

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In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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by

Mildred Davis Bruce

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### Dedication

To Jim without whose help and support  
this would not have been possible.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Nature and Significance of the Study

During the first half of the twentieth century, many public school systems in the United States operated separate schools for black and white students based on the "separate but equal" doctrine sanctioned by the Supreme Court in 1896 in the case of Plessy vs Ferguson, 16 S. Ct. 1138 (1896). The Plessy decision did not create segregated schools, for in most instances they were already in existence, but it did declare segregation legal and supported future actions which resulted in segregation. Some states had laws which required separate schools for the races, a situation known as de jure segregation. In other states, by virtue of housing patterns, tradition or unwritten policy, separate schools were provided but not required by law, creating segregated schools de facto.

From time to time there were challenges to the existence of de jure segregation in public education

but no decision was reached in the courts that had far-reaching consequences until 1954. It was in that year that the Supreme Court ruled on four cases which had been brought before it in 1952 and then re-argued at the request of the Court earlier in 1954, charging that segregation in the public schools deprived black children of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. The four cases were listed by the name Brown vs. the School Board of Topeka, Kansas, 74 S. Ct. 686 (1954) and the court ruled that laws which required the separation of students in public schools on the basis of race were unconstitutional. The Court wrote:

We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.

Recognizing the complexities involved in implementing the decision, the Court asked for further argument on parts of the decision and indicated that it would rule on the implementation after hearing those arguments. One year later, in a second ruling, known as Brown II, 75 S. Ct. 753 (1955), the Court declared that all school systems should move to desegregate

schools "with all deliberate speed." With these two decisions the Court had brought into question not only the legality but also the justice of some cherished traditions and practices in the schools of many states and had set in motion a chain of events of great significance to the educational institutions of the United States.

The Court's ruling was not met with immediate or easy compliance, particularly in the South where the states instituted a number of measures to circumvent the law. These measures, known collectively as Massive Resistance, served only to delay desegregation, not to prevent it (Wilhoit, 1973). When localities in states that required segregation did not move to desegregate their schools, many groups and individuals brought lawsuits against their local school boards, using the Brown decision as a basis. The decisions reached in these lawsuits frequently extended and clarified the intent of the Brown decision, creating a vast body of legal precedents dealing with the desegregation of schools (Note 1).

Virginia, with its conservative tradition, was at the forefront of the Massive Resistance movement (Wilhoit, 1973). As the state legislature created a variety of legal barriers to the implementation of the

Brown decision, local school boards found themselves caught between these mandates of the state and the pressure of groups demanding the relief promised in Brown. Compliance with the decision had to be won city by city, locality by locality, through individual court cases challenging each legal barrier the state could devise (Orfield, 1969). In 1961 one of such lawsuits, the case of Bradley et al vs the School Board of Richmond, Virginia, was first entered in the District Court of Eastern Virginia. Judgments were rendered in this suit on several occasions and the case was re-opened several times before its final settlement in 1986.

Very little research has been focused on the law suits which brought about the actual desegregation of schools in specific localities, except in the case of the four systems which were involved in the original Brown decision. A great deal has been written about the desegregation process in the large eastern and mid-western cities and in areas of the United States where violent conflict accompanied the changes that took place. Some dissertations have been found which have examined certain aspects of the desegregation process in various cities but none which have focused on the problems and issues facing a local southern

school board. The city of Richmond, because of its position as capital of the state of Virginia, and its role in the South as the former capital of the Confederacy, seems uniquely qualified for studying a local southern school board which came to be the defendant in a lengthy lawsuit, thus providing an opportunity to examine a new aspect of the process of desegregating schools.

The intent of this study has been to provide knowledge of the effect of the Brown decision on a local southern school board. The issues that faced the School Board of the City of Richmond from the period of Massive Resistance to the actual desegregation of the school system, the Board's reactions to these issues and how the desegregation of schools was gradually realized in a southern city with a conservative background in politics and education have been addressed. Research on this topic contributes to our understanding of the relationship between a federal policy in education and its implementation at the local level, an area in which Donald Warren, writing in Historical Inquiry in Education: A Research Agenda, stresses the need for research. Given the long-standing federal interest in education, he points out that very little is known in a systematic way about the



effectiveness of various federal policies in bringing about the desired results (Warren, 1983). The study also contributes to our understanding of the educational history of Virginia during the period of 1954 to 1971 by focusing on the city of Richmond; and, finally, it adds to our understanding of the desegregation experience in school systems of southern cities, an avenue of inquiry suggested by James Sanders Brown (1983).

#### The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide an accurate description and interpretation of the desegregation process in Richmond Public Schools, Richmond, Virginia, as seen through the actions of the Richmond City School Board from 1954 to the actual desegregation of the school system in 1971. To describe the Richmond experience accurately, the context in which it took place must be explored. A summary of the general response in the nation to the decision by the Supreme Court in the case of Brown vs the School Board of Topeka, Kansas, in 1954, followed by a more in-depth discussion of the response to this decision in the South helps develop this context. Even more critical to an understanding of the Richmond

School Board's response is a description of the response of the State of Virginia during this same period of history. Important historical aspects of segregation and educational policy in the South and in Virginia help put the events following the 1954 decision in historical perspective.

The response of the Richmond School Board to the Brown decision and the steps it took in response to the changing policies of the state of Virginia from Massive Resistance through actual desegregation form the major part of the research and show how and why the Bradley case was filed against the School Board. Following this presentation of the issues and policies which led up to and occasioned the Bradley case, an analysis and interpretation of the desegregation process in this conservative southern city is presented. What is learned in regard to the implementation of a federal policy by a local school board and the contribution of this study to urban educational history during the period following the Brown decision completes the analysis of the desegregation process.

In conclusion, consideration is given to two aspects of the Brown decision - how the events in this southern city have increased our understanding of the decision and how the intent of the decision has

been manifested in the events of this period of history. These considerations suggest other avenues of research which would add to the understanding of Brown and its effect on the policies and practices of school systems.

### Theoretical Framework

To describe and interpret accurately the desegregation process in a southern city as a result of the Brown decision requires some understanding of the federal involvement in educational policy as well as knowledge of the development of urban educational history as a field of inquiry. In the book, Historical Inquiry in Education, A Research Agenda, Donald Warren addresses the federal policy issue (1983) while James Sanders (1983) urges further research in urban educational history. Both stress the need to broaden the spectrum of case studies from which generalizations about federal policy and urban educational history may be drawn (Sanders, 1983; Warren, 1983).

Discussing the role of the federal government in educational policy, Warren writes that the common wisdom for many years was that the federal government had no educational policy since education was not one of its functions. To some extent this was true, he

says, but lack of specific policy did not mean lack of interest. Although the Constitution of the United States gave the federal government no responsibility for education, even during the early years of our nation, the federal interest in an educated populace was manifested in several ways. Support of general schooling was given indirectly through such means as land grants from which the earnings were to be used to support educational efforts. Direct appropriations were provided for military training and for Indian education beginning in the early nineteenth century. Other entrances into the educational arena by the federal government came after periods of crisis such as war or an Indian uprising, but were usually temporary and somewhat tentative. In these situations the government tried to use education as a means of reform, but it was an intervention after the fact, a sure prescription for failure (Warren, 1983).

The federal government might have become more involved in educational concerns except for the efforts of southern congressional members. Fearful of any encroachment of the federal government on state rights which, as they saw it, threatened the southern way of life, southern congressmen were usually successful in preventing the passage of legislation which might have

increased federal involvement, although debates over these issues were often quite bitter. Following the Civil War, the federal government became very active in promoting educational concerns, particularly in the South, because of the black demand for schooling. When full federal financial support was not forthcoming, this activity also proved to be temporary (Warren, 1983).

A trend for increased federal activity in education seemed to be set by the activities surrounding the Civil War, however, that did not diminish. In 1931 when Herbert Hoover appointed a committee to do a comprehensive study on the federal involvement in education, the committee submitted a report which listed twenty or more departments and agencies of the three different branches of the government that were directly involved in activities related to education. They noted in submitting their report that a marked shift in federal policy and procedures with regard to education had taken place from the mid-nineteenth century onward (Warren, 1983).

This same change can be noted in the involvement of the federal courts with education issues, beginning in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Whenever lawsuits raise the possibility of a constitutional

issue, the federal courts become involved. From the beginning of our history as a nation through the nineteenth century, there were few conflicts involving constitutional issues and education and only six Supreme Court decisions on education were handed down. During the first half of the twentieth century, there were nineteen decisions in this field but during the period from 1948 to 1972, the number of decisions in education totalled more than all of the previous decisions combined, due to increasing challenges involving rights guaranteed by the First and the Fourteenth Amendments. Such statistics would seem to provide substantial evidence that the Supreme Court of the United States is assuming an increasing role in shaping educational policies and practices throughout the nation (Bolmeier, 1973).

Warren (1983) stresses the need for more case histories in the area of federal policy in education in order to match intents of federal intervention in education with long and short-run results. He also points out the value of using policy analysis as a point of departure in educational history. Historical policy analysis, he says, is a valuable tool for the historical researcher since it allows one to take the facts and arrive at conceptualizations inductively

rather than to try to apply an abstract definition of policy to the data. This means that the researcher does not set up self-fulfilling prophecies or exclude data prematurely in order to prove a theory, but is free to examine all information available and then draw meaningful conclusions about policy. This gives the research greater utility, both for the present conclusions and for future researchers. In this he is in agreement with Lindblom (1968) who wrote that policy analysis is not a theory in search of facts, for there is no specific theory of policy-making. It is rather a method of looking at events, the actors and the resulting practices and determining what factors were at work in producing the results.

Where Warren urges research on federal policy and its results, Sanders (1983) emphasizes the need for additional research in the area of urban educational history. This field has provided topics for serious research for the past fifteen years, he reports, as an outgrowth of two strands of research - urban history and educational history. He, like Warren, urges case studies which will broaden the base of knowledge from which those features which distinguish urban education from other forms of education may be deduced.



Urban history is a relatively recent field of research, consisting largely, during the early part of its history, of studies about the mobility and assimilation of various ethnic groups in our society. The research grew out of a desire to write the history of the common man and developed an immediate popularity. Indeed, Sanders says, any publication with the word "urban" in its title could be assured of an eager reception whether it was really about the city or not. This popularity has waned somewhat but urban settings have remained fertile areas for researchers. More recent trends have been toward using the city as a site for studying topical concerns such as ethnicity, women, the family, and so on (Sanders, 1983).

Educational history is an older field but was having a struggle to become recognized as a field worthy of scholarly research and interest when urban history came into its own. It did not take educational historians long to ride the new wave, especially since schools reflected many of the social concerns being addressed by urban historians - declining achievement, mushrooming absentee and drop-out rates, explosive confrontations over racial and ethnic differences. Concern over equality of opportunity has been a major preoccupation of much of recent educational history,



and the school's role in this social concern has fueled the major ideological debate of this period - whether schools are instruments of social control or the pathway to opportunity (Sanders, 1983).

Sanders (1983) points out that the debate cannot be settled because there are not enough case studies to be examined and compared to enable historians to draw significant conclusions. He urges historical researchers to place emphasis on the role of the school in the changing fabric of society. To do this productively, one must cast off old assumptions and look freshly at events and actors, ". . . avoiding the temptation either to simplify the research by recourse to an ideological starting point or to overstate the results by spinning a meta theory based on a single case study" (p. 226). He reiterates the need to look at cities other than the much-studied major ones so that the variety of studies will become a basis for future historians to draw meaningful conclusions.

A study of the desegregation experience of the San Francisco Public Schools by Doris Renee Fine exemplifies some of the research needs expressed by Dr. Sanders. Written as her dissertation for the University of California in Berkeley, Fine's study has been published as a book, entitled When Leadership

Fails. She uses the case history method of looking at the San Francisco School System, tracing the conditions that existed at the time of the Brown decision and then relating the experiences that the school system underwent in its efforts to develop a unitary school system. Due to a rather intense personal involvement in some of the events she describes, one might question the objectivity of the study, but the use of primary sources such as School Board minutes, newspaper accounts, personal interviews and committee proceedings provides a detailed picture of the period which adds to the body of existing knowledge about the desegregation process in urban school systems.

This present study has not attempted to address the broader issues outlined by Sanders of whether schools are instruments of social control or the pathway to opportunity in a democratic society. Rather its purpose has been to examine one aspect of urban educational history, the beginning of the desegregation of schools in a southern city and the implementation of a federal policy by a local school board in accomplishing this. Combining the concerns of urban educational history and analyzing the results of federal policy in education have provided a framework for the study.

### Method of Inquiry

The case study method has been chosen, focusing on the minutes of the Richmond City School Board and other primary and secondary sources that relate to the research topic. Good secondary sources, such as books and articles, provided background for the national response to the Brown decision, for the Massive Resistance measures in the South, for Virginia's reactions and for some aspects of the Richmond School Board's reactions. Primary sources, in addition to the minutes of the Richmond School Board, included minutes of some City Council meetings, local newspaper accounts of events, one regional (southern) school publication, and interviews with available persons directly connected with some of the events of the period from 1954 to 1971.

The actions of the School Board have provided a focus for determining which other sources have been used. City Council minutes, newspaper articles and editorials, and interviews have been selected which add to the picture presented in the formal minutes of the School Board meetings during this period of time. Fine's dissertation on the San Francisco Schools during desegregation used similar sources for a detailed

picture of the period and to that extent has influenced the choice of sources. Orfield (1969) supports the need for many details and facts when he points out that ". . .policy commitments and administrative strategies often are far more the product of an accumulation of limited decisions about details than of a conscious choice between fundamental alternatives."(p. x)

#### Limitations of the Study

The focus of the study has been the actions and policies developed by the School Board of the City of Richmond, Virginia during the period beginning in 1954 as it responded to the Brown decision calling for desegregation of public schools. The study ends in 1971 when the case of Bradley vs. the School Board of Richmond, Virginia had brought about the actual desegregation of the Richmond Public Schools. There were many key actors and many important events related to the desegregation of the schools during this twelve year period other than those directly involving the School Board. However, the emphasis in this study has been to see what issues confronted a local educational policy-making body as it responded to a federal educational mandate which called for a major change in policy at all levels.

Using historical policy analysis as an element of urban educational history has provided some assurance that the research has been done with a high degree of objectivity. As with any historical research, analysis of the evidence has required an awareness on the part of the researcher of the possible distortion of events that can occur when one looks at past events from the vantage point of the present. There may be some omissions due to the unavailability of some of the key actors and due also to the fact that some important material had never been written down and/or was not recalled by those persons interviewed. Newspaper accounts, no matter how factual, may be slanted by the bias of the writer or the editor, and it has been important to keep this in mind.

The resulting analysis may err because of these limitations but this is always a danger when one looks at the past and should not deter efforts to study and learn from history. Sometimes the passage of time clarifies the events of the past and relieves the distortions that the emotions of the moment might give to them. In the case of the Brown decision and the subsequent upheaval in the educational institutions, of America, one hopes that the vantage point of 1988 has allowed us to learn valuable lessons from our past.

The period of time from 1954 to 1971 has been chosen, since this was the time between the Brown decision and the actual desegregation of Richmond Public Schools. The Bradley case was not closed by the court until 1986, and an update has been included to cover the period from 1971 to 1986 briefly. The events from 1954 to 1961 which occasioned the Bradley suit and the ten years it took to bring about the desired results are the focus of this research. Subsequent events are all a result of the foundations laid during this period of time.

## CHAPTER 1

### REFERENCE NOTES

1. For cases which have extended and clarified the intent of the Brown decision, see, for example:

Cooper v Aaron, 78 S.Ct. 140 (1956)

Griffin v Prince Edward County School Board,  
377 U.S. 218 (1964)

Green v New Kent County, 88 S.Ct. 1689 (1968)

Alexander v Holmes County Board of Education, Mississippi, 90 S.Ct. 21, 1969

Swann v Charlotte-Mecklenberg Board of Education, 91 S.Ct. 1267 (1971)

## CHAPTER 1

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## CHAPTER 2

### PRELUDE TO THE BROWN DECISION

#### The South in 1954

When the Brown decision was handed down by the Supreme Court in May, 1954, the South, the area of the United States which appeared to be most affected, was a region bound together by strong social, economic, political and educational similarities. The Civil War and the Reconstruction Period which followed had helped forge a renewed sense of regional identity and pride which rivaled any seen previously in the nation (Duke, 1960). Southern military leaders from the Civil War were revered as heroes and immortalized in statues, in names of streets and schools and in special days that were set aside to honor them. The flying of the Confederate flag along with the American flag was traditional in many cities and towns (a tradition which persists even today in some parts of the South). There was much talk by politicians of protecting the "southern way of life", which to most southerners meant

genteel manners, a leisurely way of life, a fondness for traditions, strong family ties and a high respect for law and order. It also meant a highly stratified society, a strong belief in states' rights and, above all, white supremacy (Wilhoit, 1973).

Socially, even in the middle of the twentieth century, in the southern states, there was an almost absolute separation of the races. The inferiority of blacks was assumed and accepted by most whites who believed the black to be lacking in intelligence, dirty, lazy and less human than themselves. These beliefs were institutionalized and pervaded all areas of life. Although the institution of slavery had been abolished and the Reconstruction Period had brought some gains in status for blacks, these advances had been made without the willing participation of the southern white leadership and there was only grudging acceptance. When the white leadership regained the power it had lost after the Civil War, it had written into law what most of the white southerners felt - that the two races should be separate and should remain so (Dabney, 1976). Segregation in public accommodations in transportation had been sanctioned by the Plessy v Ferguson decision of the Supreme Court in 1896, 16 S Ct. 1138, by making separate but equal facilities.

acceptable and, whenever segregation was legally challenged, this principle was applied by lower courts. In Cumming v. County Board of Education, 175 U.S. 528 (1899), the separate but equal doctrine was held to be valid in education (Bolmeier, 1973) and remained the accepted practice throughout the early twentieth century. Equality of facilities was never really put into practice although some attempts were made in education later, as we shall see. Where there were no laws to govern conduct, strong social pressures prevented the mixing of the races (Wilhoit, 1973).

Politically, southerners at mid-century were still conservative and strongly supportive of the rights of localities to govern themselves. Historically southern legislators had opposed anything which even hinted at federal encroachment on the rights of the states and localities. Often legislation which would have provided badly needed funds was defeated on the grounds that federal control would follow. Despite this attitude some federal money did come into the South, usually for an educational purpose, such as land grants or funds for vocational education. Federal policy required that such funds be administered without discrimination but research shows that this was not the case. A study during the 1930's showed that black

vocational teachers were paid less than half as much as whites even though federal funds paid the salaries of both groups. The same study showed that the spending for white students was at least twice as high as the spending for blacks and that the opportunities for blacks was limited almost entirely to agricultural training. Black leaders felt that the situation would not change unless federal pressure was applied by withholding funds from the programs. The political structure made this a dubious course of action (Orfield, 1969).

The federal bureaucracy had been reluctant to try to enforce policies by withholding funds since early attempts to do this had often backfired. When funds were withheld, local leaders would appeal to state agencies, who in turn appealed to their representatives in Congress. It was these local leaders who exercised the power needed for the election of state officials as well as representatives to the federal government and political realities made their support necessary. The usual result was that the funds were restored or the program was discredited with the persons who had the power to fund it. This "no-win" situation had led federal agencies to use tactics of persuasion and to seek mutual cooperation with state

agencies, a practice which had mixed success and often resulted in an outright misuse of funds without penalty. Federal officials were quite aware that funds were being used inequitably and in support of segregated programs in the South and felt powerless to change this. Thus the South had actually been upheld in its pattern of unequal educational opportunities for blacks by the federal government and its agencies (Orfield, 1969).

Prior to the Civil War, the rural economy of the South had not provided much reason for a high level of education for most of the poorer whites of the region and education for blacks was discouraged or forbidden. The children of the well-to-do were educated in the private schools which were available at all levels or went away to schools outside the region. When the War ended, the South had to contend with the fact that it had a large body of illiterates, both white and black (Anderson, 1981).

The Reconstruction period brought a change both in attitudes toward education and the desire for it. The freed slaves were eager for all of the education they could obtain, and as many as fifty percent of the school age population is estimated to have attended the various schools that were started for them. Blacks who

took advantage of the educational opportunities began to make great strides in learning and the literacy level among them rose sharply. This eagerness of blacks for education provided the impetus for greater interest among whites in improving opportunities for schooling, since they were often embarrassed when blacks were better educated than they were (Anderson, 1981).

In the years following the Civil War, interest in public education was increasing, although progress toward universal schooling had many obstacles to overcome. Questions of how much, if any, education should be provided for blacks and whether poor whites should be educated beyond their station in life were unresolved. Accepting free education from the government was seen as a form of welfare, and was generally frowned upon, but a growing portion of the population was beginning to favor more public schooling (Heatwole, 1916).

While the interest in universal education was increasing, political forces were at work shaping the form that education would take. During Reconstruction the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution had been written and ratified while the southern states were excluded from the Congress. Federal agencies were set

up in the South to protect Negro voting rights and to guarantee equal protection of the laws to all citizens, thus placing the power of the federal government against local discrimination. While federal agents were in control of the southern states, there was no segregation and many blacks held political positions, but as white southerners gradually regained local control, the federal apparatus enforcing equal rights was dismantled and most localities returned to local white domination. Numerous efforts were mounted in the Congress to pass laws prohibiting segregation in education, but none were successful. As southern states wrote new constitutions, provisions for a system of public schools were included, and the usual practice was to keep the races separate. Later versions of constitutions, written when whites had regained their dominance, mandated segregated schools. Given the southern attitude toward public free schools, the leadership felt that it would be difficult enough to get public approval of a free school system, let alone an integrated one (Orfield, 1969).

Having accepted the idea of a public school system, southerners realized that there was much to be done and tackled the problem of improving educational offerings with great zeal. The first half of the

twentieth century brought sweeping changes as southern systems copied northern schooling practices. The North had embraced many facets of the Progressive Movement and had established state-wide school systems with bureaucratic administrative organizations (Maxcy, 1981). In their quest for efficiency, administrative progressives showed great interest in the corporate structure, which had small Boards of Directors to develop policy, while the administrative functions were carried out by a president or other chief executive officer and his administrative staff. Using this model, northern school systems moved away from school boards of twenty or more persons elected by wards, who ran the school system, to small school boards of five or six persons, appointed at large, who made policy. Administrative authority was vested in the person of the superintendent of schools, instead of school board committees, and the rise of the strong superintendent resulted. These smaller boards were often community elites, business and professional men, who, it was felt, would make policy in the best interest of the community. This pattern was copied in the South as southern school practices became more like those of the North (Tyack, 1974).



Progress toward universal schooling and efficient school systems was rapid and, although growth was interrupted somewhat by the Great Depression, the South soon recovered and continued its progress through a period of educational reform. By mid-century some excellent systems flourished in the South, although it remained substantially behind the other parts of the nation in the quality of its programs. Maxcy (1981) points out that the progress of the southern school systems was different from that seen in the West and North in that it occurred with a far greater speed and intensity and that, in five decades, the South built not one, but two, complete public school systems, one for whites and one for blacks.

The dual system put a financial burden on the South, where many of the states were simply not wealthy enough to generate adequate tax money to support better schools. At mid-century while some states had an annual income of \$12,000 for each child of school age, others, many of them in the South, had less than \$5000 income per child. The effort made by the southern states exceeded that of some of the wealthier states, but there never seemed to be enough to meet the needs. This meant that the average teacher in the South was paid less than teachers in other parts of the country,

and, because of discriminatory practices, black teachers were paid less than white teachers while twice as much was spent on the average for each white pupil as for each black pupil (Butts, 1978).

During the 1920's and 1930's the federal government did little to attempt to correct the inequalities, either in helping poorer states or in challenging the disparities in expenditures for whites and blacks. Southern leaders were permitted to continue to operate in a segregated and unequal manner even when federal funds were involved. The operation of the schools was seen to be largely a matter for state and local control. During the 1940's and 1950's, however, correcting inequalities became a part of the national Democratic Party platform. Recognizing the South's resistance to federal encroachment, efforts centered around ways to provide federal aid to education without federal control, but legislation always ran into two major stumbling blocks: (1) concerns about whether there should be aid for parochial schools and (2) whether or not southern states would be required to allocate equitable proportions to their segregated schools for whites and blacks. The inability to resolve these issues prevented the passage of any meaningful federal aid to

education legislation, but this failure did not diminish the increasing federal interest in equalizing educational opportunities for all citizens (Butts, 1978).

In the 1930's and 1940's, increasing literacy levels among blacks and a new, better educated black leadership gave rise to increasing protests about discrimination in educational opportunities. Many southern leaders began to see that the white community had some responsibility for the condition of blacks and states began to make a genuine effort to improve schools for them, both in quantity and quality, attempting to achieve equalization (Ashmore, 1954). The backlog was great, however, and progress was slower than the new black leadership felt acceptable. Unable to make progress to correct inequalities through legislation, black lawyers began to move into the courts. Several court cases challenged the system but failed to dislodge the "separate but equal" principle. Even when the courts agreed that discrimination existed, school systems were ordered to equalize facilities, not to integrate the races in the schools. Then, in two cases involving higher education, Sweatt v Painter, 339 U.S. 629 (1950) and McLaurin v Oklahoma State Regents, 339 U.S. 637 (1950), institutions of

higher learning were directed to grant full participation to black students in the white facility. No mention was made of school systems at lower levels, but the NAACP, which provided legal assistance for blacks willing to challenge educational inequalities, saw a change in attitude developing and decided that it would not handle any more equalization suits but would only handle suits where the plaintiff was willing to press for integrated schools (Butts, 1978).

### Virginia at Mid-Century

Virginia at mid-century was typical of the South in many ways while, in other instances, it had made slower progress than many of the other southern states. Its economy was still largely agricultural, but there was increasing urbanization in the northern part of the state around Washington, D.C. and in the eastern ports around Norfolk, where large military bases added to the economy and brought people together from many parts of the nation. Politically, the rural areas dominated the state government, supporting the southern Democratic party headed by Senator Harry F. Byrd. This political group had been in power for a number of years and had come to be known as the "Byrd Machine" due to the almost automatic election of anyone who received its

support. There was only weak opposition to this continued domination of state politics since most white Virginians felt that their needs were being met. Roads had improved, there was a slow, but steady development of industry, and changes were taking place gradually, a style that seemed to suit Virginians (Gottman, 1955).

Gottman (1955) describes Virginia as being unique among the states which surrounded it. Perhaps no other state had quite the commitment and fondness for tradition that was to be found in the Virginia of the mid-century. Virginia and Virginians had led the nation during its early years and a deep reverence for the past had developed, accompanied by a cautious approach to anything new. Virginia had continued to lead the South through the Civil War, but had lost its place of prominence during the early twentieth century and had been slower than most of the South to become involved in the modernization process. This ability to resist change, Gottman states, was unusual when one looks at the geographical position of Virginia in the center of the eastern seaboard and in the pathway of the growing megalopolis of the East. Most of the industrial growth in the state had come through investment from outside the state, not from within, and with the investment came new people, not necessarily

with the same commitment to tradition as native-born Virginians. Thus at mid-century there were some new power groups emerging in the state, willing to see change, while the dominant power group was devoted to maintaining the status quo (Gottman, 1955).

The black population of Virginia at mid-century did not wield much political power even though it represented 22.1% of the total population of the state. The distribution of blacks in the state was very uneven, ranging from less than 5% of the population in some of the western counties and suburban areas to over 50% in other areas (Gottman, 1955). They were concentrated for the most part in the cities and in the largely rural counties in the southern and eastern part of the state, where they sometimes comprised a majority of the county population. Fifteen counties had a black majority in their total population, and several others had a black majority in school populations. It was from these same counties that the Byrd organization drew much of its political support, a factor which would strongly influence Virginia's response to the Brown decision. In spite of their concentration in these areas, blacks had little local power and were not represented in county government or on city councils or school boards in the cities. Less than one in four

black adults was registered to vote although there was not a deliberate discriminatory effort to prevent them from registering. The Byrd organization was not popular with blacks and in turn made no effort to court the black vote, so enfeebled were they as a political force. White leadership regarded the black population in general as apathetic and indifferent to political and social issues (Ely, 1976).

On the surface, race relations in Virginia in the middle of the twentieth century were cordial, an improvement from the strong racial tensions left by the Civil War. During the years following the War, angry and bitter feelings developed as a proud, but impoverished, state tried to rebuild what the war had totally destroyed and tried as well to cope with thousands of freedmen who were ill-prepared to take part in this rebuilding effort. As one observer put it, the white population took out their wrath against the Yankees on the blacks, as soon as they were politically able (Dabney, 1976). The feelings in Virginia were not as bitter as in other parts of the South, however, and they moderated considerably in the latter part of the nineteenth century as Virginians became more preoccupied with the business of building a new economy. There was concern with keeping the blacks

"in their place", but this was accomplished through the passage of laws rather than through violent attacks. Open conflict was not the way of Virginians and in the twentieth century, under the Byrd organization, the state had adopted the most stringent anti-lynching law in the South, while the Ku Klux Klan, active elsewhere in the South, had been so discredited in Virginia that it was not a factor. Racial tensions had varied over the twentieth century, but many white Virginians expressed pride and satisfaction in the progress the black community had made, as they saw it, and seemed to expect a gradual lowering of the barriers between the races (Ely, 1976).

Educationally, Virginia was one of the weakest of the southern states as the middle of the twentieth century approached (Gottman, 1955). This seems ironic since, just prior to the Civil War, Virginia had been the leader among the southern states in the amount of public education that was offered, providing localities with financial assistance by providing for the salary of county commissioners, and by appointing district superintendents. The greatest obstacle to creating free public schools was simply the prejudice against the entire concept. Many families just did not want to be identified as "poor" and having to accept the



charity of the state to educate their children. One frustrated county commissioner decried this prejudice as a false pride which left children to grow up in ignorance rather than be educated by public funds (Buck, 1952).

After the Civil War, a new state constitution was written by the Reconstruction legislature, and even though it contained some features unacceptable to most of the populace, it did provide for a system of free public schools. The General Assembly elected as the first State Superintendent, Rev. W.H. Ruffner, a remarkable individual who in his twelve years as superintendent was able to accomplish what seemed an almost impossible task, getting a state school system started. He launched a campaign to win public support for the idea of public schools which was so successful in changing attitudes, that, in 1902 when a new constitutional convention was held by the restored white leadership, the provision for public schools was kept although a dual system for whites and blacks was required (Heatwole, 1916).

Virginia continued to make great strides in the development of a state-wide public school system, although opportunities for blacks lagged far behind those for whites. The state, like the rest of the

South, paid black teachers only about half as much as white teachers, and as late as 1920 was just beginning to offer training for black teachers. There were few black entrants to the teacher training programs because there were so few black high schools. Many black communities made considerable effort to help themselves through private donations and through the contributions of several educational foundations, and the number of black teachers increased. While the state took pride in the pace of its growth in education, its progress was still slower than other states, even some of those in the South (Buck, 1952).

Some of the progressive organizational patterns were adopted by the state schools in the 1920's and 1930's. Small school districts were consolidated into single county units, greatly reducing the number of school boards and increasing the quality of the personnel serving on the boards. Power was given to local boards to appoint their own superintendents, from a list approved by the state, putting more control of the schools in the hands of the localities. The strain of financing dual systems was a problem for some counties, and white schools were given priority in these situations. The state had slipped from 39th in the nation to 43rd when the 1944 Denny Commission made

a report on the schools and urged increased state funding as a means of financing needed improvements (Buck, 1952).

A renewed interest in education came with the growing prosperity of World War II and Virginia began an effort to "catch up", but there was much to do. There was a serious shortage of teachers, classes were overcrowded and the school population was increasing rapidly. Between 700 and 1000 new teachers were being added every year. Black teachers were more plentiful than white teachers since their salaries and training institutions had been upgraded. There was an effort to equalize facilities for white and black students, but the state was having difficulty keeping up with the many school demands. Black leaders began pressing for better educational opportunities for black students, particularly in areas of the state where not much had been done (Gottman, 1955).

#### The Development of Public Schools in Richmond

The development of Richmond City's public educational system followed roughly that of the state of Virginia although from the beginnings of public education in the state, cities pursued a somewhat

independent course of action when compared to the counties and rural areas. Prior to the Civil War, Richmond had offered free schools to white children who needed them, through a combination of city and private funds (Pollard, 1954). The devastation left by the War made the need for publicly financed education greater than ever since many families could no longer afford private education, and in 1869 a group of citizens petitioned the City Council to establish a system of public schools. With money from the city, from the Freedman's Bureau and the Peabody fund, a nine-member Board of Education was appointed and 53 schools were opened, enrolling 2400 students, black and white. In 1870, the city took entire control of the fledgling system, appointed a new school board of ten members, and appropriated money for current expenses as well as for buildings. The public began to show confidence in the new system (Heatwole, 1916).

The city schools of Richmond became part of the new state system in April, 1871, and with the establishment of a high school in 1872, a full range of educational opportunities was provided. There were more black students than white students in the system, and a Normal School for training black teachers was established which later became a combination Normal and

High School. Black and white leaders stressed equal educational opportunities for both races. White teachers taught in black schools when there were not enough black teachers, but as their number increased, black teachers taught black students. There was a period of racial harmony, though not integration (Heatwole, 1916).

In the 1890's the racial back-lash from the Reconstruction period was felt in Richmond as well as in other parts of the state. Black leaders, along with some of the white leadership, recognized the injustices being carried out against blacks through denial of voting rights and other civil liberties, but were not able to curb the movement and decided in favor of a conciliatory approach. Black leaders decided to develop a strong, separate economy and to wait for other opportunities to make new gains. The constitutional convention of 1901-02 legalized segregation in schools as in other areas of life, and dual systems of schools became firmly established. The school system administration was white, and even black schools were administered by white principals, although black teachers were hired to teach in their schools. There was no other racial mixing in the school system (Dabney, 1976).

During the early twentieth century Richmond, along with the rest of the state, became involved in the campaign for better education. The passage of an effective compulsory attendance law and increased state appropriations helped improve the status of the schools. Curriculum became more diversified, and the city schools began to offer vocational programs as federal money became available for such purposes. The city school board had nine members, who served on board committees to oversee the operations of the school system. The progressive movement had not affected the school system's organization. (Dabney, 1976; Buck, 1952).

The 1940's saw some increase in efforts to improve race relations in the South. Richmond's black community was much like the white community in its social stratification. There was a black upper class as well as a white upper class, based largely on occupation. Out of the black business and professional class rose a number of leaders who sought to achieve better opportunities for blacks, to eliminate discrimination in transportation and to keep the center for the improvement of race relations in the South, rather than having northern influences come into the region. Concerns about schools and higher education

opportunities were among their priorities (Dabney, 1976).

In 1942 a study of the Richmond Public School System was requested by the School Board and commissioned by the State Board of Education. The report and recommendations brought about some changes in the schools and in the administrative organization. Richmond had at this time 23 white and 13 black elementary schools, along with two high schools for each race. Three junior high schools served white students only, while black students of this age group were housed in the high schools. There was overcrowding in some black elementary schools resulting in double shifts at the lower grades (Report, 1942).

Academically the Commission found that there was great discrepancy among schools of both races, with some achieving above national norms and others below. All black schools were below expected norms and variations among them were only in the degree of retardation in achievement. White students entered school at age 5 and 1/2 and spent 4 semesters in a junior primary block before entering second grade, while black students entered at age 6 and spent only a year and a half before entering the second grade, creating a discrepancy from the beginning. The average

black student entering the second grade was one year older than the average white student at the same point and was five months behind in achievement (Report, 1942).

The Commission merely recognized these discrepancies and raised questions but did not address the concerns on a racial basis in its recommendations. The Commission was basically concerned with the style of teaching, which they found outdated and too dependent on the memorization of textbooks in many schools, especially in the black schools. The Commission noted also the difficulty of getting black students to take business courses in high schools since there were so few jobs of this type available for blacks in the community (Report, 1942). All-in-all the tone of the report was not critical, simply matter-of-fact. No questions about providing more opportunities for the less advantaged, white or black, were raised except in the matter of instructional style and meeting individual needs. The awakening of social conscience in the nation had not yet begun.

The Commission did make recommendations about changing the role and structure of the School Board, however, and along with it the organization of the school system. The Board's nine members, three each



from the three magisterial districts, were appointed by City Council for three year terms with no limit on the number of terms which an individual might serve. In 1942 five members had served for ten or more years with one member's period of service at twenty-two years. Attendance at Board meetings was excellent and the number of meetings substantial, indicating a high degree of devotion to the cause of public education. The relationship with the City Council was excellent, and there seemed to be no reason to change the method of selection (Report, 1942).

The Commission viewed the organization and role of the Board differently, however. The members recommended a change from the committee style board to the more progressive, smaller school board acting in an advisory capacity to a professional staff. Other professional educators from a variety of school systems, who reviewed the report, agreed heartily with this recommendation and even suggested the reduction of the school board to five members, more like a board of directors (Report, 1942). This recommendation involved several changes, one in the city charter, which had to be approved by the state legislature, and another in city ordinances, which had to be approved by the City Council. These changes were started in 1945, just a few

months before a new superintendent was hired, and in April, 1946, the City Council approved the new board (City Ordinances, 1944-46).

As the city of Richmond crossed over the mid-century mark, its school system was considered excellent by Virginia standards. Graduates of both white and black high schools went on to high levels of achievement in many areas of endeavor, although there were not many white residents who gave more than a passing thought to the black system that existed side-by-side with the white system. In 1953, the City Council appointed a leading black businessman from the city, Booker T. Bradshaw, to the Richmond School Board, the first black to serve in that capacity since Reconstruction days. The school system had an excellent superintendent, Dr. Henry I. Willett, who had an international reputation as an outstanding educator. Relations between City Council and the School Board were exemplary, and some of the most outstanding citizens in the city were willing to serve on the Board. Prospects were for continued growth toward excellence (Dabney, 1976).

Orfield (1969) has pointed out that it is very easy to become comfortable with what exists and certainly the state of Virginia and the city of

Richmond exemplify that state of affairs. A tradition of slow change, a satisfaction with existing conditions and a pattern of race relations that had not undergone any major changes since the beginning of the twentieth century characterized a state and a city that would respond to the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States to end segregation in the public schools.

#### Responding to the Brown Decision

"We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. . . ." (Supreme Court Decision, Brown I).

With these words the Supreme Court pronounced a new federal policy for all states with laws requiring segregation of the races in public schools. The Court confirmed a principle which must now be enacted into new laws and policies in every state and every locality where the races were segregated. The South, which had always been able to subvert federal policy to its own ends because of its political power, was confronted with a policy mandate from a group that was essentially immune to the usual political influences (Orfield, 1969). Old methods and approaches would not work in this setting.

Understanding the South and southerners, one might have predicted a more outraged response than actually occurred once the Brown decision was announced.

"Reactions to the Brown decision in the South were varied and, more often than not cautiously phrased", writes Wilhoit in The Politics of Massive Resistance (1973). For several weeks after the decision was announced, the national and world media were filled with acclamations of the Supreme Court's action. Faced with this mass of positive response, white southerners were somewhat reticent in their comments. Reactions seemed to fall into three categories, to some degree a function of geography, with the deep south being ardently opposed, the middle states moderate and restrained, and the border states cautiously positive (Wilhoit, 1973).

Governors, who in southern states were almost always men of considerable power and high status, were quick to respond and reflected their state's general attitude, while legislative reaction took some time to develop, since most legislatures were not in session at the time of the decision. By the time legislatures reacted, their position was generally more oppositional than that of the governors had been and they immediately began to look for maneuvers to avoid

compliance. Such devices as tuition grants for persons wishing to attend private schools and the appointment of commissions to analyze the problems presented by Brown were proposed. There were threats to abolish the public school systems if integration of schools took place, but in general these first reactions were not violent in tone (Wilhoit, 1973).

Virginia's response followed the pattern of most of the southern states, although in length and level of resistance, Virginia became more like the deep South as time went by. States were invited to file briefs with the Court as it considered the implementation decree to follow Brown, and Virginia's Attorney General was one of the responders. In late May, 1954, the State Board of Education instructed local boards to continue segregation during the coming school year, while awaiting the implementation decision. There was still hope that the original decision would be modified to fit southern conditions, but the delay only served to give time for positions of resistance to solidify (Ely, 1976).

Virginia's Governor Stanley, in the meantime, appointed a legislative commission, headed by State Senator Garland Gray, to develop recommendations for responding to the Brown decision. Although heavily

populated with southside legislators known to be ardent segregationists, the commission took as their task, that of devising ways to comply with Brown with as little integration as possible. Recognizing that several areas of the state could comply with little community opposition and, indeed, would benefit financially by having a single school system, while other areas were totally opposed to any integration at all, the commission recommended in November, 1955, a local option plan, tuition grants for parents not wanting to send children to integrated schools and repeal of compulsory attendance laws. These latter two recommendations called for revisions in the state constitution, and, in a referendum on January 9, 1956, the electorate approved a limited constitutional convention for this purpose. By March, 1956, when the convention assembled, several factors had intervened to alter the course of Virginia's resistance (Ely, 1976).

The first factor was a change in attitude that began to surface around November, 1955. Urged on by prominent editorial writers, particularly James J. Kilpatrick of the Richmond News Leader, politicians in the South began to consider an alleged constitutional weapon known as interposition, which stated that "every State has a right to interpose its sovereignty,

under certain circumstances as a challenge and check against encroachment by the Federal government upon reserved powers of States." (Kilpatrick, 1956). With no strong statements forthcoming from the White House in favor of compliance with Brown and with the Supreme Court in effect washing its hands of any further involvement, stating that cases should be resolved in the lower courts, southern congressmen and other leaders felt encouraged that this idea might work (Wilhoit, 1973).

In its regular session, in January, 1956, the members of the Virginia General Assembly, swayed by the newspapers articles and editorials on interposition and growing talk of resistance, had approved a resolution of protest which had included many of the sentiments of the interposition doctrine. Although the resolution was not a strong interposition statement, its passage nevertheless left many legislators in the position of being unable to reconcile voting for even limited integration while upholding the sentiments expressed in the statement (Orfield, 1969).

A second major factor influencing the course Virginia would take was the emergence of Senator Harry F. Byrd and the state of Virginia as leaders in the southern resistance movement. Southern Congressmen met

in March, 1956 and developed a "Declaration of Constitutional Principles" or "Southern Manifesto" which also endorsed many of the sentiments of the interposition doctrine. Widely circulated in the Congress, the document met with a variety of responses, both positive and negative, but it had the effect of putting Byrd and Virginia in a position of national prominence as a leader against school integration. Byrd used the phrase "massive resistance", and the movement had a name and a leader (Wilhoit, 1973). State politicians took this position of leadership seriously, and many members of the General Assembly expressed the view that Virginia had to "hold the line" or the entire South would go down. It seemed imperative that one single policy for the entire state be developed, and no local option could be permitted for any part of the commonwealth. Kilpatrick gave it voice, "No integration in Virginia's public schools, now or ever" (Orfield, 1969). Thus parts of the state that would have preferred a different approach were swept along with the actions engendered by a vain hope that integration could be avoided.

Massive Resistance was a loosely connected series of maneuvers and legal tactics designed to delay and /or circumvent the carrying out of the requirements



of the Brown decision. By 1956 every southern legislature spent much of its time developing and passing legislation to prevent desegregation. Many approaches were found. Wilhoit (1973) lists twenty-one major legislative items which were used by some or all of the southern states. The use of the various strategies followed roughly the same chronological order in the most of the states, and by the end of 1956 full resistance had been enacted into southern law. White leadership in the South was spending considerable time and energy to go backwards, not forward (Wilhoit, 1973).

When the Virginia General Assembly met in special session in August, 1956, the Gray Commission report was repudiated in favor of more stringent measures even by the members of the Commission itself. A ring of defensive maneuvers was erected to bar any racial integration in the state. In addition to tuition grants and the removal of compulsory attendance requirements as approved by the constitutional convention, a state Pupil Placement Board was made responsible for the assignment of all students to all schools. The governor was required to seize and close any school threatened with integration and then to attempt to re-open it on a segregated basis. This

failing, a local school district could re-open the school on an integrated basis with its own funds, state money being withheld in such a case (Ely, 1976).

As the barrage of massive resistance measures issued from the state legislatures, local school boards in Virginia and other southern states often found themselves caught in the dilemma of trying to prevent desegregation in order to keep the state from closing schools while trying to comply with federal court orders to admit black students to formerly all-white schools (Wilhoit, 1973).

The positions taken by the state's political leadership in Virginia were not favored by all even though there were few who rose to express opposition. There was, even among conservatives, a recognition that interposition was not a defensible position. In 1956, Mr. Powell, Chairman of the Richmond School Board, wrote a paper pointing out the legal fallacies in the position but withheld publication of the paper in order not to embarrass state leaders (Ely, 1976). Protestant clergymen were active in favoring compliance with the Supreme Court decision, but became less vocal and active as the state's position hardened. In 1957 when the Ministerial Association in Richmond published a statement protesting the state's actions and calling

for compliance with the Brown decision (Richmond News-Leader, January 28, 1957), they came under scathing attack by the editor for their "muddle-headed thinking" (Kilpatrick, 1957). Catholic schools admitted blacks in September, 1954, and, having done so, maintained a low profile, while the Jewish community found it the better part of wisdom not to antagonize the powers that were in control by publicly supporting integration. The emerging liberal power groups in the north and east of the state were not yet politically strong enough to shift the balance of power, and blacks were not a political factor at all (Ely, 1976).

The school year 1957-58 saw no integration in Virginia schools even though five of the southern border states, as well as North Carolina had rejected massive resistance in favor of token integration. Several Virginia cases were tied up in court, but in the fall of 1958, the crucial test for Virginia's Massive Resistance measures came. All legal delays had been exhausted, and school boards in Charlottesville, Warren County and Norfolk were ordered by the courts to desegregate their high schools when school opened. Acting under the existing laws, Governor Almond took control of the affected schools in each of the

localities and closed them, locking out 13,000 students (Ely, 1976).

Laws were one thing but children out of school were another, and state groups began to oppose the school closings. Senator Byrd saw the crisis as the ultimate test between the state and the NAACP, but his rhetoric was not enough to convince the populace that closed, segregated schools were preferable to open, integrated ones. The state PTA, by a narrow margin, opposed the closings; the Virginia Education Association, professional organization of white teachers, opposed the closings, also, while certain business leaders quietly urged the abandonment of Massive Resistance arguing that it was deterring investment and industrial growth in the state. On Lee-Jackson day in January, 1959, both the Virginia State Supreme Court and the 3-judge federal district court handed down decisions invalidating the school closing laws, and Massive Resistance, for all intents and purposes, came to an end (Ely, 1976).

State leadership realized that some integration would have to be accepted so Governor Almond appointed a commission, under Mosby Perrow, state senator from Lynchburg, to develop a new plan which would seek to satisfy the federal courts, keep schools open and hold

mixing of the races to a minimum (Dabney, 1960). In March the Perrow Plan was made public. Its main emphases were a pupil assignment plan under which the Pupil Placement Board would use criteria other than race to screen transfer applications and an increased use of pupil scholarships with no mention of avoiding integrated schools. The Plan also recommended allowing localities to enact a local ordinance requiring compulsory attendance. In a confused and frustrated session, the General Assembly argued over the plan but could come up with no meaningful alternatives. Encouraged by the ruling in the South Carolina case, Briggs v Elliott, 132 F. Supp 776 (1955), that the Supreme Court had not mandated racial balance, only an end to discrimination, a coalition of moderates and independents succeeded in passing the laws necessary to put the Perrow Plan into action (Ely, 1976).

Hailing these policies as the new way for the South, many white leaders felt that they could limit integration for many years to come, while others were skeptical that the Courts would accept these tactics any better than the earlier resistance measures (Ely, 1976). In January, 1960, Virginius Dabney, the editor of the Richmond Times-Dispatch, the morning edition of the largest Richmond newspaper, spoke for those with

the more positive outlook. In an article in the U.S. News and World Report, Dabney stressed that Virginia was once more "...in a position of leadership, ... guiding the South toward a new era in the long and troubled history of racial relations", through its new policy of freedom of choice. Through the use of the enrollment criteria such as health, geography and certain personal qualifications, white Virginians hoped to limit the integration of the races and remain within the law (Dabney, 1960).

In the spring the Pupil Placement Board decided on two criteria for screening applications for transfer to different schools - the distance a student lived from the school and an achievement level equivalent to the median achievement in the school for which application was being made. The new measures seemed to work to limit the number of black students entering formerly all-white schools, and for a while the race question faded from prominence. Black students entered formerly all-white or even integrated schools only if they actively sought to do so. In 1962 1230, less than 1%, of Virginia's blacks attended integrated schools and in 1963, the NAACP recognized Virginia as having the most widespread and successful token integration program in the country. In May, 1963, a new policy set

living within a given geographical zone as the only criterion for the Pupil Placement Board to consider in approving applications, thus weakening its position greatly. Localities could choose to remove themselves from the Placement Board's jurisdiction, and, as many local boards chose to do so, the effectiveness of the Board decreased even more. By December of 1964, over 10 years after the Brown decision, only 5% of black students in Virginia were enrolled in desegregated schools, and local school boards typically took no steps toward desegregation until forced by the courts to do so (Ely, 1976).

Some progress was being made in civil rights in other areas of life. Hotels, restaurants, theaters and athletic fields had dropped racial barriers. Urban fire companies, police forces and bus companies hired black employees, and by 1963, some local chapters of the Virginia Education Association were accepting black members (Dabney, 1964). The actual number of blacks involved was small, and there seemed to be a weariness with the slow pace of change which gave way to a period of heightened racial tensions in the summer of 1963. Some of the few violent confrontations in Virginia during the entire desegregation period occurred that summer in Danville and Farmville, creating a climate of

unrest and prompting visits by Martin Luther King, Jr. to the region. As the turbulent summer came to an end it was obvious that there were no concrete black gains, but that, as a group, Virginia blacks were becoming politically aware. This political awareness would emerge as power in the presidential election of 1964 when Virginia blacks cast an estimated 150,000 votes for Lyndon B. Johnson to put Virginia firmly in the camp of the Democratic Party (Ely, 1976).

The reactionary politics of the South were not going unnoticed by the Courts, the Congress and other parts of the nation. Courts were firm in upholding Brown and the president spoke out in favor of civil rights. A backlash to the South's tactics developed in the Congress, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed in spite of southern resistance. This Act spelled out the responsibilities of localities in many areas of civil rights, not just in the area of education, but it provided the next major impetus for the desegregation of schools in Virginia and the rest of the South (Orfield, 1969).

Courts were approving freedom of choice plans, and further growth in civil rights through the courts seemed to be at a standstill. The Civil Rights Act carried with it a provision for withholding funds from



school systems not in compliance with desegregation requirements. School systems had to file desegregation plans with the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare in order to receive funds. When the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was enacted soon after the Civil Rights Act, the huge amounts of federal funds for education that were involved suddenly made the problem of desegregation urgent for local school boards (Orfield, 1969).

During the first year of enforcement of the Civil Rights Act, local school administrators floundered in uncertainty as they attempted to provide acceptable plans for desegregating schools. In Virginia, state officials, for political reasons, remained as uninvolved as possible, providing no help for the local schoolmen. During the first year there was a substantial increase in the number of black students attending desegregated schools, and local school boards were relatively relieved that it had been accomplished. With the coming of the second set of guidelines from HEW in 1966, however, requiring much more in the way of faculty and student desegregation, opposition stiffened in Virginia, and some localities eventually had funds withheld because of refusal to comply with the new requirements. The new guidelines

did result in greater integration but the degree of opposition lessened the federal desire to confront school systems and made HEW more cautious in enforcing desegregation requirements. By 1967, the major energy generated by the Civil Rights Act had spent itself, and once again the need for a new momentum returned to the courts (Orfield, 1969).

In 1968, the Supreme Court, in a Virginia case involving New Kent County, ruled that freedom of choice plans rarely resulted in the protection of the constitutional rights of black students and that all local school boards must move rapidly toward unitary school systems. Now the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the judiciary were working in concert with one another. Local school systems which had not desegregated their schools or had relied on freedom of choice to satisfy the federal requirements were faced with hopeless and costly battles if they failed to move to create unitary, non-racial school systems. Concern over education proved more important than concern with maintaining segregation, and all over the South, along with the remaining districts in Virginia, systems began moving to comply with court orders. Already, however, the problems of resegregation were beginning to be seen in those

systems nominally unified, and the future for resolving racial inequality in the schools remained uncertain (Orfield, 1969).

An in-depth look at the actions and reactions of the School Board of the City of Richmond follows as it faced first the Massive Resistance measures, then the state policy of limited integration, and finally the pressure to have a unitary school system. The role of the Bradley case is traced throughout this period as it spurred the changes made by the School Board. Whether the intent of the Brown decision has been met in the desegregation of the Richmond Public Schools in providing equality of opportunity of education for students regardless of race, and the changes in the role of the School Board that occurred during the desegregation process will be examined. Thus the educational picture in the state of Virginia during this period of history as shown through the city of Richmond as well as some of the implications of implementing a federal policy in a local setting will be more fully understood.

## CHAPTER 2

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## CHAPTER 3

### THE RICHMOND SCHOOL BOARD AND MASSIVE RESISTANCE

#### The Richmond School Board in 1954

The Richmond School Board at mid-century was composed of five members appointed by City Council from the city at large to serve for five-year terms. Each member could succeed himself once, making the term of service ten years (City Ordinance, April, 1946). Occasionally a member was appointed to fill an unexpired term of someone else and might serve eleven or twelve years (Minutes, 1954-1963).

Board members were community "elites" who served without compensation. There was usually a banker, a lawyer, someone from the business or professional community, one female who was active in community affairs, and, beginning in 1953, one black community leader. Members need have no knowledge of or ties to Richmond Public Schools. In fact, members of the School Board sometimes had their own children in

private schools (Doherty, 1971). This type of school board organization was an outgrowth of the progressive movement and exemplified the "disinterested" school board theory prevalent during the first half of the twentieth century. This theory held that school board members should not have any personal interest in the school system they served but should be able to make decisions objectively, in the best interest of the community (Tyack, 1974). When a Board member retired from service, City Council tried to appoint a person who would maintain the same balance in representation in professional and ethnic background and in the area of the city represented. Maintaining this same representation guaranteed the continuation of the Board's conservative philosophy, which was in harmony with that of the majority of the white community, the City Council, and the superintendent of the school system. There were no formal rules governing this structure, and the Council was free to vary it any time it wished to do so (Doherty, 1971).

The Richmond Public School system's superintendent in 1954 was Dr. Henry I. Willett, a strong administrator with a national and international reputation as an outstanding educator. Dr. Willett had just completed a term as president of the American

Association of School Administrators and was highly respected within the school system as well as by the community. During the early years of desegregation activity, Dr. Willett served on the Board of Directors for the Southern School News, a publication which described itself as ". . . an objective, fact-finding agency established by Southern newspaper editors and educators . . ." whose purpose was to provide information about the developments in education arising from the Brown decision. He was the only school superintendent on the Board, all other members being editors, college presidents, and businessmen (Southern School News, December, 1962).

Under Dr. Willett's strong, personal leadership, the school system had improved and earned a state-wide, even national, reputation for quality education. In order to achieve this, Dr. Willett had worked closely with the business leaders of the community to gain support for the school system and, in turn, he was anxious not to do anything to offend them. He had been appointed superintendent in January, 1946, just a few months before the School Board had been reduced in size from nine members to five, so he had great impact on the fashioning of the new role for the Board.



School Board meetings were usually preceded by an informal luncheon during which Board members were "briefed" by the superintendent on topics which were on the agenda. Any disagreements were usually worked out during these sessions so that Board meetings themselves, which were open to the public, were without conflict or controversy between Board members (Personal Interviews, Dr. Peple, Mrs. Crockford). It was generally known that Dr. Willett did not like to have members of the public speak at meetings although he welcomed representatives of organized parent groups, such as Parent-Teacher Associations (Minutes, 1954-1969).

The School Board was fiscally dependent on City Council, having no power to tax or otherwise raise funds. The city's contribution to the schools' budget was by far the largest share of the School Board's revenue, amounting to almost 77% (Richmond Times-Dispatch, June 5, 1958), making the fiscal dependence an important factor in the Board's role. Maintaining good relations with City Council was very important to the smooth functioning of the school system. The effective working relationship between the School Board and the Council had been cited as exemplary in a 1942 study of the school system (Report, 1942), and close

cooperation between the two groups continued into the 1950's.

In 1954, the five-member School Board was composed of three white males, one black male and one white female. Mr. Lewis F. Powell, Jr., a respected local lawyer, had been appointed to the School Board in 1950 and had been chairman since 1951. Mr. Powell was considered an outstanding civic leader and, indeed, was later appointed a justice on the Supreme Court of the United States, a situation which would ultimately affect the desegregation decisions concerning Richmond. The other two white males were Dr. Edward C. Peple, a professor at the University of Richmond, and Mr. Carlisle R. Davis, a local banker. Dr. Peple was a Richmond native who had attended Richmond schools and the University of Richmond before completing his formal education at Harvard. He had been on the School Board since 1953. Mr. Davis was president of a local bank and an outstanding citizen of the community. The Board experienced a loss when Mr. Davis suffered a heart attack and was unable to complete his term of service. (Personal Interview, Dr. Peple)

Mr. Booker T. Bradshaw, the black member of the Board, had been appointed in 1953 to fill the unexpired term of Mrs. Henry W. Decker (Richmond Times-Dispatch,

June 10, 1955). He was the first black member of the School Board since Reconstruction days and was considered an outstanding civic leader and advocate of educational endeavors. He had earned the respect of the business community when he and his business partner had built a successful insurance business from the wreckage of a company ruined in the Depression. Mr. Bradshaw served on the boards of the Virginia State Library, Virginia Union University and Virginia State College as well as the Richmond School Board (Dabney, 1976).

Mrs. Kenneth F. Lee, the only woman on the Board, was a former school teacher. Her husband had come to Richmond to join the State Health Department, and Mrs. Lee was active in community affairs (Richmond Times-Dispatch, March 30, 1961). She had been on the Board since 1952.

Joining the five members at Board meetings were the Superintendent, Dr. Willett, and two other officers, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Board, who were usually persons from the school administration. Assistant superintendents and directors attended meetings more or less regularly according to the needs of the Board and the schedule of the administrators (School Board Minutes, 1954). Meetings were open to

the public, and there were always members of the press in attendance. In order to speak at the meetings, one called the clerk's office prior to the meeting and asked to be put on the agenda.

School Board meetings were held once a month and dealt with expenditures of funds, even small purchases, with personnel appointments and changes, with special requests of all sorts and with recommendations from the Superintendent. At certain times of the year, the development and approval of a budget to be submitted to the City Council took up a major part of the Board's time. The budget was recommended by the superintendent and could be amended or modified by the Board, although there were rarely challenges to the superintendent's recommendations. The Board's role was largely ceremonial, such as presenting the budget to Council. There was a budget for capital expenditures such as new buildings and major renovations, and an operating budget encompassing salaries, supplies and day-to-day expenses of the school system (Minutes, 1954). There were few reasons for the Board to initiate any actions. The school system was well-run, gaining in reputation as a quality system, and there were few problems known to Board members (Personal Interviews, Crockford and Peple).

In 1954, Richmond operated a dual system for black and white students. School Board minutes from that period reveal that personnel changes and appointments were identified as "Negro" and "white", that schools were identified by race, and that high school graduating classes were listed by white and Negro schools, with white schools first (Minutes, 1954). The city was experiencing growth in its black population, and school enrollment had increased from 37.4% black to 42.1% black over the ten year period from 1943 to 1953, as the white population had started the move to the suburbs (Richmond Times-Dispatch, June 29, 1959). This increase was putting pressure on the capacity of the black schools at all levels, causing overcrowding and the use of double shifts. Periodically a school would need to be converted from white to black as a community changed over almost completely (Minutes, 1954-55).

There was no obvious discrimination between black and white schools in the minutes or in the reports from the administration, but black schools often used books previously used by the white schools and received "hand-me-down" furniture as well. Black adults remember getting "new" books, when they were students, and wondering why there was marking in them.

During the desegregation period, some black students were resentful because their schools were being repaired now that white students were arriving, and many white parents complained bitterly about the condition of the facilities when their children began attending school in the formerly black buildings (Minutes, 1970-71). Many black schools were the older buildings, since blacks usually moved into the older neighborhoods as whites moved out. Since the city allowed a greater density of population in the black neighborhoods than in the white areas (Richmond School Decision, 1972), blacks moved into the communities in greater numbers than whites moved out, creating overcrowding in the existing school buildings. Although a building program was in progress, there was a backlog in the building of schools since World War II had interrupted all construction, and the process of "catching up" moved slowly through all the necessary channels (Personal Interview, Mrs. Crockford).

### Massive Resistance Begins

After the Brown decision of the Supreme Court in May, 1954, the State of Virginia had ordered school systems to continue segregation for the 1954-55 school year. The Supreme Court had indicated it would issue

an implementation decree in 1955 so there was a "wait and see" attitude in the state and in the city. The Richmond News-Leader (May 20, 1955) conducted a survey of its readers and reported that 92% of the white respondents preferred segregation, while 91% of the blacks surveyed opposed it. The state was preparing a brief for the Supreme Court to be heard in October as the that Court considered the conditions of implementation, and leaders were hopeful that local conditions would be taken into account in the implementation decree. The governor had called for the cooperation of both races and had stated that there would be no compulsion for anyone to attend school with other races (Richmond Times-Dispatch, August 5, 1954). Integration was not yet a topic at Richmond School Board meetings.

In March, 1955, shifting population patterns in the Church Hill area of the city prompted the Board to notify property owners in the Bellevue School area that the school, currently for white students, would be reorganized to house black students. The owners were invited to speak to the Board since the policy of the Board was not to take action which would adversely affect the value of property without providing the opportunity to hear any opposition. No one appeared,

although Mr. Bradshaw reported receiving one phone call. Parents of white students who would be displaced were given a choice of schools to attend, in accordance with the usual procedure followed in conversions of schools from black to white (Minutes, March 31, 1955).

In May, 1955, the white Ginter Park Elementary School P-TA, in a letter to the Board, expressed its dissatisfaction with the location of Chandler, the junior high school for the northside area, and asked that a new junior high school be constructed. Their concern was prompted by fears of integration since Chandler was located in an area where the population was changing from white to black. They urged the Board to take some action now that would prevent further dissatisfaction which, they felt, was bound to increase with the future of integration (Minutes, May 27, 1955). This concern was expressed just several days before the Brown II decision was rendered.

As Brown II gave rise to increasing expressions of concern about the future of the schools and integration, the School Board decided it should make a public statement as to its intentions. At an informal luncheon prior to the regular meeting on June 9 (Richmond Times-Dispatch, June 10, 1955), a statement was developed which was recorded in the minutes and



published by the local newspapers, pointing out the necessity of waiting for revisions in the state laws before taking any local action. The statement expressed the belief that there would undoubtedly be a measure of discretion for localities due to varied local school problems and affirmed that a solution would be sought in Richmond to preserve the local school system under law (Minutes, June 9, 1955). (Appendix A).

Summer meetings of the Board proceeded without further attention to desegregation concerns. Mr. Bradshaw was re-appointed to the Board for a five-year term, and Mr. Powell was re-elected chairman for 1955-56. (Minutes, July 25, 1955). The 1955-56 school year opened with the school system still operating segregated schools. In November, 1955, the Gray Commission, appointed by the governor to develop plans for complying with Brown released its report which emphasized local option as to the means of complying with the Brown decision, at about the same time that James J. Kilpatrick, editor of the afternoon paper in Richmond, the Richmond News-Leader, began to write about the interposition doctrine. Through a series of articles and editorials about interposition, Kilpatrick stirred up public emotions by suggesting

that there might be a way to prevent integration and made the future of the Gray Commission Report uncertain (Ely, 1976).

The Richmond School Board in the meantime was faced with a black population explosion in the east end of the city. Taking advantage of the availability of federal funds to help provide low cost housing, the City Council had approved several housing developments, designated for black residents, to be built in the east end of the city. Other low cost housing was proposed for the southside and west end, but negative community response defeated the west end proposal, while the southside project was eventually constructed for white residents (City Council Minutes, 1956). Two new schools were proposed in the east end in the spring of 1956 to meet the emerging needs in Whitcomb Court and Fairfield Court, since existing schools could not handle the growing school population (Minutes, 1956). These were the first new buildings built for black students. The black community saw this as an effort to "equalize" facilities. This need for buildings was just the beginning of a problem that would occupy the School Board's time for many years.

By the end of the 1955-56 school year no integration had taken place in Richmond Public Schools,

but in the School Board minutes there was evidence of a growing awareness of discriminatory practices, and the designation of race had quietly disappeared from references to personnel assignments. Lists of graduates from the local high schools were listed by school with no racial designation, although white high schools continued to be listed first, and black high schools afterward. Racial designations continued to be mentioned in connection with schools when conversions were anticipated and in connection with summer school and special activities, but some changes were beginning to appear (Minutes, 1955-56).

As the special session of the General Assembly approached in the summer of 1956, the School Board became concerned about rumors of impending legislation, particularly legislation which would withhold state funds from school systems in the event of any integration. At its August meeting the Board developed a statement to be sent to City Council and to the General Assembly delegates from the Richmond area, urging some form of pupil assignment plan such as the Gray Commission had proposed. Some degree of flexibility, the Board felt, was essential, so that localities would not be forced to abandon their public schools without their expressed consent (Minutes,

August 27, 1956) (Appendix B). The state was denying localities the same rights it was demanding that the federal government grant to the states (Ely, 1976). The School Board's plea, and undoubtedly that of others, did not alter the course of events, and the Massive Resistance measures were enacted into law.

The 1956-57 school year opened quietly with Richmond's major problems still related to building needs. In February, 1957, Mr. Carlisle Davis resigned from the Board for health reasons and was replaced by Mr. Frank S. Calkins, partner in a local accounting firm (Personal Interview, Dr. Peple). In the south side of the city, the low cost housing unit for white families opened, and the increase in population put stress on the enrollment of the nearby school. The School Board approved the building of a primary school near the development to relieve the crowding at the community school, but several black schools continued to be overcrowded (Minutes, 1956-57).

In the spring of 1957, Pupil Placement Forms were received from the Commonwealth of Virginia Pupil Placement Board for the 1957-58 school year. The Board directed that the Clerk and Deputy Clerk sign the forms as they were received from parents and send them on to the state. As the school year drew to a close,

Superintendent Willett reported to the Board that the state would deal firmly with those persons who refused to sign the Pupil Placement Forms. The school system was required to forward the names of such persons to the State Pupil Placement Board. The Pupil Placement Board in turn had asked the superintendent to try to determine the reasons individuals had not signed and he had enlisted the aid of principals in securing this information. During the summer, three different communications from the Pupil Placement Board commented on the status of those refusing to sign the forms and it was clear that children of parents who refused to sign them would not be enrolled in school in the fall. (Minutes, 1956-57) (Appendix C).

When school opened for the 1957-58 school year, a number of black students were refused admission to the schools on the basis of their parents' refusal to sign the Pupil Placement Forms. In the name of William C. Calloway, Jr. et al, a suit was filed in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia against the Pupil Placement Board, the School Board of the City of Richmond and H.I. Willett, Superintendent of Schools, seeking a restraining order and requesting admission to the schools in spite of

having refused to sign the Pupil Placement Forms  
(Minutes, September 30, 1957).

While a decision in the suit was pending, parents of the students involved in the suit, had secured space in two local church buildings and, through the services of volunteers, had held classes for the affected children. Mrs. Alice Calloway, William's mother, tells how they secured books from sympathetic teachers and organized the volunteer teachers to keep the children from getting behind in their school work. Black postal workers, most of whom had college degrees, took their leave time to teach the students, joined by former teachers and other volunteers (Personal Interview, Mrs. Calloway). On September 18, the district judge, Sterling Hutcheson, ruled for the plaintiffs, and the students returned to their schools, leaving in doubt the future of the Pupil Placement Forms (Minutes, September 30, 1957).

In October, 1957, The Richmond Regional Planning and Economic Development Commission began discussions on possible regional cooperation between the city and the surrounding counties in matters pertaining to health, welfare, parks and education. Close cooperation between the school boards of the three localities was encouraged as they approached problems

of metropolitan significance. The School Board was pleased at this effort and directed the Clerk to express their interest in being informed of methods of procedure and information on legal limitations of this approach (Minutes, October 10, 1957).

In December, two of the new schools for black students were being opened and a formerly white elementary school in the east end was being considered for re-organization as a black elementary school. The pressure for additional schools for black students continued in several areas of the city and in February, the Board was considering space in the Randolph-Maymont area, in the near west end as well (Minutes, 1956-57). Even though many white schools were not filled to capacity, the only methods considered for solving school problems created by the shifting population was the conversion of white schools to black schools or the building of new schools. If integration was considered as a solution, it was considered a moot point due to the state's school closing laws. The School Board was mainly concerned with keeping schools open and keeping within the law (Personal Interview, Dr. Peple).

Four years had passed since the Brown decision and several southern and border states had desegregated at least some schools, but Virginia remained totally

segregated (Ely, 1976). Dr. Thomas Henderson, president of Virginia Union University in Richmond, an all-black institution, published an article for the Richmond Afro-American in which he stated that Virginia was fighting a lost cause, that it was an island in the southern states (Richmond Afro-American, February 15, 1958). In Richmond the black community, up to this point, had used little pressure to try to force compliance with the Brown decision. A small crack had been made in the wall of Massive Resistance, however, for in June, 1958, Pupil Placement Forms were re-instated with the stipulation that the terms of the law be fulfilled except in the case of black students whose families chose not to sign. Black families should be offered the chance to voluntarily comply with the law, but could not be required to do so because of the injunction issued by the District Court (Minutes, June 27, 1958).

In July, three black elementary students, through their lawyer, Oliver W. Hill, requested placement at Nathaniel Bacon, an all-white elementary school, instead of the Chimborazo Elementary School to which they were assigned. The request was specifically that they be assigned to a school without regard to race. The letter from Attorney Hill was referred to



the City Attorney, who, in a lengthy written response, informed the School Board that it should forward applications to the Pupil Placement Board for the three students and await the Pupil Placement Board's decision. Mr. Bradshaw expressed concern that, as a Board member, he was sworn to uphold both state and federal law and they seemed to be in conflict with each other. Mr. Powell agreed with the awkwardness of the School Board's position but indicated that he thought state law had to come first until the courts ruled otherwise (Minutes, July 17, 1958).

September, 1958, was expected to be a critical test for Virginia's Massive Resistance measures since three localities were under court order to desegregate. When the school year began, Governor Almond did indeed take over the schools in Warren County, Charlottesville and Norfolk and closed them to prevent desegregation (Ely, 1976). In Richmond, the school year opened with no integration but with all schools open. On September 2, a suit was filed on behalf of three plaintiffs seeking admission to the all-white Westhampton School. This suit, styled Lorna Renee Warden v. the School Board of the City of Richmond, typifies the way legal procedures could be used to delay action since it was not settled until July 5, 1961. By this time two of

the plaintiffs had withdrawn and the only remaining student, Daisy Cooper, was admitted to Westhampton (Court Decision, May 10, 1963).

The legal maze was meant to discourage and create delays in order to avoid integration for as long as possible. State leadership expected judges, who were often sympathetic to the segregationist cause in spite of their position, to do all within their power to rule in the state's favor. Many judges ruled as conservatively as possible while keeping within the framework of Brown, with the result that cases which could have brought about broader changes often moved the desegregation process forward by only a tiny step (Orfield, 1969). The Warden case is an example of this at work, since after all the time and effort spent, only one child was affected. No general injunction was granted. At the same time, the pressure on judges in the city must also be understood as they tried to uphold the law and remain in the community. At least one judge, faced with a conflict between the decisions he must make and his personal views, resigned from the court system (Ely, 1976).

Richmond Public Schools continued to try to handle its increasing black population. At the opening of school for the 1958-59 school year, one formerly

white school was converted to a black school and the School Board authorized transportation to Nathaniel Bacon School for the white students, who were being displaced. By September 15 the overcrowding caused the Board to propose the shifting of white students from Nathaniel Bacon to the East End Junior High School and the conversion of Nathaniel Bacon to a black school. Although the overcrowding was a legitimate reason for making the conversion, this maneuver would also take care of the placement of the three black applicants whose requests for transfer to Nathaniel Bacon had been sent to the Pupil Placement Board (Minutes, September 15, 1958). Needless to say, the motivation of the Board in making this decision was called into question by the newspaper (Richmond Times-Dispatch, September 16, 1958), and later on by the court when examining the School Board's behavior over the years. On September 17, the Pupil Placement Board approved the plan for reassigning the students (Richmond Times-Dispatch, September 18, 1958). Before the school year was over, in March, the Board submitted still another request to the Pupil Placement Board asking to convert the East End School to a black school, moving some of the same white students for the third time in a year (Minutes, March 25, 1959). Changes in the east end population were occurring rapidly.

The woes of overcrowding were not all confined to the east end. One south Richmond school, Blackwell, was beginning to experience problems and the Board authorized a study of this situation. On December 31, 1958, representatives from the P-TA of Graves Junior High School, in the central part of the city, appeared before the School Board to request relief for the overcrowding there. The Graves students were using three buildings, one across the street from the main building and one several blocks away, having to change classes from one building to another in all sorts of weather. The P-TA spokesmen requested that the Chandler Junior High School building be used to house some of the population from Graves to relieve the problem (Minutes, December 31, 1958). The Chandler School, for white students, was on the northside of the city and was experiencing a decline in enrollment due to the shifting population in that area. Mrs. Alice Calloway, one of the Graves' parents, recalls that integration was not the aim of the request, that the parents were only asking for separate but equal facilities (Personal Interview, Mrs. Calloway). Mr. Bradshaw, speaking for the Board, assured the parents that the Board was anxious to correct the situation. He stated a two-fold problem - providing for the safety of the students and determining a long-term solution.

No immediate action was taken by the Board (Minutes, December 31, 1958).

### Preparing for Change

In January, the dual decisions against Virginia's school closing laws by the Virginia State Supreme Court and the 3-Judge Federal Court essentially brought Massive Resistance to an end in the state (Ely, 1976). The Richmond Times-Dispatch on its editorial page, January 29, printed a table of school population figures which showed that since 1943, Richmond had changed from a system of 29,000 students of whom 37.4% were black to a system of 39,000 students of whom 51.1% were black. Concerned about the increasing number of applications by black students to attend white schools and hearing predictions of pending integration, the City Council in February discussed a proposal to restrict funds from the city to segregated schools only. The ordinance was not adopted, but an attitude was clearly communicated. The School Board was seeking a meeting with City Council, and one Council member indicated that he was developing a plan to limit integration in the city (Richmond Times-Dispatch, February 7, 1959). The state in the meantime had appointed the Perrow Commission to study new ways to

handle desegregation, and the schools closed by the governor re-opened on an integrated basis (Ely, 1976).

In March, the Perrow Plan was made public and in May, when the Richmond School Board held a special meeting with the City Council for the purpose of moving ahead with the construction of two new high schools, some of the new issues being addressed in the plan were a part of the Board's presentation. The high school buildings had been a part of the long range planning of the school system since 1945 but the growth of recent years had added urgency to the need for the schools. City Council had been hesitant to appropriate funds due to the uncertain integration situation and disagreement over appropriate sites. The School Board had selected two new sites, one on the north side and one on the south side of the city, both near the borders of the neighboring counties which would be advantageous if merger of the city and counties should take place. The new sites also had the appeal of being on the outer edge of white neighborhoods, which would be likely to remain white for some time to come, thus lessening the impact of integration. Speaking to the Council, Mr. Powell, the School Board Chairman, stressed that the choice for the city had to be between some integration or the abandonment of public education. He presented

the sites selected by the Board as the best possible choice for limiting integration. Mr. Powell stated:

However bitterly many of our people resent integration (and I do not underestimate the depth of this feeling), we on the School Board are confident that when they understand the only alternatives which in the near future will actually be available to us, an overwhelming majority will then insist that public schools be continued (Minutes, May 7, 1959).

Therefore, the statement continued, the Board and Council should make plans to see that this education is provided, and the two proposed high schools formed the basis of such plans. The Council yielded to the logic of Mr. Powell's presentation, and the contracts for building the new schools were awarded as the school year drew to a close (Minutes, May 7, 1959).

Sometimes the activities of the School Board revolved around more comfortable topics than that of integration of schools. During the summer of 1959, the members were called to a special meeting to resolve a crisis that had arisen. The bricks that had been selected for the two new high schools were not available in sufficient quantity and when the contractor ordered more, it was learned that the clay used to make the bricks had changed color and the bricks could not be matched! It was necessary for the Board to make a decision about another type of brick

that could be secured in sufficient quantity for the two buildings. Dr. Peple pointed out that it took some time to resolve this "weighty matter" (Personal Interview, Dr. Peple). The minutes show that it was October before the problem was solved (Minutes, October 29, 1959).

The Brown decision had come during a period of stability for Richmond and its school system. The leadership of the school system and of the School Board remained the same during the period from 1954-55 to 1958-59. Centrality of purpose - keeping the schools open by preventing integration - had provided a guiding principle for making decisions and was a unifying force between School Board members and the school administration. Some instability was experienced through the pressure of the growing black school population, but this was not yet unmanageable. The black community did not seem anxious to force the issue of integration, thus giving the Board and the superintendent time to handle other problems and yet maintain the stability in relationships with the City Council and the business community that it had developed.

With the end of Massive Resistance, the issue of keeping the schools open was much less critical since



the new state laws had reduced the chances of schools being closed. Containing integration became the new issue. The growing school population remained a very pressing problem, particularly as it became a part of limiting integration. Pressures from a very traditional white community to maintain segregation would continue to influence the Board to proceed with caution, fearing explosive confrontations such as had been seen in other parts of the South. What the Perrow Plan would bring remained to be seen, but it seemed certain that 1959-60 was ready to usher in major changes in Virginia's and Richmond's educational system.

### CHAPTER 3

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## CHAPTER 4

### DESEGREGATION BEGINS

The stability of the last half of the 1950's stands in contrast to the period of uncertainty and change that followed in the early 1960's for the Richmond School Board. The new policy of token integration did not provide firm guidelines for decision-making for those who were not committed to full integration; no one could tell when enough had been done. This meant that both the white groups that wanted things to remain the same and the black groups who wanted to see the promise of Brown begin to be fulfilled would put more pressure on the School Board to meet their demands. Add to this a growing political awareness on the part of the black community plus growing skill in making the political system respond to their needs, and the result was increased litigation and pressure from the courts. The early part of the new decade also brought changes in the leadership and membership of the Richmond School Board as persons completed their second term on the Board, until, by 1964, only one member would remain from the group who

had been on the Board in 1954. The growth in enrollment of 1000 students each school year would continue to cause a constant addition of new staff as well as a massive building program and a continuing need for funds. It would be a period that would see the School Board go from "holding the line" on integration to developing a freedom of choice plan that eliminated all administrative barriers to racial mixing in the schools.

#### Community Conflict

As the 1959-60 school year opened, an editorial in the Richmond News-Leader captured the essence of the new state plan for "complying" with Brown. The editorial stated,

To most white southerners, complete segregation in the schools is greatly to be preferred to any integration. But the best possible alternative available to the South is to hold mixing to a minimum through pupil placement laws... (September 23, 1959).

There were still groups in the state who felt that limited integration was only the prelude to full scale integration, but most leaders maintained the view that, at least for the foreseeable future, racial mixing could be held in check and still meet court requirements (Ely, 1976).

The U.S. News and World Report, in January, 1960 carried an article by Virginius Dabney, editor of the Richmond Times-Dispatch, in which the leadership of Virginia in showing the way to "limited integration" in the South was praised. Dabney pointed out the limited beginnings of integration in areas where it had seemed an impossibility and expressed the belief that Virginia was leading the South to a new era in race relations. He pointed out, however, that race relations were not as cordial as they were prior to the 1954 decision. The communication between leaders of the white and black groups had almost ceased, although there had been no open interracial conflict (Dabney, 1960).

While the future of the state's policies was still being debated, the 1959-60 school year opened for the Richmond Public Schools amid some conflict between the Richmond School Board and the City Council over the conversion of schools from white to black. The Board's need to convert the schools was based on the demands of school enrollment and the desire to avoid integration, while political considerations often caused the Council to see other ramifications to the changes. The Board was following its own policy in keeping with its role as well as its legal status (Bolmeier, 1973). The Council was raising the issue over who has ultimate

control over school buildings, that is, who makes the policy. Schools attracted people just as surely as people created the need for schools, and the changeover of a school from white to black accelerated the rate of change in a neighborhood. This might mean the closing of businesses, lowered real estate values, and, therefore, lowered tax revenues. The Council passed a resolution during the summer of 1959 requiring that the School Board consult with them when planning to convert or close buildings (Richmond Times-Dispatch, September 26, 1959). The School Board insisted that it was willing to consult with Council but the ultimate responsibility for determining the use of school buildings remained with them (Minutes, September 25, 1959).

Prompting this conflict was the unresolved situation regarding Chandler and Graves, both junior high schools, the former white and in a changing neighborhood, the latter black and overcrowded. Also involved were the two new high schools which were expected to be ready for occupancy in the fall. In December, 1959, the Board and City Council set a joint meeting for January 18, 1960, to discuss several school problems (Minutes, December 30, 1959).

The two new high schools, to be named John Marshall and George Wythe, were being designated as white schools. Application had been made to the state Pupil Placement Board for approval of their new boundary lines (Minutes, January 27, 1960). Opening of these two schools would leave the old John Marshall building in the center of the city unused, presenting a possible solution to the Graves' problem. It had been in the Board's long range plan since 1945 to convert Chandler to a black school when a new high school was ready to open on the northside, but awareness of the political climate caused some hesitation. The Board, therefore, after its meeting with Council, announced that it would hold a public hearing on this problem in February (Richmond Times-Dispatch, January 28, 1969).

Ordinarily, School Board meetings were held in the Board room in the old George Wythe building across the street from the old John Marshall building, but, after the public hearing was announced, the number of calls from persons and groups who wished to speak at the meeting was so large, it was decided to hold the meeting across in the John Marshall auditorium (Personal Interview, Dr. Peple). On February 24, a "tense and noisy" public hearing was held (Richmond Times-Dispatch, February 25, 1960). School Board



minutes reported 1300 persons in attendance while the newspaper reported 1600. Many white and black residents and property owners from the area near Chandler were present along with black and white leaders of a variety of organizations. Fifteen persons spoke. Black speakers urged integration of Chandler, not conversion, and were booed by some of the white persons present. The School Board Chairman, Mr. Lewis Powell, demanded order and, after hearing all speakers, announced that the Board would study the situation and have a recommendation later. A written record of the hearing would be prepared so that all suggestions could be considered and the city attorney would be asked to confer with the Board (Richmond Times-Dispatch, February 25, 1960). Mr. Powell pointed out the many complexities in the situation and made no promise on behalf of the Board other than an attempt to reach a decision in the best interest of all of the community (Minutes, February 24, 1960).

#### The Perrow Plan in Action

One of the main thrusts of the Perrow Plan was a new Pupil Assignment Plan, and the time was approaching to issue Pupil Placement Forms for the coming school year. The state Pupil Placement Board was anxious that

the new plan would not appear discriminatory on its face, knowing that a plan which admitted no blacks to formerly all-white schools would not be acceptable (Ely, 1976). There was consideration given to having the state legislature take over pupil assignment in order to remove this function from the scrutiny of the Supreme Court and Fourteenth Amendment guarantees, by bringing the Eleventh Amendment into play, but this approach was discarded as not being feasible (Richmond Times-Dispatch, February 24, 1960). Finally two criteria were set for the placement of students who applied for transfers. The student must live closer to the school for which admission was being sought than to the school to which he was assigned, and he must achieve at a level equivalent to the median score of the students in the school for which he was applying. Only students who took the initiative to ask for a change would be subjected to the criteria; others would go to the school to which they were automatically assigned (Ely, 1976).

The Pupil Placement Board was an integral part of the state's policy of containment, limiting integration to the least possible level that would be acceptable by the courts. The Richmond School Board's responsibility was to sign the forms received from parents and forward

them to the Pupil Placement Board. Under the new law, school systems could elect to remove themselves from the Pupil Placement Board's jurisdiction by guaranteeing to meet state guidelines for the assignment of pupils (Ely, 1976), but the Richmond School Board remained a part of the system.

The other major thrust of the Perrow Plan was the issuing of tuition grants or pupil scholarships for students to attend schools of their choice. The scholarships were in the amount of \$275 per year for secondary students and \$250 for elementary students, given for one semester at a time. School systems had no choice but to grant the scholarships, part of which the local system paid with the remainder being reimbursed to the locality by the state. If a locality refused to grant the scholarships, the state would pay the full amount and deduct the locality's share from state funds due to be distributed to the school system, thereby actually removing any choice the locality might have in the matter (Richmond School Decision, 1972). In 1959-60 there was a growing number of applicants for these scholarships, and a part of each School Board meeting was devoted to the approval of these grants. Since there was no stipulation that the school to which the student was assigned had to be integrated in order

for the applicant to qualify for the scholarships, students who were already in private schools were able to qualify for this assistance. Many of the grants approved by the Richmond School Board were for local private schools, some were for public schools in the surrounding counties, while others were for places as far away as Missouri, Vermont and New York. By the end of the 1959-60 school year, the nearly 50 scholarships granted for that year alone totalled over \$10,000. Only \$2,600 of this would be reimbursed by the state (Minutes, 1959-60).

On March 26, after the regular Board meeting, the Richmond Times-Dispatch reported no decision from the School Board on the Chandler matter, but in April, after two conferences with City Council, the School Board announced that Chandler would remain a white school for the 1960-61 school year (Minutes, April 22, 1960). At a committee meeting of the Board, the members had come to an agreed upon position which had led to Mr. Powell's drafting of a statement summarizing the Board's views. The essence of the statement was that the Board had planned for some time to convert Chandler to use as a black school when the new John Marshall building became available, but the coming school year did not seem a good time to do this due to

the political climate and adverse public opinion. The school plan might become a divisive political issue in the councilmanic election campaign, which was already in progress, resulting in damage to the school system for a long time to come. The uncertainty of whether the new John Marshall High School building would actually be ready by fall was also cited as a factor in the decision (Minutes, April 22, 1960).

Each Board member was asked to express his or her views in regard to the statement. All agreed to the statement, with Mrs. Lee and Mr. Bradshaw expressing some reservations. Mrs. Lee felt that it would be wise from the administrative and educational viewpoint to continue with the planned conversion but agreed that other considerations made this a poor time to make the change. Mr. Bradshaw stated that he was trying to remain as objective as possible and that, even though he favored integration, he would concur with the statement since desegregation did not seem feasible at this time. He also mentioned the continuing problem of overcrowding at Graves and was assured by the Chairman that the Administration would work with the Board in finding a solution to this problem. The president of the Graves P-TA was also present and spoke about the same problem, which would be worse in the fall. He and

Mr. Bradshaw both agreed that using the old John Marshall building was not a feasible solution (Minutes, April 22, 1960).

The Board's action was supported by the Richmond Times-Dispatch in an editorial two days later. The editor expressed the view that conversion of Chandler to black use would have a devastating effect on the remaining white community but he also recognized that less than full use of a building made it more vulnerable to court-ordered integration (Richmond Times-Dispatch, April 24, 1960). The City Council greatly feared "white flight" from the city and saw schools as magnets holding residents in communities as long as the schools remained segregated. The Council, composed of nine members elected at large in the city, was very vulnerable to pressure groups since each member of the Council received votes from throughout the city. The Council, like the School Board, was very sensitive to the wishes of the business community who had the money and the real power in the city. The loss of whites to the suburbs concerned the business interests, the City Council and the School Board (Personal Interview, Mrs. Crockford).

Activity in the area of civil rights outside the school system was intensifying in the city. Black

college students and other members of the black community set up picket lines protesting segregated lunch counters and discriminatory hiring practices in local stores. Blacks could not eat at lunch counters, were hired for only the lowest level jobs, and were not permitted to try on clothes in department stores (Richmond Times-Dispatch, February 25, 1960). In May, 1960, a rally at the Mosque, the local civic auditorium, drew 3500 blacks to observe the sixth anniversary of the Supreme Court's school decision. The speaker, Adam Clayton Powell, urged "massive insistence" as a means of forcing the South to accept racial integration as the law of the land (Richmond Times-Dispatch, May 18, 1960). Richmond had yet to integrate its first school.

During the summer of 1960 both of the new high schools became ready for occupancy while the Pupil Placement Board screened applications by some black students for admission to white schools. Two of the applications for Chandler Junior High School met the criteria of distance from the school and achievement equivalent to the median score of the white students at Chandler, and the students were placed there for the fall of 1960. The third application, from William Calloway, met the achievement criterion but there was

some question of which school, Graves or Chandler, was closer to his residence. The Board ordered the distance to be measured (Richmond Times-Dispatch, September 20, 1960). Mrs. Calloway, William's mother, recalls that a peg was put in the ground in front of their house, and a tape measure was used to determine the distance from each school. The measuring was done by hand, and it was determined that the Calloway home was a few feet closer to Graves than Chandler. Accordingly, William was denied entry to Chandler for failure to meet established criteria (Personal Interview, Mrs. Calloway).

The School Board made an appeal for the community to accept the placement of the two black students, both girls, in a spirit of harmony. Given the depth of public feeling expressed at the hearing related to Chandler, the Board apparently feared the possible reaction to this token integration, the first in 90 years (Minutes, August 24, 1960). The school year of 1960-61 opened peacefully and ushered in a period of relative quiet in matters of desegregation. The old John Marshall High School Building was declared surplus and returned to the city indicating that it would not be used to solve the overcrowded conditions at Graves Junior High School. Reports on extracurricular



activities at the high schools were reviewed, signed and sent to the state. Additions to several east end buildings and one southside building were approved. The number of scholarships approved reached 60, and the chairman expressed concern over the amount of money involved. Minutes no longer referred to schools or personnel with any racial designations, and the casual reader of the minutes might think that all of the integration problems were solved (Minutes, 1960-61).

In March, 1961, Mr. Powell, who served as chairman of the School Board for ten of his eleven years of service, was appointed to the Virginia State Board of Education and tendered his resignation to the Richmond School Board. Mrs. Lee was elected chairman to succeed Mr. Powell, and Dr. Peple was elected vice-chairman. At the same meeting, Dr. Willett was reappointed by the Board for another four-year term (Minutes, March 29, 1961), and in May, Mr. J. Harvie Wilkinson, Jr., president of a local bank, was appointed to the Board, bringing it to a total of five again with its overall structure and philosophy essentially unchanged (Minutes, May 15, 1961).

During the spring, overcrowding at Blackwell School prompted the School Board to request the Pupil Placement Board to approve changes in the assignment of

certain pupils from Blackwell to Franklin School and from Franklin to Westover Hills School. Residents and property owners from both the Blackwell and Franklin communities appeared at the Board meeting to express their views, and it looked as if a new "Chandler" situation was developing. A public hearing was requested but the chairman, Mrs. Lee, pointed out that this was a public hearing, duly announced and advertised. The matter was closed without incident as the Board decided to consider all of the points brought to it on this subject and to vote on the resolution at its next regular meeting (Minutes, May 31, 1961).

At its final meeting of the 1960-61 school year, the superintendent and his assistants made an annual report on the school system which showed the overcrowding in the east end schools to be the most pressing problem. Two thousand students were on double shifts with a projected increase of 4000 students in the next five years for whom classroom space would be needed. New facilities were being readied, several of them additions to existing schools, but additional sites must be found. The report emphasized curriculum developments in the field of educational technology - language laboratories in high schools and a fledgling educational television program at the elementary level,

using a commercial television station. The wide scope of activities pointed out the growing diversification of educational offerings and the need for Board members to become more and more knowledgeable about a variety of subjects (Minutes, June 29, 1961).

In July, 1961, a district court order was received in the case of Lorna Renee Warden v The School Board. The opinion, rendered by Judge Oren Lewis, placed one student, the only remaining plaintiff, in Westhampton School for the coming school year. The student, Daisy Cooper, lived only four and a half blocks from Westhampton and five miles from her assigned school. Quite likely the Pupil Placement Board would have assigned her to Westhampton had she submitted a new application, but the judge decided to make the assignment rather than have her go through further administrative procedures. The case was not taken as a class action so only the one student was affected, an unusual procedure when compared to most court actions (Minutes, July 27, 1961).

#### The Bradley Case Is Filed

The Pupil Placement Board continued placing students on the basis of distance from schools and

requiring a level of achievement from black students equivalent to the median score of the white student population of the school for which application was being made. These criteria were challenged when parents of ten students brought suit in the district court after their applications for transfer were denied. Four of the students were moving from an elementary school to the Graves Junior High School and had applied to Chandler instead. They had been denied admittance to Chandler because of their achievement scores. The lawyers pointed out that white students going from certain elementary schools to Chandler were not subjected to the same criteria, since the "feeder" system used in the school system automatically placed certain elementary students in specified junior high schools without regard to achievement. Five other plaintiffs, already in junior high school, were seeking transfers from the Graves Junior High School to Chandler and were denied their request on the basis of achievement scores. They argued that the feeder system had put them in the Graves School in the first place and the white students in Chandler had not been required to meet the same criteria. Another plaintiff sought admission to John Marshall High School even though he lived closer to the school to which he had been assigned. The argument was that he lived in the

attendance zone for John Marshall that would have been used if he had been white (Court of Appeals, 1963). The plaintiffs were listed in alphabetical order and the suit became known as Bradley vs. the School Board of Richmond, Virginia, after one of the students, Carolyn Bradley.

The School Board's agenda in the 1961-62 school year continued to be dominated by the approval of pupil scholarships in growing numbers and the constant work on buildings. Subtle changes in the Board minutes show the dropping of all racial designations and the listing of schools in alphabetical order, no longer white schools first. In the spring Dr. Peple was elected chairman of the Virginia School Boards Association and in June, 1962, when Mrs. Lee retired from the Board after her ten years of service, he was elected chairman of the Richmond School Board, also. Mr. Frank Calkins was elected vice-chairman of the Board, and the new member was Mrs. W. H. Crockford. Mrs. Crockford's appointment was something of a departure for the City Council, as she was an active patron in the school system, in both the local and state Parent-Teacher Association and a person well-known by the school administration. As Dr. Peple took office, he listed three major concerns facing the Board: teacher

recruitment, improvement of reading, and the need to enact a compulsory attendance law (Minutes, 1961-62).

The annual report of the superintendent had grown as activity in the school system increased so that it was presented in parts over several Board meetings. The administrative portion listed a great variety of new buildings, additions to existing buildings, and renovations to other buildings in all parts of the city. The new buildings and additions would add 73 classrooms, enough for about 2000 students, but not enough to meet all of the system's needs. The superintendent stressed the need to strengthen communication with the community so that the necessity for changes that had to be made would be understood. (Minutes, August 24, 1962).

In July, the first court decision in the Bradley case was rendered. The student plaintiffs were placed in the schools they requested, but no injunctive relief was granted. Instead, the school system was given time to develop a plan to remove the objectionable features of the "feeder" system. Dissatisfied with this decision, the plaintiffs appealed the decision to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals (Court of Appeals Decision, 1963).

In August the Board and the superintendent showed their growing skill in handling community pressures when it became necessary to convert Stonewall Jackson School and move the 209 white students to other schools. Parents objected to the distance involved in the new assignments but were convinced by the Board that the limited number of students made the development of an effective program very difficult and it was best to move them. Mrs. Crockford assured the parents of the Board's sympathy with the transportation problem, but stated that the Board thought it best to make the conversion. The Pupil Placement Board was requested to approve the change (Minutes, August 8, 1962).

The 1962-63 school system enrollment reached 42,500 students (Minutes, September 14, 1962). The continuing growth of about 1000 students per year was creating a constant need for teachers. Getting and keeping the best quality personnel was a concern raised by the Personnel report which showed an annual turnover of 23% of the teaching staff. The pay scale was blamed for the inability to attract teachers who were permanent to the area. The school system was hiring many teachers who were wives of students at the local colleges or other temporary residents in the area and

when the husbands were ready to move on, the teachers left the system. The School Board decided to study the matter of differentiated staffing or some form of merit pay to reward teachers who remained in the system. They feared that the high level of turnover might create some instability in the future, if not curbed, and were seeking ways to prevent this (Minutes, November 19, 1962).

In March, 1963, the School Board developed a resolution in response to the July, 1962 decision in the Bradley case, even though the Fourth Circuit Court had not yet ruled on the appeal. The School Board had been told to remove dual attendance areas and to develop new policies for the assignment of students. The resolution adopted by the Board covered three areas of concern. First, the resolution pledged that pupils seeking enrollment in the school system for the first time or moving to a junior or senior high school would be assigned on the basis of distance from the school and the capacity of the school to handle the applicants. Secondly, students continuing in a given level would be assigned to the school they were attending unless application was made to attend another school. The third concern stated that applications must be received by June 1 in order to be processed for



the following school year. After the Board approved the resolution, Mr. Bradshaw stated that, in his understanding, the Board's action meant that the School Board would set no barriers to reasonable requests for placement, that the School Board would be operating under a "freedom of choice" plan. There was general agreement to his interpretation of the action (Minutes, March 18, 1963).

In May, 1963, the State Pupil Placement Board reduced the criteria for transfers from one school to another to only living within the geographic zone (Ely, 1976). The state had moved past seven of the southern states in the amount of integration in its schools with 1,230 black students in integrated schools, although the majority of black and white students were still in segregated schools (Southern School News, November, 1963). Many localities had exercised their option to have their own assignment plan and had withdrawn from the Pupil Placement Board's jurisdiction. As the Courts continued to chip away at the state's delaying devices, the role of the Pupil Placement Board became less and less important and, in 1966, it closed its operations (Ely, 1976)

In May, the Court of Appeals ruled on the District Court's earlier verdict in the Bradley case

and upheld it in part, while reversing it in part, granting a general injunction (Court Decision, May, 1963). In June, when the District Court issued the general injunction concerning pupil assignment, the School Board responded by submitting the resolution it had passed in March (Minutes, June 17, 1963). The district judge accepted the resolution as constituting a plan for desegregation, and once again the plaintiffs appealed the decision on the grounds that it was not an adequate plan and did not address the issue of faculty desegregation (Court Decision, April, 1965). For the 1963-64 school year, however, the school system would operate under the terms of the resolution.

In the summer of 1963, Dr. Peple retired from the Board after ten years of service, but a successor was not immediately appointed, and he remained on the Board until September when he was succeeded by Mr. A.C. Epps. Dr. Peple's departure left Mr. Bradshaw as the only remaining member of the 1954 Board. The basic structure of the Board was the same but the individuals were almost all new. Mr. Calkins was elected chairman, and Mr. Bradshaw was elected vice-chairman for the new school year (Minutes, 1963-64).

September's enrollment showed the same growth that had been occurring for several years and the Board

was looking for locations for new buildings. A new elementary-junior high school was being readied in the area of several of the low income housing developments in the east end. In the spring, consideration of a site for another school led to a meeting with City Council and a public hearing on the proposed site. The Board was suggesting placing the school on a tract of land near the recently built juvenile detention home and city jail. Black residents from the area appeared at the hearing and protested the move. They were already resentful that their neighborhood had been surrounded by a low income housing development, the city jail and the detention home, and they strongly objected to their children being sent to a school near the detention home. They also expressed concern that the location would perpetuate segregation and asked that the students from that area be assigned to Chandler which was already integrated. If the Board persisted in its plan to use this site, the residents threatened to mobilize the voters and have all of the children enroll in white schools (Richmond Times-Dispatch, March 10, 1963). This group pressure was successful in getting the measure tabled, and the School Board sought other alternatives for the location of the school. The availability of suitable school

sites in the city was becoming a problem (Minutes, August 18, 1963).

The Board turned its concern to the part of the Perrow Plan which allowed localities to enact a compulsory attendance statute. The law required the local governing body to pass such a statute only upon the request of the local school board. The Richmond School Board had already mentioned the need for this statute to City Council and that group had signalled its willingness to cooperate at its meeting on October 20 (Richmond Times-Dispatch, October 22, 1963). On October 21, the School Board passed a resolution to ask City Council to adopt an ordinance making attendance in school compulsory. The move received community support from a variety of organizations, black and white, with only slight opposition expressed (Minutes, October 21, 1963). The move to enact a compulsory attendance statute had been delayed for much longer than it needed to be due to a lack of unanimity on the Board itself (Personal Interview, Mrs. Crockford).

Several issues continued to get attention from the Board during the remainder of the school year. In January, 1964 the Board received a report on the proposed Merit Pay Plan for teachers. The difficulty in identifying recipients presented too many problems,

and the Board decided to table the plan and to propose a general salary increase instead. Discussions had already been held with the City Council to outline financial needs for the next several years and improvement in salaries was a part of the agenda. Improved standards for student achievement and the anticipated increase in enrollment were other concerns the Board had discussed (Richmond Times-Dispatch, November 19, 1963).

Behind the scenes, continued discussions on merger were being held with the counties. The Brookings Institute made a study of the metropolitan community and pointed out the need for one-ness in meeting problems and finding solutions throughout the area. This concept was supported by an editorial in the Richmond Times-Dispatch on February 21, 1964. The counties and the city had always seemed like one area, and there was great concern in the city for the three localities to be in accord with one another (Personal Interview, Dr. Miles Jones).

In July, Mr. Calkins was re-elected chairman of the School Board, with Mr. Bradshaw continuing as vice-chairman (Minutes, July 15, 1964) The period from 1959-60 to 1963-64 had seen many changes in the school system, in the community and on the School Board.

Integration of schools had been contained, but the new political awareness among blacks showed that pressures to more fully comply with Brown were beginning to build. As School Board members attended conferences of the National School Boards Association, they developed an awareness that Richmond was an urban school system with the same types of problems that other urban systems experienced and that some of the solutions found in other parts of the nation might be applicable to the problems the School Board was facing here (Minutes, June 8, 1964).

## CHAPTER 4

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## CHAPTER 5

### FROM DESEGREGATION TO RESEGREGATION

In 1964, ten years after the Brown decision, the Richmond Public School System opened its 96th year with a token level of integration in the schools brought about largely by neighborhood changes. A "freedom of choice" plan was in operation as a result of the pressure brought by the court through the Bradley case, which was now on appeal to the Fourth Circuit Court. The next few years would see major changes in the desegregation picture as a result of the interaction of the Bradley case, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the new interpretation of Brown that was to be given in the case of Green v New Kent County, 391 U.S. 430 (1968) (Virginia). These events would provide the impetus for desegregation; the decisions made by the city leaders and the School Board in the previous ten years would dictate the shape it would take.

In February, 1964, Virginius Dabney, editor of the Richmond Times-Dispatch, wrote an article for the Saturday Review entitled, "Richmond's Quiet



Revolution" in which he spelled out the progress that had been made in the winning of rights and opportunities by black citizens in Richmond in the decade since the Brown decision. He listed the many ways in which desegregation had come to the city through peaceful means. Black citizens were holding jobs in many formerly all-white occupations such as police and fire departments and driving buses. The desegregation of public facilities such as theaters, parks, athletic facilities, buses and department stores had been accomplished with no violence or fanfare. Richmond had been cited as exemplary in the progress made when compared to other southern cities. He gave credit for this progress to the satisfactory race relations of the past, the commitment to law and order on the part of both races, and the large black voter group which was beginning to see the power they could wield at the ballot box (Dabney, 1964).

#### The Civil Rights Act of 1964

The quiet progress in Richmond was not matched by other cities in the South. The violence in some areas when desegregation was attempted was watched by many people throughout the country through the medium of television. The distaste for what they saw and a

president who spoke out in favor of civil rights had created a kind of national determination to do something to correct these injustices. Legislation, which was not new to the Congress of the United States, began to get new support, enough to overcome the long-standing southern opposition to any federal control, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed. The Act attacked discrimination on almost every front in American society, including education. It also carried with it the threat that there would be no new federal grants or renewal of existing ones until a desegregation plan was approved by the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare (Orfield, 1969).

During the summer, school officials had attended meetings to become acquainted with the provisions of the Act, but there seemed to be little reason for concern, since federal money did not make up a large part of the schools' budgets, and school systems which did not want to comply with the guidelines could simply withdraw from the programs. In early January, however, the Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and suddenly the awareness of the possibility of large amounts of federal aid to education made the need for an approved desegregation

plan of great importance (Butts, 1972). Local systems, however, had to wait for the State Department of Education to provide the Department of Health, Education and Welfare with a civil rights compliance pledge. In Virginia this was not easy since the State Department of Education did not wish to look as if it were supporting desegregation of schools. After much vacillating, the Department submitted as mild a pledge as it felt would be acceptable (Orfield, 1969).

The Richmond School Board, meanwhile, was still faced with a severe shortage of classrooms, and first graders in six schools were placed on double shifts in September as school opened, with two more schools added in November. School system enrollment was over 44,000 (Minutes, September 21, 1964). The educational needs of this growing population, much of it from low income families, were becoming an important concern and the prospects of federal aid offered a way to meet some of the needs and ease the financial burden on the city. The system had been administering programs financed by a grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity for a Human Development Project which aided both adults and children through a wide variety of projects, and reports of the results were encouraging (Minutes, October 19, 1964).

In January, the superintendent reported to the Board that he had received HEW Form 441, an assurance of compliance form which was required under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Later in the month, the State Board of Education adopted a resolution authorizing the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to execute a statement of compliance for the state and, at its February meeting, the School Board attorney recommended that the school system do the same. The school system had three choices of methods for complying with Title VI. They could submit a copy of a final court order, submit a plan of desegregation consistent with good faith compliance under the Act, or they could simply execute the assurance of compliance form. Since the Court order of 1964 was still on appeal and, therefore, not final, the attorney recommended that the School Board execute the assurance of compliance form and send it on to the state for approval (Minutes, February 22, 1965).

In April the Fourth Circuit Court issued its decision on the appeal in the Bradley case, affirming the School Board's plan of freedom of choice as adequate. The court did not rule on the contention that failure to desegregate faculties was a factor which inhibited some students from exercising freedom

of choice, since the plaintiffs had presented no evidence to substantiate this charge. The Bradley plaintiffs decided to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court (Court Decision, 1965).

Soon after the Circuit Court's decision was received, Dr. Woodrow W. Wilkerson, Superintendent of Public Instruction, requested additional information in support of the School Board's assurance of compliance. Dr. Willett submitted copies of the Court orders. About one month later, in a second letter to Dr. Wilkerson, the policies and plans were set forth in greater detail by Dr. Willett. The plan consisted of freedom of choice for students with the only limiting factor being capacity of schools, a limitation which had not been used to date. Notice of the right to choose one's school was given through the media, through letters to parents and through P-TA meetings (Minutes, May 24, 1965).

The plan showed that desegregation of staff was limited. General meetings and in-service training programs for teachers were desegregated, some black personnel had been appointed in central administration and one black teacher had been hired to teach white students in a summer program in 1964. There was no mention of any desegregation of faculties in regular

schools although an intensification of efforts to prepare for this was described (Minutes, May 24, 1965).

The plan also stated that community relations were good and that close communications existed with leaders of both races. Cited was an example of a special committee from the Parent-Teacher Association which had helped develop the recent school budget. The committee was composed of 21 persons, of whom 10 were black. Assurances were also given that transportation and extracurricular activities were provided in the same way for all students regardless of race (Minutes, May 24, 1965). The P-TA committee was actually two committees, one from the white Federation of P-TA's and the other from the black Council of P-TA's, who submitted recommendations to the superintendent. While there was some communication between the groups, it is not certain that all of the members of both groups ever met together (Personal Interview, Mrs. Crockford).

The use of federal funds was beginning to increase. Summer programs were being planned, utilizing funds from federal sources and from the Ford Foundation Human Development Grant. Community Action Program and Head Start grants were expected and plans were being made for eighteen centers for junior primary students in black schools which would be 90% federally

funded (Minutes, June 28, 1965). Junior primary was the designation used by Richmond Public Schools for its kindergarten and first grade program in white schools. Students started to school at the age of five and remained in the junior primary program for two years, entering the second grade on completion of the program. Some of the Board members felt a sense of shame that this program had not been offered in black schools, and that Board members were not aware of this. Unless a Board member asked questions or went out into the schools, he or she might have a very limited knowledge of the workings of the school system. (Personal Interview, Mrs. Crockford).

In June of 1965, Mr. Booker T. Bradshaw, the only black member of the School Board, retired after twelve years of service. He had been considered by his fellow members of the Board as an outstanding member and a needed influence with the black community during times of controversy. Mr. Bradshaw had served as vice-chairman of the Board for two years, but he had never been elected as chairman even though he had more years of service than anyone else serving on the Board (Minutes, 1953-1965). Mr. Bradshaw was replaced by Dr. Thomas H. Henderson, president of Virginia Union University, a black university in the city of Richmond.

Mr. Frank Calkins was elected chairman and Mrs. W.H. Crockford, vice-chairman, for the 1965-66 school year (Minutes, July 19, 1965).

The position of being the only black person on a body such as a school board was a precarious one; it was difficult to please everyone. There was a feeling among some members of the black community that Mr. Bradshaw had not been as aggressive as he might have been as a member of the Board. Although he often expressed a different point of view from other members of the Board, he usually voted for approval of measures even when he disagreed in part. Some persons expressed the view that he should have voted against more resolutions or initiated more action, causing the Board to take a stand. Others were of the opinion that as the only black member of the Board, he would have had little to gain by constantly being on the adversarial side of issues and that by his expressions of difference with Board decisions, he may have brought about more changes than a more aggressive posture could have achieved. Dr. Henderson, as his replacement, was very vulnerable in the matter of white business interests. As the president of a university, he was dependent on these business interests for help when fund-raising was necessary, and he had no desire to



hurt the university by alienating any past or future contributor.

In 1965-66 federal funds for special programs for the educationally disadvantaged continued to flow into the city. A grant was received for in-service training of staff as well as continuing grants for the Community Action Program and Head Start. The application for a grant under Public Law 89-10 for general education assistance for the disadvantaged had been approved and, in October, the Board learned it would receive \$1,350,000 from this grant. In December, the Board also learned that Public Law 81-874, which provides federal money to areas with a substantial population of federally-connected persons, had been expanded to include cities with large concentrations of federally-funded housing projects, and Richmond would qualify for funds under this revision (Minutes, 1965-66). Between \$250,000 and \$300,000 would be realized from this provision in the law, increasing even more the school system's dependence on federal funds (Richmond Times-Dispatch, March 25, 1966).

The school census, taken during the summer of 1965, indicated a reduction in the number of births since 1955, implying a more stable school enrollment picture. Future increases would be dependent on inward

versus outward migration and on the holding power of the schools. The census figures, which covered persons in age from one to nineteen, showed that during the 10-year period from 1955 to 1965, the not-in-school group decreased by nearly 14%, an encouraging trend (Minutes, August 23, 1965). Part of this decrease was accounted for by the junior primary classes in black elementary schools, so the improvement was not entirely due to a reduction in drop-outs. All-in-all the census showed that the Board could hope to see an end to the constant need for new buildings.

#### The Bradley Case Re-Opened

In January, 1966, Dr. Willett and an assistant, Mr. Roy Puckett, were ordered to appear in court on April 1, when, on order of the Supreme Court, the District Court would again hear the case of Bradley v School Board of Richmond (Minutes, January 17, 1966). At issue in this continuing case was the desegregation of faculties or the lack thereof, and the failure of the present freedom of choice plan to bring about a substantial degree of desegregation in the schools. The School Board was now responsible for pupil assignments in the city, since the Pupil Placement Board of the state was no longer functioning, and the

constant pressure from the courts for results made it urgent that the freedom of choice plan work.

On March 24, the School Board approved a letter and a new placement form to be sent to parents yearly, requesting them to choose schools for their children. The letter would include a listing of all the schools in the city and the grade levels each school served (Minutes, March 24, 1966). Dr. Henderson, one of the Board members, suggested that there might need to be some indication as to which schools were integrated to prevent surprises for parents, but the Board did not act on this suggestion (Richmond Times-Dispatch, March 25, 1966).

Modifications to the existing plan were being worked out with lawyers for the plaintiffs in order to satisfy the District Court. One critical area was in the desegregation of faculty and another in the recruiting of blacks for administrative positions. Even in the matter of freedom of choice it was noted that there might have to be changes later. Mr. Calkins, the Board chairman, issued a statement requesting the understanding of both races for the compromises inherent in the plan the Board was submitting to the Court and stressing the responsibility of the entire community for helping to

solve the problems of desegregation and race relationships (Minutes, March 30, 1966). The NAACP hailed the agreement as the most far-reaching in terms of hiring practices for blacks that had been reached with any school system (Richmond Times-Dispatch, March 31, 1966).

The new plan adopted by the Board differed in only slight ways from that submitted to Department of Health, Education and Welfare for assurance of compliance with the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. In addition to recruiting black applicants for administrative posts, the Board indicated stronger efforts to recruit currently employed teachers of both races to transfer to schools where the faculty had a majority of the other race and to assign new teachers in a manner facilitating desegregation of faculties. For pupils the plan emphasized equalizing schools near each other where inequalities in enrollment as related to capacity existed and setting up city-wide centers to serve students from all areas of the city, providing integrated experiences. The plan further indicated that new steps would be taken if these efforts did not produce results. The Board unanimously approved the

Plan for submission to the Court (Minutes, March 30, 1966).

At the regular meeting in April, Dr. Bruce Welch, the only high-ranking black member of the school administration, presented a request for a leave of absence to work with the federal government. At the same meeting, concerns about the policy-making process in the school system were expressed by a group of black community leaders. The impending placement of the Human Development Programs in other departments in the school system and the loss of Dr. Welch raised the question of whether the goals and direction of the program would be changed, and whether Dr. Welch had been involved in the policy-making for the programs as the administrator. The superintendent replied that Dr. Welch had always been consulted on matters pertaining to the Human Development Programs, an indication that the concerns expressed by the group were in fact true (Richmond Times-Dispatch, April 19, 1966). Dr. Willett made an extensive reply on the specific questions, explaining the fact that the programs instituted under the Civil Rights Act were up for re-funding in the Congress and that the direction programs would take would be determined by the purposes for which funding was approved. This was one of the problems with

federal funding, he stressed; you could not know from one year to the next what could be expected in terms of funds and goals (Minutes, April 18, 1966). As if to prove the truth of Dr. Willett's remarks, along with the new funding from federal programs were new guidelines for compliance, which many school systems in the state would find distasteful (Orfield, 1969)

During the summer of 1966, Mr. J. Harvie Wilkinson completed a five-year term of service on the Board and did not seek re-election. He was replaced by H. Hiter Harris, Jr., also a local banker, as Mr. Wilkinson was. Mr. Calkins was re-elected chairman, and Mrs. Crockford, vice-chairman of the Board for the new year. As the Board approved personnel changes, they also met Dr. James T. Guines, the newly appointed Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent, a black educator from the Washington, D.C. school system. (Minutes, July 27, 1966). The school system's efforts to recruit black administrators was already showing some success.

The school year, 1966-67, opened with enrollment at 44,300. Double shifts for first graders were in effect at Blackwell, Chimborazo, Randolph and West End Schools, in scattered areas of the city. The east end overcrowding seemed to be easing with only Chimborazo

affected while the center city was becoming the most crowded. Federal programs during the summer had been directed toward remedial efforts for disadvantaged students, and Title I funds were helping to continue these efforts during the regular school year. By December, the School Board was receiving over \$3,400,000 for federal programs which included financing some buildings, the Head Start and Early Childhood programs, a program of School-Community Coordination, in-service training for teachers, a math-science center, adult basic education and a materials development center. (Minutes, 1966-67).

Dr. Willett's report to the Board showed the results of the increased efforts to desegregate schools and faculties to be encouraging. Of the 57 schools in the system, 25 were desegregated with 2500 black students in formerly all-white schools. Four white students were in formerly all-black schools, making a total of almost 5000 black students in schools that were technically desegregated. Only 5 all-white schools remained, but there were 27 schools with all black student populations, most of them in the east end of the city. Faculty desegregation had improved considerably. In two years the number of black teachers now in formerly white schools had gone from

zero to 56, while 26 white teachers were now in formerly black schools. Only eight schools had no faculty desegregation (Minutes, November 17, 1966).

For a while, the desegregation issue faded to the background except for the continual need to approve pupil scholarships. In Richmond the total number of scholarships hovered around 100 per year for several years (Minutes, 1960- 1969). The use of such grants had been challenged in court, but not in a case involving Richmond. An unsuccessful attempt had been made in the General Assembly in 1966 to do away with the grants since they made possible a system of private schools (Orfield, 1969), but for the time being the grants continued to be a part of the Board's agenda. The grants were finally discontinued in 1969, after the court declared them unconstitutional.

The shifting population was beginning to cause major changes in the northside of the city. Black families moving in were swelling the school population and there was a substantial loss of white families to the suburbs. The result was a resegregation of the schools. Concerns about the rapidity and degree of change had prompted the school system, under a federal grant, to authorize a study of the situation. An Urban Team Committee, headed by Dr. James A. Sartain,



Professor of Sociology at the University of Richmond, had made the study and at the November meeting of the Board presented its implications and recommendations (Minutes, November 21, 1968).

The Committee report made several recommendations for both long-term and short-range actions which needed to be taken to slow down the resegregation process. Crucial to the implementation of the long-term recommendations was community leadership which would seek solutions to problems, not postponement. While the School Board was not in a position to provide this leadership, it could lend support, the report emphasized. Among the recommendations was one to seek annexation of substantial areas of the surrounding counties or the development of a multi-governmental unit school system to help in establishing a meaningful racial balance in the schools. The Committee even suggested that the city might consider giving up its charter, creating two metropolitan county governments (Minutes, November 21, 1968).

School system efforts, the report said, should focus on creating a climate of acceptance and true integration, rather than just desegregation, in the schools. The development of bi-racial teams to identify problems and to seek ways of facilitating

communication and social understanding was a primary tool for accomplishing this. Prior to such teams being ready to function, the report recommended an expanded in-service training program to develop meaningful dialogue among employees of the school system. Communication "between the races in Richmond on a basis other than master-servant and at a level closer to the people than city council or even the civic clubs" was seen as essential and could start in the public schools. No action was taken on the report, although in December, 1969, citizens' concerns about northside schools prompted the Board to schedule a work/study session with community leaders (Minutes, 1968-69).

The report was of limited value, since many of its recommendations were too late to prevent the changes it was interpreting. The School Board by this time was so busy with the steady demands of federal compliance and litigation concerns, it really did not have time to do the long-range planning recommended by the report (Personal Interview, Mrs. Crockford).

In the fall of 1968, also, as the time for re-appointment approached, the superintendent submitted a letter of retirement for the end of the school term. Dr. Willett had served the school system for 23 1/2 years, longer than any other superintendent in the

history of the Richmond Public Schools. He had gathered about him an able group of administrators (Personal Interview, Dr. Peple, Mrs. Crockford), and the Board decided to offer the post of superintendent to one of the assistant superintendents, Dr. Lucien Adams, upon Dr. Willett's retirement. There was some objection to this choice from the black community but the selection stood (Minutes, April 10, 1969). Dr. Adams was not eager for the job, preferring to work behind the scenes, but his cooperative manner and concern for communication with the community were appreciated, and the Board made him their choice for the post.

While the School Board and superintendent were involved with the events of the city schools, in the Supreme Court, the final event which would push Richmond to full-scale desegregation was taking place in the Supreme Court. A lawsuit against New Kent County, not far from Richmond, was one of several cases to reach the Supreme Court that involved the failure of freedom of choice plans to bring about meaningful desegregation. In its ruling in the case of Green v. County School Board of New Kent County, the Court ruled that where freedom of choice did not bring about a unitary, nonracial school system, it was unacceptable.

Local authorities were required to take whatever steps were necessary to eliminate racial discrimination "root and branch", the Court said. The decision helped bolster the enforcement program for Title VI of the Civil Rights Act just as its 1968 guidelines were being disseminated and gave the sagging civil rights battle a needed burst of energy (Orfield, 1969).

The city of Richmond, as the school year 1968-69 closed, was in the midst of annexation proceedings against Chesterfield County, and Dr. Willett stayed on long enough to testify and fulfill his role in this effort. Dr. Adams took over as superintendent and, in an administrative re-organization, put Dr. James Guines, a black educator, in the post of assistant superintendent. The School Board also underwent some re-organization as Mr. Calkins, chairman for several years, was retiring after ten years of service and Mrs. Crockford was elected chairman of the Board. Mrs. William Calloway, whose son had been the plaintiff in earlier lawsuits against the school system, was the newly appointed member of the Board and, for the first time since 1953, the Board had a new structure. Two women, Mrs. Crockford and Mrs. Calloway, were joined by three men, Hiter Harris and A.C. Epps, both white, and Thomas Henderson, black. Both of the women were

persons who had been very involved with the school system at the grass roots level, having had children who attended the schools and having served on parent groups in support of the schools. Not only was the structure changing but evidence of a philosophical change could be detected as well (Personal Interview, Mrs. Crockford, Mrs. Calloway).

As the Board and Dr. Adams began their new association, Dr. Adams promised better lines of communication with the Board and community. In the fall a regular Public Information period was instituted at Board meetings so that citizens could ask for information or bring concerns to the Board. Early issues of concern to the citizens who appeared were the proposed programs for sex education and the changing northside schools. Word was received that the annexation order had been approved and plans for the schools in the new area in the southside of the city had to be made. Mrs. Calloway urged the promotion of black candidates to vacancies occurring in administrative positions since many of the positions held by blacks were only interim positions such as those in federal programs. The school year was moving along with the Board involved in a variety of things (Minutes, 1969-70).

In February, 1970, Dr. Thomas Henderson, Board member, died suddenly. Reverend Miles Jones, minister of a local black church and a member of the Virginia Union School of Theology faculty, was appointed to replace Dr. Henderson, just as the Bradley case re-opened (Minutes, March 4, 1969).

#### Bradley and Green

Based on the decision in Green v County School Board of New Kent County, 391 U.S. 430 (1968), the Bradley plaintiffs requested the court to require Richmond to operate a unitary, non-racial school system. The newly annexed territory south of the river was almost completely white and the school system now had a substantial number of all-white schools along with the all-black schools which had never been desegregated. When questioned by the court, Superintendent Adams agreed that Richmond was not operating a unitary, non-racial school system and that he had requested the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to make a study and recommend a plan for desegregation in keeping with the latest decisions of the Supreme Court. The Board and administration promised to submit a plan to the court by May 11, 1970 (Minutes, March 19, 1970).

While waiting for word about the desegregation plan from the court, the School Board underwent several changes. H. Hiter Harris resigned, leaving one opening. He was replaced by Richard Schwarzschild, and two additional members were added as required by the annexation decree, William O. Edwards, white, and Linwood Woolridge, Jr., black. The Board was now composed of seven members, four white and three black. Mrs. Crockford was elected chairman and Mr. A.C. Epps, vice-chairman. In spite of the fact that there would be disagreements along racial lines in the coming months, members of this Board recall the bond that existed between them as they faced serious issues together. It was a Board that wanted to be involved, to know about the school system and the issues. It was a Board that attended conferences and meetings in all parts of the country to learn as much as possible about problems other systems were facing and how Richmond might profit from their experience (Personal Interviews, Dr. Jones).

As a first action in the Bradley hearings, Judge Merhige, new judge of the District Court, issued an injunction against any further construction of schools until the case was resolved. He disapproved the plan of desegregation developed with the help of the

Department of Health, Education and Welfare as not creating a unitary system and told the Board to develop another one. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare had developed a plan along neighborhood lines since meaningful integration seemed impossible in light of Richmond's housing patterns and heavily black population. Judge Merhige wanted the new plan immediately. In August, the Board, by split vote, white versus black, approved a new desegregation plan to be submitted to the court which used some busing and satellite zoning, but left most elementary schools racially identifiable. Judge Merhige approved the plan for one year only due to the imminent opening of school. A new plan must be submitted as soon as possible for the next school year (Minutes, August 20, 1970). Teachers and students in the school system who had been waiting for the Court's action scrambled to be ready for the opening of school.

At the same time that the Board approved the desegregation plan, they realized that they would never be able to develop a workable plan within the limits of the city. The white flight that had been feared for so long would become a reality, and the system would become resegregated just as the northside schools had done. An idea that had been discussed for a long time,



even with Judge Merhige, seemed to be the only solution - consolidation of the city schools with those of Henrico and Chesterfield County to try to reach a meaningful level of desegregation. With this in mind, the Board voted five to nothing in favor of a joinder motion, making the Henrico and Chesterfield County School Boards parties to the suit now in the District Court (Minutes, August 20, 1970). Mrs. Crockford abstained from the voting as did Mr. Schwarzschild. Mrs. Crockford explained that she felt the action to be premature and that the counties would resist being used to desegregate Richmond's schools. While she felt that there were several legitimate concerns which could have led to merger between the counties and the city in time, integration was not one of them. (Personal Interview, Mrs. Crockford).

In the August meeting of the Board, during the Public Information period, there were numerous complaints from white citizens about busing and about what was termed the lack of positive leadership from the Board. The Board was urged to appeal the Court's decision and they agreed to meet on August 24 to consider this (Minutes, August 20, 1970). The decision to appeal was a four to three vote, along racial lines, while a motion to request a "stay" was defeated

(Minutes, August 24, 1970). Richmond would operate its public schools under an interim plan of desegregation for the 1970-71 school year.

The Interim Plan was based on a neighborhood school concept in the elementary grades with a desegregated staff. In the secondary schools, both staff and students were desegregated. Limited busing from satellite zones brought white students to black schools and black students to white schools. Sixth grade classes were moved out of the elementary schools and into the junior high schools, which were described as "middle" schools. The school system was 64% black and 36% white. In order to provide elementary students with some integrated experiences, classes were taken to the Learning Centers to share experiences with students from other schools, usually on a weekly basis (Doherty, 1971).

On September 17, at its regular meeting, the Board heard objections to the "sprinkling" of white students in Mosby and Kennedy, black secondary schools in the east end of the city. Citizens accused the Board of failing to provide racial balance and of creating a situation detrimental to the high achiever. There were concerns about students being molested and robbed and about the reassignment of teachers. The Board was

urged to appeal vigorously and defend the freedom of choice plan which had been in effect for several years (Minutes, September 17, 1970).

In November, Lewis Booker was appointed to the Board to replace A.C. Epps, who had resigned for personal reasons. Mr. Booker, a lawyer, had children in the Richmond Public Schools, and his appointment completed the change from the "disinterested" School Board which had been the guiding philosophy in 1954 to a School Board very much interested and knowledgeable about the school system for which it made policy. The Virginia State Board of Education was added to the joinder motion along with the School Boards of Henrico and Chesterfield since it is the state that makes policy that defines school districts (Minutes, November 19, 1970).

During the Public Information period on the November 19, there were concerns expressed about the joinder motion which was creating extensive controversy in the metropolitan area. There were also concerns about the operation of the P-TA's of the newly organized schools and many concerns about the condition of buildings which had formerly housed black students only. Some citizens stated that the Board should resign, and some that the Board should not resign. Mr.

Wooldridge was prompted to note the lack of courtesy on the part of some of the speakers and the character references used by some persons (Minutes, November 19, 1970).

Since the concept of a unitary school system was not clearly defined, the school system developed three plans for submission to the court and in January, 1971, they were ready. Plan I was much like the freedom of choice plan had been, Plan II like the Interim Plan now in operation and Plan III, a fully desegregated system. The Court rejected the first two plans but found Plan III to be acceptable and ordered its implementation. Required in the plan would be 54 buses to move students from one part of the city to another, and the Court also ordered City Council to provide the money to purchase the buses. In the plan some schools in contiguous zones were paired so that minimal busing would be required. In order to connect the white schools in the recently annexed area with the black schools in the east end of the city, schools were paired also, requiring much longer bus rides (Minutes, January 21, 1971). The plan was not greeted with enthusiasm by the community.

The rest of the school year was spent in anticipation of implementing Plan III. In April the

Board issued a statement urging support from others in implementing the Court's decision and in June, Mr. Edwards expressed grave concern over the credibility gap existing in the community. The exaggeration of every problem in the school system and the blaming of desegregation for every difficulty filled the newspapers, particularly the Richmond News-Leader. Dr. Adams, in referring to such things as the need for a security force, pointed out that many of these problems existed before desegregation and had been developing for a long time but most of his comments fell on deaf ears. In June, plans for the opening of school under the new plan were well underway.

September, 1971, saw an orderly opening to school considering the vast amount of change that had taken place. At the September 16 Board meeting, the enrollment report showed that the system had lost 3400 white students while gaining 800 more black students than had been projected, a net loss of 2600 students. There had been 38 teacher resignations, at least 20 of them related to reassignments. Seventy-one students had been suspended, substantially more than usual (Minutes, September 16, 1971).

On October 15, more parental concerns over the effects of the new plan were expressed to the Board.

Conditions of the buildings were again a major source of concern. White enrollment had continued to drop and the loss was at 3536 while a total increase of 1265 black students had changed the school system enrollment to almost 70% black (Minutes, October 15, 1971). The Richmond Public Schools were desegregated, but before any meaningful desegregation could actually take place, resegregation had begun in some schools and would continue to take place over the next few years. The school system was under court order not to make any changes in school zones without the approval of the court, although numerous changes would be approved over the next few years, trying to maintain some semblance of racial balance.

The Bradley case was not over, but its goal of desegregating the Richmond Public Schools was accomplished. The events of the next several years, while of considerable importance, would have little or no effect on that original goal. For ten years, the Bradley plaintiffs and the courts had gradually pushed back the barriers keeping black students from full participation in the Richmond school system, seeking to put the principle confirmed in Brown into practice in a local school system.

## CHAPTER 5

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## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Summary

The Richmond School Board in 1954 was composed of five persons of high standing in the city, who acted in in a liaison capacity between the school system and the community, legitimizing the school administration's actions and bringing a high degree of respect to the schools. The superintendent of schools was a strong administrator of outstanding reputation in the education profession, in the community and in the school system, and his judgment about school affairs was trusted by the Board. The school system felt stable and well-run and was a source of pride to community and staff.

A dual system of schools was operated for the races. Segregation of the races in schools had been established policy since the beginning of the public school system in Richmond and had been a state constitutional requirement since 1902. Facilities and



curriculum for black students were inferior to that provided for white students, and black achievement levels lagged behind.

In 1954, segregation required by law was declared unconstitutional in the Supreme Court's decision in the case of Brown v the School Board of Topeka, Kansas. After an initially moderate reaction, the state leaders in Virginia, with political gains in mind, embarked on a course of massive resistance to the decision, rather than compliance, and allowed no options for localities except to obey the new state mandates under threat of school closing and the withholding of state funds to school systems. A primary tool for managing this resistance was the State Pupil Placement Board which placed all students in every school in the state. The Richmond School Board adopted a policy of keeping schools open by maintaining segregation, side-stepping every attempt of black students to integrate the city schools, in order to accomplish this.

During this period of time, the black population of the city and of its school system was steadily increasing, creating a constant need for schools for black students. Even though the black schools were over-crowded and the enrollment in white schools was

below normal capacity, the Board put black students on double shift, delaying conversions of schools from black to white in order to prevent pushing out more white families, who fled areas being integrated.

When, in 1959, new state laws were written in an attempt to allow, but limit, integration, the Pupil Placement Board was once again a primary tool for containing integration by limiting transfers of black students according to established criteria. Localities could elect to develop their own placement plans following state guidelines, but the Richmond School Board and administration continued the policy of maintaining separate schools, remaining under the state Pupil Placement Board's jurisdiction. Black groups in the city began to press for compliance with Brown, while the white community and its leadership urged maintenance of the status quo. Caught in the middle of these pressures, the Board took no action to bring about desegregation, thus, in effect, yielding to the demands of the white community. Only by the pressure of a court case, Bradley v the School Board of Richmond, Virginia, first filed in 1961, were any steps toward desegregation taken. One by one, the administrative devices which limited desegregation were eliminated by court action until the School Board

established a freedom of choice plan which received final court approval in 1965.

In 1964, the passage of the Civil Rights Act, requiring desegregation in schools in order to receive federal funds, followed by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, which made tremendous amounts of federal money available for a wide variety of programs to aid the educationally disadvantaged, put new pressure on schools to desegregate. The Richmond School Board submitted its court-approved plan of freedom of choice as a desegregation plan and began to benefit from federal funds. The Bradley plaintiffs appealed to the courts for additional compliance in the area of faculty as well as student desegregation. Under this pressure, some affirmative effort was made to integrate faculties, and student transfers were granted more freely. By the 1966-67 school year some progress had been made in both areas of desegregation.

As the influx of black students continued, the school population became so heavily black that there seemed to be little hope of meaningful desegregation. The schools in the northside of the city which had been desegregated by changing residential patterns were going from desegregated to resegregated, prompting a study by a team of sociologists and urban planners to

see what could be done to prevent further loss of white families. The city, in the meantime, sought to annex portions of both of the neighboring counties and was successful in the southside of the city, adding a largely white residential area from Chesterfield County. This action created a situation where there were all-black schools in the east, mixed schools in the central area and all-white schools in the newly annexed area of the city.

The School Board had also undergone a change during this period. The membership of the Board had changed as a result of the retirements of former members and the addition of two new members as a part of the annexation decree. The new Board was composed of four white and three black members. Several of the new Board members were more personally interested in the educational system in the city than previous members had been, and the philosophical nature of the Board changed. The retirement of the superintendent and the appointment of one of his assistants as the new chief executive also created a major shift in direction.

Soon after the annexation decree became final, the Bradley plaintiffs took the School Board to court once again, based on the Supreme Court decision in

Green v New Kent County that school systems must be unitary, without racially identifiable schools.

Richmond's new superintendent agreed that the school system was not unitary and, after several attempts, presented a plan to the court that was accepted for one school year. In the 1970-71 school year, secondary schools were desegregated, and faculties were desegregated in all schools. During this year three plans were presented to the court, and the one which added busing and pairing of schools at the elementary level to the already desegregated secondary schools was accepted by the court as creating a unitary school system. The school system was expected to be about 64% black.

When the 1971-72 school year opened with all schools fully desegregated, the school system lost 3500 white students and gained 1200 black students, creating a system that was almost 70% black and resegregating many schools before desegregation could begin. The next few years would see additional changes of a more gradual nature, a court order to consolidate the school systems of the counties and the city which would become a landmark case in the Supreme Court, and the complete reorganization of the city schools under black leadership. Problems would not be over, but the long

strain of waiting for desegregation could be put to rest and the business of educating students in the city schools could take top priority once again.

### Analysis and Interpretation

The Richmond School Board during the process of desegregating the public school system underwent a gradual metamorphosis. It went from being an advisory board, removed from the schools and the community, to a more active role in both areas. Situations such as that involving Chandler School were learning opportunities, and the Board gradually developed greater skill in preparing communities for the necessity of converting schools from white to black, as in the case of the southside schools of Blackwell, Franklin and Westover Hills. They listened more to the community and became more responsive to community concerns as indicated by the Public Information period instituted in 1969 as part of every School Board meeting.

The Board also assumed a more active role in the setting of policy and program for the school system as the membership changed from "disinterested" persons to those with a more personal interest in the schools. Board members learned that they needed to ask questions

about school system practices and policies. They began to attend national level conferences to learn more about opportunities for funding of programs and to talk with persons from other school divisions who were facing problems similar to those in Richmond. They found that, if they were going to interpret the school system to the public, they needed to be more knowledgeable about the schools and even began having some Board meetings in the schools during the school day. The School Board Rules and Regulations Manual was completely revised.

Part of the change in the Board's role came about when there was a change in the superintendency. The superintendent from 1954 to 1969 was a very strong, but conservative man who felt great pressure from the business community to keep things under control. As with many superintendents of his generation, he and his staff ran the school system and did not really want community involvement. There had been some movement toward better community relations just before his retirement, and the new superintendent encouraged and augmented this approach. Since the change in the membership of the Board coincided with the change in the person who held the chief executive office of the school system, one can only speculate about what would

have happened had the previous superintendent remained in office while the Board membership changed. At least one or two Board members from that period of time think there would have been serious clashes between the Board and the superintendent.

Some of the factors affecting the Board's actions during the desegregation process are inherent in the history of the city, the state of Virginia and the South as a region. The regional identity of the "solid South" had a strong influence on the actions of the state and in turn on the city. The unwillingness to break with tradition was characteristic of the entire region. The Virginia attitude of minimizing conflict in public, of being "gentlemanly" in conduct and of presenting a united front affected individual members of the Board as well as the relations between the Board and the superintendent. Even Mr. Bradshaw, the first black member of the Board, and Mrs. Lee, the woman member of the Board, would express differences of opinion but would vote approval of the Board's decisions. Strong evidence of this factor at work was the Board Chairman's withholding of his written opinion about the doctrine of interposition in order not to embarrass state leaders.



A second set of factors influencing the Board were those which were peculiar to the Richmond situation. Among the cities in the commonwealth, Richmond had the largest black population. In an effort to contain this population, the City Council had approved the building of several low-income housing developments in the east end of the city, concentrating a large segment of the black population in that area. Fears of white flight from the city which would create a loss of their power base, and fears of engulfment by the black community strongly motivated the actions of many City Council members who, in turn, influenced the School Board. This influence derived partly from the fact of the Board's fiscal dependence on the Council, and partly from the similarity in philosophy that white members of the community shared.

In these concerns about loss of power, the city was more like the counties of southside Virginia than it was like the cities in other parts of the state. Richmond leadership seemed to have difficulty seeing the city as an urban area, with urban problems. The Civil Rights Commission's report in 1962 stated that desegregation was not Richmond's real problem, only the belief that it was. The fear white citizens had of blacks in large numbers, of engulfment, obscured the

fact that the problems of Richmond were "big-city" problems. To continue to preach that there was a race problem would surely create one (Pettigrew, 1968):

The desire to maintain the status quo clouded the vision of Richmond's community leaders who could not see the advantages of developing an extended power base, including blacks and whites, which could have been beneficial to all. The white community could share power with blacks up to a point. The case of Mr. Bradshaw, the first black member of the School Board, illustrates this point. Mr. Bradshaw served on the Board for twelve years, longer than any other member since the Board's re-organization in 1946, yet he was never elected chairman. He was vice-chairman during the last two years of his service, while others with less tenure than he were chairmen. The School Board responded positively when black groups pressed for rights, as in the proposed location of a school near the juvenile detention home, but when there was a conflict between white and black groups, decisions were seldom made that adversely affected the whites.

The final set of factors influencing the School Board's actions derive from the nature of the School Board itself. Even when the Board could see the necessity for change, its authority to bring it about

was limited to a very narrow sphere. The Board could influence or persuade others, but it could not take action outside the school system. The one thing that the Board could have done was to have supported the need for change publicly, as recommended in the Sartain report. The high status of the Board members could have been an influence on others in the community who could have brought about some positive action. There were many persons and groups in the city waiting for leadership to emerge which would take some affirmative action. This was critically needed, but never forthcoming. When desegregation came, it was more a case of yielding to the inevitable, than a positive affirmation of the justice of the Brown decision.

The white leadership of Richmond acted to postpone the problem of an increasing black population and a declining white population by first trying to contain the black population in one area of the city. They pressured the School Board to delay conversion of schools from black to white because changing a school caused a neighborhood to change over faster; leaving a school white seemed to hold some parts of the community together. Failure to see the futility of this action only allowed a situation to build which had more drastic consequences for the schools and for the city

when desegregation actually came. Had the black population been more evenly spread over the city, some true integration of schools would have been possible without busing and might have decreased white flight.

Instead of trying to postpone the problem, some efforts toward seeking solutions through communication between leaders of both races would have been preferable. During the 1966 appeal in the Bradley case, Board members and the city attorney sat down with lawyers for the plaintiffs to work out a mutually agreeable plan for desegregation of faculties and more affirmative action in student desegregation. The Board chairman, in a statement to the public, expressed appreciation for the high level of cooperation that had existed in seeking solutions that would work for all the children of the community (See Appendix D). Unfortunately, most of the time communications between the leadership of both races became strained, and an adversarial relationship developed which made mutual agreement almost impossible.

The consequences of holding too fast to tradition were also evident in the Richmond situation. Tradition, which can be an enriching, stabilizing force in a community and in a school system, became a paralyzing force, preventing the planning and action

that could have moved the community more positively into the future.

The desegregation process in Richmond Public Schools clearly shows what can happen in the implementation of a federal policy at state and local levels. Implementation is affected by a number of factors - some regional, some local and some inherent in the nature of the administrative arrangements for implementation. When the federal policy is not wanted by the power structure at the state and local level, powerful forces can be marshalled to prevent and/or postpone the implementation of the policy. Efforts to change a policy which was as firmly entrenched as that of segregation, which was fundamental to the power structure of the community, and which was deeply rooted in emotional issues was bound to engender great resistance.

Normally in the South, federal policy had come to be whatever the local power structure had wanted it to be. Local leaders seemed determined to treat this new policy in the same way. State leaders looked for every legal means to protect the status quo from the implications of the Brown decision, and local leaders used the state's actions as their defense. Pressure to resist the implementation of the policy came from

political and business interests and from the emotional responses of the citizenry.

Resistance to implementing a policy at a local level might continue indefinitely if there are not counterbalancing forces pressuring for compliance. One way to get this counterbalance is through the use of force, as occurred in some localities during the desegregation process, but other pressures can also be powerful. For some the public commitment to education and a tradition of upholding the law provided this counterbalance. Faced with a choice between education and integration, the public decided on education, although many individuals still found ways to avoid integration, at least for a little while longer.

Implementing a federal policy, then, is likely to engender resistance if it does not have public support. If, however, a choice has to be made between yielding to an unwanted policy or maintaining a traditional institution, the value the public sees in the institution may counterbalance the resistance and result in the compliance with the policy, if not acceptance. The principle of equality in educational opportunity was perverted in the South by laws requiring separate schools for the races. In other areas of the nation, there were no laws requiring

segregation but strong community traditions promoted the practice through neighborhood schools. Is the process of implementing change the same in a situation involving de facto segregation as has been seen in the case of de jure segregation? A look at the desegregation process in the San Francisco Public Schools will provide an opportunity for comparison.

#### Comparison of San Francisco and Richmond

In a case study of the desegregation experience of the public schools of San Francisco from 1960-1980, Doris Renee Fine described the San Francisco School Board as composed of seven lay citizens from the business and social elite, whose main responsibility was to hire a chief executive for the school system and then to legitimize the school administrations' policies and actions. The Board also served as "gate keepers" between the schools and the community, protecting the school system's autonomy and diverting public criticism. The Board had the right to initiate new policies but seldom chose to do so. The schools and the Board were "above politics" (Fine, 1983).

Members of the San Francisco Board were appointed by the Mayor, an elected official, but since

Board members could serve several five-year terms, a member might continue to serve even after the mayor who appointed him was no longer in office. There was an informal agreement to keep the Board representation balanced among the three major religious groups, labor and business, and to include one woman and one member of the black community. The Board relied on the superintendent for advice and information; the budget was drawn up by him and his staff for Board approval and most recommendations from the administration were approved readily by the Board. The superintendent in 1960 was Dr. Harold Spears, a well-known educator who ran the school system well, based on traditional principles of organization and educational practice (Fine, 1983).

The Civil Rights movement was well underway in the nation when the push for desegregation of schools in San Francisco began in 1961. The superintendent's proposed re-location of the city's academic high school from the inner-city to a new residential area and its re-organization from an open enrollment academic high school to a comprehensive high school, serving a defined neighborhood, met with opposition from the community. The School Board, which usually approved the superintendent's recommendations, unexpectedly



supported the community viewpoint instead of the superintendent. Civil rights' groups questioned the superintendent's motives in recommending the re-location of the school and challenged some of his views regarding race. The groups also challenged the School Board as to their social obligations toward minorities, creating a gradual transformation of the School Board's social consciousness (Fine, 1983).

The superintendent became defensive about the practices of his administration, and when the Board asked him for a report on school conditions as a response to charges of racial discrimination, he issued a report with no figures on the racial make-up of the schools. He emphasized that there was no sound educational purpose in providing the figures, that the number of white students in schools made no difference. Representatives of the civil rights' groups were upset by his attitude and decided to mobilize community groups to challenge the superintendent. In the face of this pressure, the superintendent backed down and, when the groups felt they had been successful, they pressed harder for changes (Fine, 1983).

After this initial outburst of concern, a period of relative quiet ensued which the administration took as time to re-group, not to take affirmative action.

They resorted to such bureaucratic routines as appointing a commission, hiring a visible black for a public relations position and holding public hearings as delaying tactics, and the Board concurred. Members expressed the view that there was a conflict of goals, those of education versus the solution of social problems, and solving social problems was not the role of the school system. Activists were trying to force the Board to enact a new racial policy and desegregate schools, and several community-sponsored plans were offered. The superintendent, who had decided by this time to retire, rejected all suggestions. The Board decided to ask the Stanford Research Institute to investigate the feasibility of desegregation in the San Francisco schools as a tactic to satisfy critics and to have time to elect a new superintendent (Fine, 1983).

Members of the school system were in favor of the promotion of one of the administrators already in the system who had shown some leadership and a willingness to consider alternatives, but the Board, fearing political involvement, selected an outsider who was unlike the previous superintendent in style, but not in his approach to school administration. The challenges to the school system had renewed public interest in the schools, and new community energy was poured into

parent groups and other activities aimed at improving the education of their children. The right administrator could have seized the opportunity to build on this base. Instead, the new superintendent showed that he had no knowledge of ways of resolving disputes or dealing with controversy except through more of the same old tactics. Public forums were held to discuss the Stanford Research Institute report, but no decisive action was forthcoming (Fine, 1983).

By this time, groups who favored maintaining the present structure of the schools were beginning to fear the changes that might take place, and they began to speak out. Personal and private interests began to replace the public concern that had sparked the interest in the schools, and arguments raged back and forth. The school system worked out a plan to desegregate some schools and then backed down. The Mayor took the side of those wanting to prevent change and spoke to the Board, introducing a political aspect to the Board's deliberations. Frustrated, the Board demanded the superintendent's resignation, but failed to get it. He served out his contract but was unable to find any new ways to improve his effectiveness (Fine, 1983).

The school system was, in Fine's judgment, in disarray. Everyone began looking out for his own interests - first the Board protected themselves by blaming the superintendent, then persons in the school system began to complain about what was happening to them, and finally the parents insisted on their "rights". Even at this point, strong leadership could have salvaged the system and the situation, but it was not forthcoming from the superintendent nor from the Board. The situation continued to deteriorate with competing groups resisting efforts to change the system or insisting that it be changed to fit their particular interests (Fine, 1983).

The San Francisco desegregation process differs from that in Richmond in many ways, yet some of the same effects are seen. The School Boards of the two localities were similar in structure and composition, but the political climate of San Francisco was changeable, while that in Richmond had been the same for many years. This meant that the School Board in San Francisco might have a different philosophy than the city government, while in Richmond the Board and the City Council were usually in agreement with one another. Richmond was under the pressure of state law to maintain separate schools under threat of funds

being withheld and/or schools being closed, up until 1959. The San Francisco system had no law, either local or state, which mandated segregation, yet because of long-standing community tradition concerning neighborhood schools, great resistance to desegregating the schools was experienced. In both localities, political, business and private interests brought pressure to maintain the status quo. The conflict that San Francisco experienced came about because these interests resisted change, while there were other groups publicly advocating it. In Richmond there was not as much public outcry, because the change had to come first in the law, and there were not as many competing groups as in the San Francisco situation.

Both cases illustrate the difficulty of implementing a new policy when it ran counter to established practices which were supported by the power structure of the community. Both also show that strong, cooperative leadership was needed from the powerful elements in the community in order to bring about change. Richmond and San Francisco show as well that the School Board and the school administration were not in a position to be agents of social change, that the impetus for new policies in regard to social practices had to come from elsewhere, and that the

schools could only carry out that which the public wanted in this regard. While the specific factors were different in each locality, the process was remarkably similar whether the existing conditions were set in law or just in custom and tradition.

### Federal Policy at the Local Level

The federal government, while having no responsibility for education, has nevertheless had an interest in education since the beginning of our nation. Often this interest has been expressed in the courts through interpretations of constitutionally guaranteed rights. When the Supreme Court proclaimed the principle that segregation has no place in the public schools in America, a federal policy was articulated which had to be translated into action in the context of existing state and local policies. The federal policy not only required a change in state and local policies, it required a change that was unwanted by a majority of the people who would be affected.

When the Plessy v Ferguson decision was made, it merely sanctioned what was already taking place and there was little objection to it. The Brown decision threatened to undo the entire social structure of the

South, and the first reaction to it was resistance. The southern states simply said "no" and looked for ways to say this that were legal. The machinery of the courts was very slow in bringing about even a small degree of compliance, requiring numerous steps which often resulted in only a tiny amount of change. Yet in spite of this slow process, there was some progress in compliance by the end of the 1950's.

Several events converged in the early 1960's to bring about greater compliance, so much greater that Gary Orfield (1969) has called it the reconstruction of southern education. The nation was horrified to see the violence that greeted court enforcement of Brown in some areas of the south, one president spoke out in favor of civil rights, and another president took action to do something about them. After a bitter struggle with southern congressmen, the Congress passed a comprehensive Civil Rights Bill and created the federal machinery to enforce it, giving the Justice Department the right to bring suit against localities not complying with the terms of the bill. Title VI of this bill required local school districts to have an approved desegregation plan on file with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in order to receive federal funds for existing or new programs. School

systems all over the south began to comply with the guidelines and to desegregate their schools.

As the enthusiasm for the Civil Rights Bill began to wane and the national attention turned to other matters, the courts once again entered the picture. Weary of the recalcitrance of the southern school districts to take affirmative action, court decisions began to be more forceful, and several cases reached the Supreme Court on appeal. The Court's decision in Green v New Kent County required that school systems take affirmative action to end segregation when existing plans such as freedom of choice had failed to bring about desegregation of the schools. This final push, when used by black plaintiffs, brought about major changes in school systems.

The implementation of the Brown decision as educational policy in the South took a different path than previous federal policies. This policy came from the judiciary system which was not vulnerable to the kind of political pressure the South could exert on the legislative process and its intent could not be subverted easily. The methods of resistance had to be different. When the principle set forth by the court, however, was reinforced by the leadership of a



president, the aroused conscience of a nation and a Congress determined to resist the political pressures of a regional group, progress was made in bringing about compliance. Implementation of a federal policy in a climate of unwillingness on the part of the public seems to have the best chance of succeeding if there is genuine leadership and ample popular support from other groups in the society. The combined efforts of the judicial, legislative and executive branches of the government finally helped bring about an acceptable level of compliance with the Brown decision.

Has the intent of the Brown decision been met in Richmond Public Schools? The answer would have to be "no" if the framers of the decision envisioned classrooms of black and white students learning and working harmoniously together, each benefiting from the experience. In Richmond, more students are in all-black schools now than before the Brown decision was rendered. There are a handful of schools where there is integration, either by special zoning or neighborhood residential patterns. Most white students, however, either attend private schools of varying quality or live in one of the surrounding counties, while the average black student in Richmond grows up without prolonged contact with persons of the

white race. If this interaction between persons of the black and white race was intended by Brown, then it has not been fulfilled.

If, on the other hand, the framers of the decision envisioned equal access to education without regard to race, Richmond is a school system where all students have the same opportunities, and all schools are equal. The administration of the school system is thoroughly integrated, with blacks in the key roles of superintendent and assistant superintendents, as well as in numerous administrative posts at lower levels. The city government provides many black role models for the youth of the city, as does the current School Board which is a very committed, interested group of citizens who are actively involved in the affairs of the school system.

Lindblom (1972) pointed out the incremental nature of the process of change in a democracy the size of the United States. Yet, he stresses, if one looks back over a period of time, the amount of change relative to a particular issue is often surprising. Many adults, both black and white, shared the comment that a great deal of change has occurred since 1954. No legal barriers keep the races separate in Richmond Public Schools in 1988, only those invisible barriers

which may exist in the hearts and minds of members of both races and which may be the most resistant ones to remove. These barriers will not be overcome by a court decision, nor by the concerted effort of all of the departments of the government at any level, nor by a School Board or a school administration, but only by a commitment on the part of the American people to live up to the promise of equality woven into our constitution.

#### Implications for Further Research

The implementation of the Brown decision as a federal policy in education suggests comparative studies on other federal policies and their results at the local level. Millions of dollars have been poured into local school systems for the education of the disadvantaged, and it would be enlightening to determine if there are long-term gains as a result of these policies. There is some evidence that Head Start programs have positive effects, but knowledge of the long-term effects of Chapter I programs in reading, mathematics and visual literacy would be helpful in determining what types of intervention succeed and what are the long-range possibilities of such programs.

The effectiveness of the different roles of School Boards in improving education for students would be an interesting topic to pursue. Is the "disinterested" school board more or less effective than the involved board in effecting change in a school system? Are schools more effective when left in the hands of the professionals, or when there is community involvement and interest? What are the benefits for students of the two approaches?

What is the role of the federal government in education? Is it that of temporary intervention, followed by a loss of interest, or should it be more permanent and organized? A study of the advantages and the disadvantages of various federal policies as they affect the local school system would add to our knowledge in this field and perhaps point out the direction in which we should go. If there had been more consensus in our thinking about the federal role, the reaction to the Brown decision could have been quite different and more positive in its educational implications.

A final area of interest that emerges from the study of both the Richmond and the San Francisco cases is the superintendency, its power and its limitations. The strong superintendent, bureaucratic organizations

and orderly conduct of schools helped in gaining the strong public support for education that existed up to the 1960's. In urban school systems, superintendents can be powerful, and the attitudes displayed can affect the entire system. What was the effect of superintendents on the desegregation of schools in other urban settings? In the case of Richmond and San Francisco, was it the style of the superintendent that was the important factor, or was it the limitations of the role that made each one ineffective in dealing with controversy and change? This questions can only be answered by comparison with other superintendents in similar situations to see if a pattern emerges.

The Brown decision has been the subject of much discussion for the 34 years that have passed since it was rendered. Through it a social revolution has been brought about in the country, not only in education but in every other aspect of living. The revolution is far from being completely successful, and there may need to be other Brown's before all citizens in the United States gain equality. One would hope that the lessons learned from the experience of the past 34 years will assist in bringing about any future changes with greater understanding and wisdom.

## CHAPTER 6

### REFERENCES

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## EPILOGUE

When the Richmond Public Schools were desegregated, the Richmond School Board, at the urging of parents and community leaders, voted to appeal the decision of the court that the schools must operate under Plan III, which required considerable busing. At the same time, the Board approved a joinder motion to be presented to the court, asking that the surrounding counties be joined in the suit. The purpose behind this motion was to have the court consider ordering consolidation of the three school systems, in order to stop white flight to the counties and to create a system which would be about 65% white. The idea of consolidation was not new. Mutual cooperation by the two counties and the city had been taking place through regional planning for some time, but this was the first time that a multi-unit school administration had been proposed.

The wrath of the community leaders in Richmond and that of the two counties was heaped upon the School Board members. The Board persisted in its action, however, and a lengthy trial was held before Judge

Merhige of the Eastern District Court of Virginia. The result of the joinder motion now made the School Board and the Bradley plaintiffs partners together in the suit, where they had once been adversaries. This period of Richmond's history has been carefully detailed by Eric Williams in his honors thesis for the College of William and Mary in Virginia (1988).

When Judge Merhige ruled on the case in 1972, in a carefully developed opinion, he ruled in favor of the consolidation (The Richmond School Decision, 1972). The appeal of the decision was overturned by the Fourth Circuit Court, sending the case to the Supreme Court. When the case was heard by the Supreme Court, Justice Powell, former chairman of the Richmond School Board, withdrew from consideration of the case, leaving only eight justices to rule on it. The Supreme Court was divided in its decision, four-to-four, thereby upholding the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals and ending consideration of consolidation as a tactic for bring about desegregation of school systems.

The Richmond Schools remained under the court's scrutiny for the next several years, needing court approval to change boundary lines for school zones or any other changes that might affect the racial make-up of the schools. White flight continued at a much



slower pace and eventually came to a standstill, although the school system now began to lose student population through the movement of the black population into areas of the two surrounding counties.

In 1984, the School Board decided to re-open the Bradley case once more. In Kansas the original Brown case had been re-opened, asking the court to require the state to provide funds to assist black students in "catching up," after it had allowed them to be educated in segregated schools. The court in Kansas ruled in favor of the additional funding, and the Richmond Board took a similar approach, seeking additional funds from the state of Virginia to assist in removing the vestiges of state-mandated segregation from the school system. In July, 1986, Judge Merhige (Richmond Times-Dispatch, July 11, 1986) ruled against the Board, saying that there were no longer any vestiges of state-mandated segregation in the Richmond Public Schools, thereby ending U.S. control of the school system.

The long history of the Bradley case had come to an end. Or had it? The Richmond School Board still has the option to appeal this last decision and could yet decide to do so. Just as the interpretation of Plessy v Ferguson continued for 60 years after it was first

rendered, so the Brown decision may continue to influence court decisions and educational practice for many years into the future.

## EPILOGUE

### REFERENCE NOTES

1. Eric Williams' Honors Thesis, "Struggle and Strife: Proposed Consolidation of Public Schools in Richmond, Virginia", is available through the College of William and Mary in Virginia, Swem Library Archives (1988).
2. The Richmond School Decision is available in its entirety from Integrated Associates.

## APPENDIX A

The following excerpt is from the official Minutes of the Richmond School Board.

June 9, 1955

The following statement was approved by the School Board and ordered to be entered upon the minutes of the Board:

In view of the Supreme Court's recent decision in the segregation cases and the widespread public interest in how this decision will be implemented, our Board wishes to make the following statement:

The public school system in Virginia is established and primarily governed by State law, including constitutional provisions as well as enactments of the General Assembly. A Special Commission appointed by the Governor is now studying the enormously complicated problem of the changes in State law which may be necessary in view of the Supreme Court holding that "racial discrimination in public education is unconstitutional."

The General Assembly of Virginia will consider and act upon the report of the Special Commission, possibly at a special session convened by the Governor.

The recent decision of the Supreme Court recognized that one of the considerations, necessarily involved in making the transition contemplated by its decree, is the "revision of local laws and regulations."

In view of the foregoing, it would, in our opinion, be premature for the Richmond School Board to take any action on this subject until such time as it is known what policy will be established on the State level. The Board and the Administration will, however, continue to study this problem with the greatest care. The framework of State law, when this is revised, will undoubtedly leave a measure of discretion at the local

level in view of "varied local school problems," as the Court said.

The solution of these problems, in the best interest of all our people and in a manner which will preserve the public school system under law, is a matter of the utmost concern to the School Board, the Administration, and we believe to all the citizens of Richmond.

## APPENDIX B

The following excerpt is from the official Minutes of the Richmond School Board

August 27, 1956

### School Board Statement Re Segregation

The Board issued the following statement and directed that copies be forwarded to the members of the City Council and to the Richmond delegation of the General Assembly:

On June 9, 1955, in its statement of policy on the problems resulting from the Supreme Court's decision on segregation in the public schools, the Richmond School Board announced that it felt it would be "premature for the Richmond School Board to take any action on this subject until such time as it is known what policy will be established on the State level. The Board and the Administration will, however, continue to study this problem with the greatest care. The framework of State law, when this is revised, will undoubtedly leave a measure of discretion at the local level in view of "varied local school problems", as the Court said."

The General Assembly is meeting this week to determine what the policy shall be on the State level. The outcome of these deliberations is of great concern to the Richmond City School Board and to the citizens of Richmond, as it will be to other communities throughout the Commonwealth. Our controlling interest must still be in a solution that is "in the best interest of all of our people and in a manner which will preserve the public school system under law."

At the present time it seems that the attention of the General Assembly will be directed chiefly toward two proposals. One is the assignment plan which was the companion recommendation to the tuition grant proposal upon which the people voted in authorizing a constitutional amendment. The assignment plan and the

tuition grant program together were the foundation of the original recommendations of the Gray Commission which also placed great emphasis upon local autonomy and flexibility to meet local conditions.

Judge Bryan, in the Arlington decision, placed considerable emphasis on an assignment plan, and the recent decisions of both Judge Bryan and Judge Paul emphasized the legal responsibility that rested squarely on the local school boards and school superintendents.

It has been assumed that the special session of the General Assembly would enact into law the other provisions of the Gray Commission's report that were explained to the people during the campaign for the tuition grant program. More recently there has been increasing talk about abandoning the assignment plan in favor of other recommendations to be made by the Governor, and last week the Gray Commission, itself, voted 19 to 12 in favor of the Governor's proposal.

On the basis of information at present available the Board understands that the plan proposed by the Governor intends automatically to withhold State funds from all the schools of a given class (elementary or high) in a city or county if one child of one race is admitted to a school for children of the opposite race - even if that child is admitted as a direct result of a court order.

State funds amount to about 22% of the budget of the Richmond schools, or nearly two million dollars a year. The amount provided from local tax funds in this year's budget is approximately \$7,600,000. If State funds are withheld, it will not follow that segregated schools can be operated in Richmond. The loss of State funds could be offset by additional appropriations by the City Council. This would require action by the Council to increase the City's revenue. The alternatives would be a drastically reduced program of education or closing of the schools. The School Board would not be removed from the jurisdiction of the Federal courts to deal with the problem as long as schools remain open.

In localities that receive a much greater percentage of funds from the State, the withholding of State funds would seem to leave no alternative to the closing of schools.

Therefore, the School Board feels compelled to favor the assignment plan or some other plan that would give a greater measure of assistance in its previously announced position to preserve the public school system under law. Consequently, we are in agreement with the position taken by Mr. Randolph Tucker and Mr. Fitzgerald Bemiss, our representatives on the Gray Commission.

We believe that the people of Richmond want to preserve the public school system and to maintain increasingly higher standards of education. Therefore, it is our hope that the General Assembly will set State policy that will make this possible. We further believe that the General Assembly should provide a reasonable degree of flexibility under the law so that the people will not be forced to abandon their public schools in any locality without their expressed consent. The Board still feels as it did on June 9, 1955: "The solution of these problems, in the best interest of all of our people and in a manner which will preserve the public school system under law, is a matter of the utmost concern to the School Board, the Administration, and we believe to all the citizens of Richmond."



## APPENDIX C

The following excerpt is from the official Minutes of the Richmond School Board

Communication from the State Pupil Placement Board to the Division Superintendent, read into the minutes on August 23, 1957:

August 19, 1957  
Memo #11

TO: Division Superintendents  
FROM: J. W. Bland, Executive Secretary  
SUBJECT: Procedure for registering pupils at opening of 1957-58 session

A number of you have written and called, continuing to ask for a guide as to the procedure you should follow with the opening of your schools. You have our Memo #10, dated August 5, 1957, which sets forth very clearly the position of the Pupil Placement Board as follows:

"So far as this Board is advised, the Pupil Placement Act has not been invalidated by any court of last resort; and this Board will continue to exercise its duties under the Pupil Placement Act . . ."

Therefore, the earlier directives, rules and regulations of the Pupil Placement Board, which you have in Memos 1-10, inclusive, are still in effect and operative. The following is the situation at present:

1. No child can be legally enrolled in the public schools of the Commonwealth of Virginia until an application has been filed in his behalf, unless he remains in the school in which he was enrolled prior to December 29, 1956.

2. Temporary enrollment by the local school officials is permitted, until the application can be acted upon by the Pupil Placement Board of Virginia.

3. Each child entering a given school for the first time in September must have an application filed in his or her behalf.

4. In order not to work a hardship on the pupils or their parents, a fifteen-day period is allowed in which to secure the application locally.

5. In the event there is a refusal on the part of the parent or legal guardian of the pupil to file an application in the pupil's behalf, at that moment the pupil is no longer legally enrolled, and should not be allowed to further attend the public schools of Virginia. The fifteen-day rule does not apply in such instances; and you should instruct your principal and teachers not to admit such a pupil to school at all, not even for one day.

If we can be of service, do not hesitate to call on us.

## APPENDIX D

The following excerpt was taken from the official Minutes of the Richmond School Board

March 30, 1966

### Special Meeting

This meeting was held pursuant to a call issued for the purpose of conferring with counsel in reference to litigation pending in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. To further explain the purpose of this meeting the Chairman presented the following statement:

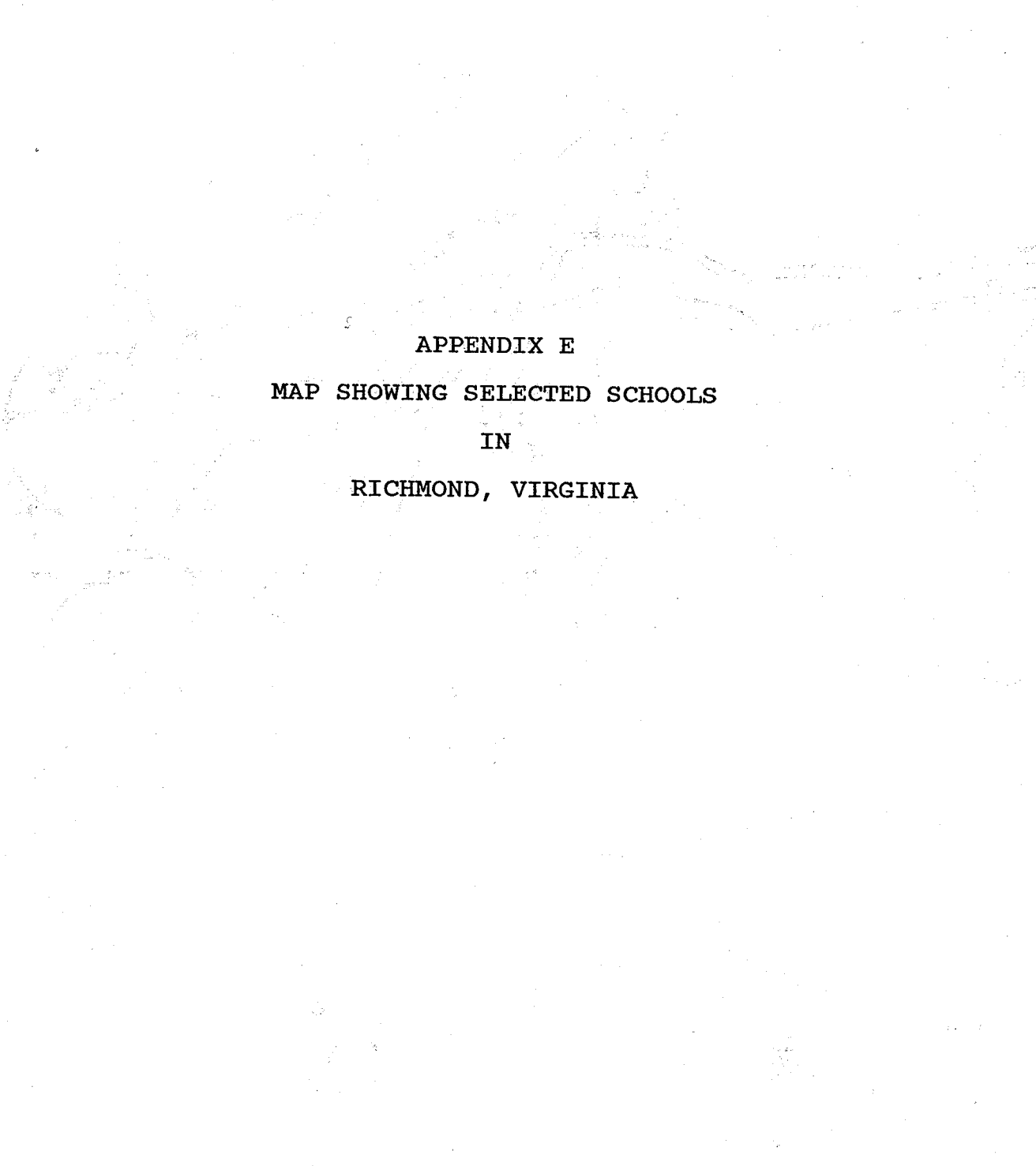
The purpose of this meeting is to consider a proposed plan of school desegregation which represents the results of an effort to find enough points of agreement around the conference table to enable the School Board to make constructive progress toward the fulfillment of its responsibility as determined by law and controlled by the criteria of what is best for all the children of Richmond. This agreement is the result of many hours of discussion and planning, and represents a compromise that strives to maintain for all parties concerned a fair and reasonable position in relationship to the principles and realities of the complex problems of school desegregation.

This plan will hardly gain the full approval of any one individual as that is the very nature of compromise. The success of the plan will require cooperation and understanding plus a willingness to suspend judgment on the merits or demerits of the plan until results of its implementation can be known and evaluated.

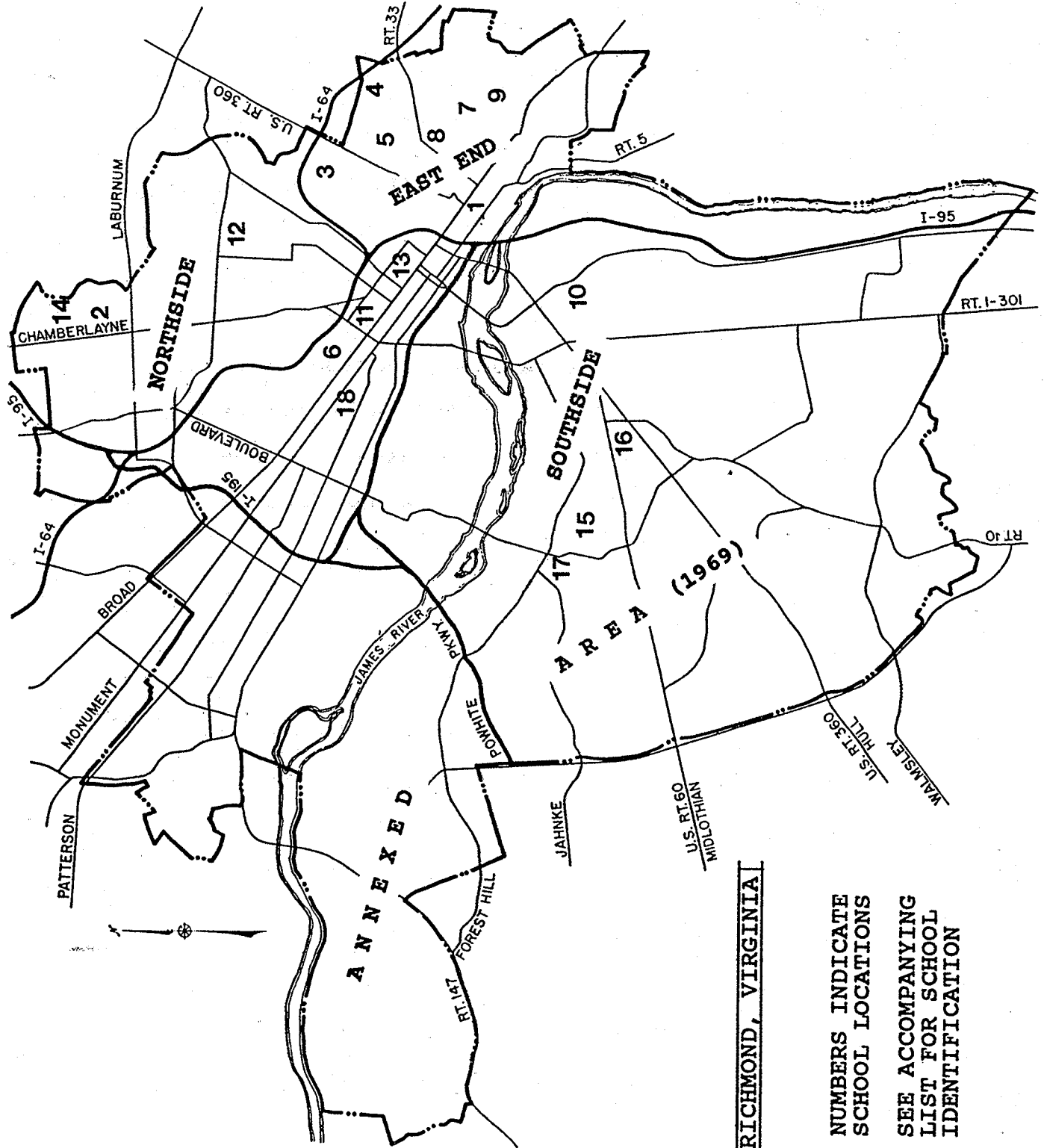
The most encouraging part of the process that led to these proposals was the desire expressed by all participating parties to operate with an increased measure of faith and confidence in terms of what is fair, reasonable, and best for Richmond and its children. The problems of desegregation and race relationships extend far beyond the

responsibility of the School Board. It is hoped that this effort to reach local agreements will serve to increase the dialogue and discussion between the leaders of both races with the hope that the leadership of the community on all levels, without regard to race, can be more effectively used in decision-making that reflects the best interests of our City.

Attention should now focus on a process that has brought a measure of success at least in reaching this agreement on the local level. The success of the plan will be a matter for future determination and will be related to the efforts, good faith, cooperation, and understanding of a lot of people on local, state, and Federal levels.



**APPENDIX E**  
**MAP SHOWING SELECTED SCHOOLS**  
**IN**  
**RICHMOND, VIRGINIA**



**RICHMOND, VIRGINIA**

NUMBERS INDICATE  
SCHOOL LOCATIONS  
SEE ACCOMPANYING  
LIST FOR SCHOOL  
IDENTIFICATION

SCHOOLS DESIGNATED ON MAP

1. Bellevue
2. Ginter Park
3. Whitcomb Court
4. Fairfield Court
5. Fairmount
6. Randolph-Maymont Area
7. Nathaniel Bacon
8. Chimborazo
9. East End School
10. Blackwell
11. Graves
12. Chandler
13. John Marshall (old)
14. John Marshall (new)
15. George Wythe (new)
16. Franklin
17. Westover Hills
18. Stonewall Jackson

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Mrs. Alice Calloway, Former School Board Member.

Mr. Herbert Crockett, Principal, Richmond Public Schools.

Mrs. Virginia Crockford, Former School Board Member.

Mrs. Bernice P. Johnson, Teacher, Richmond Public Schools.

Dr. Miles C. Jones, Former School Board Member.

Mr. Sylvio Lynch, Parent

Mr. A. Edward Ooghe, Principal, Richmond Public Schools.

Dr. Edward C. Peple, Former School Board Member.

Mrs. Valerie B. Pryor, Teacher, Richmond Public Schools.

Ms. Willi Williams, Former Student in Richmond Public Schools.

Numerous other individuals who have shared thoughts and experiences with me over the course of this research.

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## Vita

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## Abstract

### THE RICHMOND SCHOOL BOARD AND THE DESEGREGATION OF RICHMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1954-1971

Mildred Davis Bruce, Ed.D.

The College of William and Mary in Virginia, May 1988

Chairman: Professor William F. Losito, Ph. D.

The purpose of this study was to describe and interpret the desegregation process in a southern city through an examination of the issues faced by the local school board and its response to these issues, in order to gain knowledge about the implementation of a federal policy at the local level.

The city of Richmond, Virginia, was chosen for this study because of its former role as capital of the southern Confederacy and its present role as the capital of the state of Virginia, a leader in the South's resistance to the Brown decision. As a city with a large black population, desegregation of schools was a major concern over a twenty-year period of time.

The case study method was used, using primary sources to describe the desegregation process and the Board's role. Some secondary and some primary sources were used to develop the historical background needed to provide a framework for analyzing and interpreting the events from 1954 to 1971. A brief comparison with the desegregation process in San Francisco served to validate the Richmond experience.

It was concluded that the implementation of a federal policy at the local level is affected by a variety of factors. Resistance to the implementation of a policy will be strongest when it is at variance with local traditions and if it threatens the local power structure. Compliance is achieved more readily through strong leadership, widespread support for change, and cooperative efforts among the branches of government to bring about compliance.

Further case studies of the implementation of other federal policies would be valuable in order to see if the conclusions are valid in all circumstances or if they apply only when a sweeping social change, such as desegregation, is called for.