

Busing Plan In Nassau Thwarted By Parents

By DAVID A. ANDELMAN

EAST MEADOW, L. I., — The immediate question was whether some 500 children should be bused from the Bowling Green Elementary School to two others nearby, clearing the way for a district-wide administration building in the old grammar school.

But the real question the seven-member Board of Education and the audience of more than 400 mostly irate parents faced was whether in fact the neighborhood school still has any real value in the 1970's. And on the basis of community support, the answer was positive.

"This is the prime reason most of us moved to the suburbs in the first place," Mrs. Ruth Simonson, president of the Bowling Green Parent-Teacher Association said emotionally. "So we could identify with our children's school.

"For 16 years I gave my heart, my everything to this school. My second child graduates from it this year and my third child is in the second grade there. I can't sit by and see all my work destroyed.

"My little fellow has been crying for weeks at the thought of leaving his school. It would destroy his faith in education."

Consolidation Advanced

It was, in fact, two weeks ago, on Dec. 9, that parents in this district in the heart of Nassau County, adjacent to Levittown, first received word that in order to consolidate their scattered administrative system, the school board was considering busing as many as 500 students from Bowling Green to Salisbury Elementary School and two others to the Meadowbrook Elementary School. There are now 1,330 students at Bowling Green, but there are said to be 17 empty classrooms in Salisbury alone.

The vacant classrooms in Bowling Green would have been used to consolidate the district's administration. Additionally, the proposal, presented by a special community commission set up to advise the school board, would have destroyed a playing field at Bowling Green, converting it to a parking lot.

The first school board meeting since word of the plan became known was held on Monday. The Concerned Citizens and Taxpayers of East Meadow were on hand with an anti-busing petition bearing 2,667 signatures. And the organization had mobilized their neighbors to the extent that the 400-seat auditorium was filled and the crowd had overflowed into the corridors of the East Meadow High School.

There were no racial overtones here, no hints of one side of the track pitted against the other. But the mood, as the school board president, Norman Bard, convened the meeting, was ugly.

Explaining that the committee's plan was incomplete and was to be resubmitted to the committee for revision, Mr. Bard said any action would be premature. Jeers and shouts of derision greeted his remarks.

Then, a board member, Michael F. Meyer, introduced a resolution rejecting any recommendation to "reassign pupils," or bus them from their neighborhood school.

Two board members, Robert C. Werner and Bernard Rifkin, abstained, contending that the committee, which had spent nine months studying the use of school facilities, should be given the opportunity to present its report formally. But the five other members agreed unanimously on the resolution.

Support Explained

"As a mother and a woman, I can fully understand the concept of the neighborhood school," said Mrs. Lucy Gaglione, a board member.

"It is not feasible to move 500 children out of the Bowling Green school," Mr. Bard said.

"I am in favor of the neighborhood school concept," said Robert Strathman, a board member. "I don't believe moving 300 or 400 students out of that school would be moral in order to provide office space."

"I feel these recommendations for busing are not educationally or economically sound in today's environment and they are disruptive of a large segment of our community," echoed board member Dale Edwards.

"I felt with all these people coming out today, we had to take some action—I could not rule Mr. Meyer's resolution out of order," Mr. Bard explained to the parents after the vote—a demonstration of the power of a community united behind a single issue.

"We'll remember your names in the next election," shouted Richard Stroblas, on the verge of hysteria, addressing the two board members who abstained from voting on the anti-busing motion. "You don't say, 'I refuse to vote.' There's enough of that at the United Nations."

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