

Arlington Front Line in Segregation Fight

By MARY LOU WERNER
Star Staff Writer

Arlington County, by location and litigation, is the front line of Virginia's struggle to preserve school segregation. It also is the weakest link in the State's "massive resistance" defense.

The fact that the county test next month when they collide with Federal Court integration orders.

The 24-square mile county, which has been under Federal court orders to desegregate since September, 1957, has received applications from 31 Negro students to enter six white schools. This includes two who last year won court orders to attend the white schools of their choice and who propose to exercise that choice September 4 when the fall term begins.

Oppose State Stand

Through elected representatives in the State government, its own local government, the ballot box and even the State's anti-integration program of closing schools and cutting off funds.

White residents already are planning to challenge the State's massive resistance laws in court. All that the county has decided is when a suit should be filed—before school definitely close or after.

There is room for argument whether a majority of the county's white residents are anxious to accept the State's stand. But on the question of closing schools—or even tampering with them—the county has spoken in many ways.

Arlington's entire legislative delegation opposed the laws last year on the basis of massive resistance.

Twice the politically divided county board forged differences to support unanimously moves aimed at keeping schools open.

Voters Take Stand

At the ballot box, the county first expressed itself on the matter of meddling with schools in the Gray referendum held in January, 1956.

At issue was whether or not the State constitution should be amended to permit closing of tuition grants for private schooling of students to avoid integration.

The referendum carried the State as a whole by better than three to one—but not in Arlington. Fearful of any move to weaken the public school system they had spent much time and money improving, Arlington residents turned the idea down with a vote of 10,306 to 8,065.

In last fall's gubernatorial election when the massive resistance was the paramount issue and Little Rock was fresh ammunition for that cause, Arlington gave a 1,300-vote margin to the Republican candidate—State Senator Ted Bland—who campaigned against the school closing, full cut-off measures. He lost Statewide by only two to one to Gov. Almond.

PTAs Against Shutdown

The Arlington County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations in April adopted a resolution opposing closed schools. A resolution approved by the Arlington Civic Federation in June urges support of maintaining public education. Twenty-eight Arlington ministers issued a statement opposing the use of church facilities for private schooling such as pro-segregation groups have advocated to avoid integration.

Leading the movement to keep Arlington schools open is the Committee to Preserve Public Schools. So far, there is no organization like it anywhere else in the State.

Function of the committee is "to pursue every legal means to keep public schools open." Its organizers include leaders from liberal and conservative factions in county politics, and membership stands over 3,000, according to officers.

O. Glenn Stahl, a former school board member, is chairman. Head of a local subcommittee is Warren Cox, another former school board member.

Bid to Almond Failed

A delegation from the committee tried without success to get a commitment from Gov. Almond whether he would let the county reopen any school closed by integration.

Under the school closing law the Governor is supposed to try to reorganize a closed school on a segregated basis.

Mr. Cox's legal subcommittee on several occasions has expressed the opinion that the closing of schools can be prevented by filing a court petition to bar the law from taking effect.

Chairman Ralph Kaul of the Arlington County Board is confident the majority of Arlington's residents want to keep schools open, and believes the means can be found to do it. Mr. Kaul is a member of the more liberal political coalition—the Arlingtonians for a Better County—who have a one-vote majority on the five-member board.

The current chairman of the school board is Robert Peck, a conservative who favors continued segregation. The school board is divided with two liberals, two conservatives and one swing man who was appointed by a former county board controlled by conservatives.

Mr. Peck is confident a majority of Arlington's schools will open this fall. If not, he believes the Governor should be given a "reasonable

Arlington Asks Delaying of School Order

The Arlington County School Board plans to seek clarification of a Federal Court desegregation order before school opens September 4.

Judge Albert Bryan of Alexandria last year ordered seven Negroes accepted into white Arlington schools, but county officials contend the order is not valid for the coming school session. Five of the seven still want to attend the white schools.

A member of the school board told a reporter after a meeting last night that the board has decided informally to seek an order delaying Judge Bryan as soon as the jurist returns from a European vacation. The spokesman said Judge Bryan is expected back September 1 or 2 and has indicated he will be available for a conference immediately.

At last night's meeting, the board heard conflicting advice about how to handle the racial issue.

A major point made by the group seeking to keep schools open was that the school board has not told the public what it is doing to meet the Federal order. The spokesman said, "It is the duty and the responsibility of the school board to tell the people of Arlington the rapidly approaching crisis and to tell the people the steps which the board intends to take."

Mr. Howard W. Lehman, chairman of the Citizens Committee for School Improvement, said his group would hold an immediate enrollment "so the people can be sure exactly what will happen when the school opens."

William Lightsey, representative of the County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations, said the people need to know ahead of time what schools may be closed or reorganized under State law.

Mrs. Lorna Hutchings, chairman of the School Committee of the Arlington Civic Federation, urged the board to "provide as rapidly as possible whatever legal procedures are necessary" to keep the schools open and to inform the public.

The four groups urged the board to request the Governor immediately to release for local operation any school which might be closed by the State.

Board Member James Stockard said the community needs to know where it stands as soon as possible.

"I'm getting more nervous each day that we don't make our thinking known," he said.

Several segregationist spokesmen suggested that the school board make plans to use all available space in open schools for teaching "basic" subjects if some schools are closed.

Edmund A. Gibson, president of the Arlington Citizens Council, told the board it has a "legal and moral obligation to do everything possible to usurpation of State rights by massive resistance to the usurpation of State rights by Federal authorities."

Two Ordinances Involved

They said agitators will be dealt with firmly and crowds will not be permitted to form.

"I think we can handle any situation which might arise with local police," Maj. Fawver said.

"Every policeman is being instructed to enforce strictly two county disorderly conduct ordinances which have been on the books for many years," he said.

The laws will be enforced against students as well as adults.

The ordinances make it unlawful for persons to congregate and engage in unreasonable or boisterous talking; to make rude or obscene gestures or comments; to obstruct free use of streets or public buildings; to use profane language, or to place anything on the street or public buildings which might injure anyone.

Agitators to Be Watched

All policemen are being instructed in laws covering civil disturbances and given practice with shotguns, tear gas and police clubs. In addition, officers will be given training in close order drill and formations designed to disperse crowds.

Enrollment Now Urged

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Issue Beaten in 1947

The race issue, which has proved so disruptive politically to integrated Washington's nearest Virginia suburb, began to stalk the county in 1947. A Negro high school student, Constance Carter, filed suit to win equal high school opportunities for Negroes.

The first Negro to take advantage of an order desegregating a public opportunity was Richard O. Green, who was taught auto mechanics alone in a shop at Washington High School for white students.

From that time on, hardly a year has passed without some difficulty or litigation. A suit was brought against a former school board to bar integration at a teachers meeting. Arrests have been made at political meetings attended by Negroes and whites. Recently a Negro was arrested at an integrated church picnic.

The former elected school board, in 1956, announced a tentative school reorganization plan to comply with the Supreme Court's ruling. School board members thought they were doing was in keeping with the original Gray plan.

The General Assembly retaliated by taking away Arlington's elected school board, and ever since then segregationists have warned that localities cannot be trusted to handle the school problem—look what almost happened in Arlington.

Court Issues Order

Negro parents, meanwhile, went to court to ask for enforcement of the Supreme Court decree. On July 15, 1956, Judge Albert V. Bryan issued an order forbidding the county from denying students admission to public schools because of race. Enforcement of that order was held up until the following year by appeals, but has been in effect against the school board since last September—the first actual desegregation order to take effect in the State.

Mr. Bryan's first attempt to enter white Arlington schools last September, when eight of them showed up at four white schools.

The county took the position they had not been assigned those schools by the State Pupil Placement Board, and more litigation followed. It wound up with Judge Bryan ordering seven Negro students into four white schools. Against his order was held up for an appeal.

Five of those students, plus their parents, filed suit for admission to county schools this fall. The county school board is taking the position again that they must be assigned to a class by the Pupil Assignment

Arlington Police Drill To Avert School Crisis

The Arlington County Manager and police chief yesterday said county police will protect all students, white or Negro, assigned to any school on opening day, September 4.

"Assigning students is not our job, but no matter who it is supposed to enter the school, white or colored, the police will see that there is no disturbance," Manager A. T. Landberg said.

Mr. Landberg and Chief William G. Fawver revealed that the 171-man police force is undergoing training "aimed at deterring 'involving civil disturbances.'"

The chief said all police cars have been cancelled for September.

Mr. Landberg said county officials are working with Alexandria and Fairfax to develop plans for assistance if any is needed. He said he hasn't considered any aid from the State police.

The county manager said that by the opening date he expects to have a list from local school officials of what students are assigned to each school so that he can post police at possible trouble spots.

"Who goes into what school is not our worry. Our job is to protect life, limb and property," Mr. Landberg said.

County G. O. P. Starts Fund Drive Monday

"In neighbor-to-neighbor" campaign to raise funds for the Republican Party will begin Monday in Montgomery County.

The drive is part of a National-wide program to increase voter interest in politics sponsored by the Advertising Council and the American Heritage Foundation.

Mrs. Daniel Shields of 8508 Hempstead avenue, Bethesda, is chairman of the county campaign. The initial contribution was given yesterday by Representative Hyde, Republican of Maryland, who received a share of "stock" in the Republican Party.

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Budget Aide Files For School Board

William R. Thomas III, a management specialist at the Bureau of the Budget, announced yesterday as a candidate for the Monticello County School Board from the 3d district.

A resident of the county since 1940, he lives at 4716 Albemarle avenue, Garrett Park. He is married and has three daughters, two attending public school.

Mr. Thomas is a graduate of Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School and the University of Georgia.

He is first vice president of the County PTA Council. He has served as legislative chairman and president of the Monticello View Elementary School.

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