

Now shall the "Townies" be heard, alas? In Boston, where the "Southies" sought to make busing an ethnic rather than racial issue, moms and cops are once again girding for the start of school. This time the focus is on Charlestown. The difference isn't much.

'Townies' Get Turn in Boston Busing Battle

By Daniel Q. Haney



White Fist Greets Passersby in Charlestown Section of Boston Area Soon to Be Involved for First Time in School Busing

BOSTON (AP)—People in the Charlestown section of Boston call where they live simply "the town." Their neighbors, the "Townies" in this little piece of big city spread, know exactly what they mean.

And now, so do public safety officials, because the phrase is another example of the neighborhood pride they fear could turn this out-of-the-way corner of Boston into the newest flashpoint in the city's tumultuous school integration case.

Protection of local turf helped unite South Boston—known there as "Southie"—against the yellow school buses last fall. The same emotion is knitting Charlestown in rebellion against the forced integration of its neighborhood schools that begins Monday.

Like South Boston, Charlestown is white, Irish and virtually isolated from the rest of the city by geographic and man-made barriers.

Administratively, at least, it is part of Boston. But in spirit, Charlestown is a bulwark of the kind of small town love of home and suspicion of outsiders that is usually reserved for offshore islands and backwoods hamlets.

It is the classic example of the Boston neighborhood, the patchwork of ethnic strongholds that give the inner city its air of curbside conviviality. But it also emits an ingrained self-consciousness that discourages the cross-city exchange of cultures that is at the heart of school integration.

These neighborhoods, proud and defensive, are the basic urban unit in Boston. Their residents share similar heritage, race, income and outlook. There are the Italians in the North End and East Boston, the Irish in Charlestown and South Boston and the blacks in Roxbury and parts of Dorchester. West Roxbury is suburban-like and middle income. Students dominate the Back Bay.

SOME OF these neighborhoods were ordered by the U.S. District Court to integrate last September, while others, like Charlestown, were bypassed.

This fall, however, every part of the city but East Boston is drawn into a federal program that requires 26,000 of the 84,000 school children in Boston to ride out of their neighborhoods on buses.

At best, the result in white sections of the city is apt to be a boycott that will keep youngsters out of school and on the streets.

In a poll conducted for the Boston Herald American, 82 per cent of the people in Charlestown said they opposed the court-ordered integration. City wide, 66 per cent said they were against it.

When asked about violence, 86 per cent of the Charlestown residents predicted there would be as much or more trouble as last year.

"The majority of people here are either absolutely opposed to busing or are apprehensive, fearful, confused—all of those adjectives," said John Gardner, a Charlestown leader. "It's viewed as an intrusion on individual rights." Gardner is head of the Kennedy Center, a neighborhood service organization.

"People are saying they won't send their kids on a bus out of the neighborhood," he said. "They are worried about what this is going to do to the fabric and peace of this area. Charlestown is one of the few places in the city where people can walk the streets safely at night, and they want to keep it that way."

The place they want to protect is one square mile of narrow streets and apartment buildings. Charlestown is home to about 15,000 people. At the last census, 76 of them were black.

They live in two- and three-story wooden tenements, covered with painted shingles and imitation stone, and once-elegant brick townhouses that have been split into apartments.

The old buildings stand shoulder to shoulder up and down Charlestown's two historic high points of land—Breed's Hill and Bunker Hill.

THE CLEAN, car-lined streets bear names like Warren, Hancock and Prescott after the patriots who played a part in Charlestown's moment of history, the battle of Bunker Hill 200 years ago last June.

More important to Charlestown than its past, however, is its location. It is virtually cut off from Boston and neighboring cities by Boston Harbor, the Mystic River, elevated highways, factories and railroad yards. Most traffic in and out must cross bridges.

Charlestown shows the kind of isolation that has helped keep other Boston neighborhoods—among them South Boston, East Boston and the North End—the way they are, enclaves of people with something in common, a shared view of the world outside.

Residents are townies first and Boston-

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ans a distant second. They live, in their minds, on an island, far from the frightening swirl of strange people a neighborhood away.

"We are all cousins over here," said Maurice Gillem, a power company meter reader. "We intermarry. We have large families. It isn't considered ignorant over here to have five or six kids. We are opposed to having our community way of life destroyed."

"We believe in a strong, close neighborhood. We'd be just as happy if they towed Boston into the harbor. We don't feel connected with it in any way."

Although strongly opposed to busing, Gillem is a member of the Citywide Coordinating Council, which is monitoring integration for the court, and says he has worked this summer to keep the school opening peaceful.

"We don't want any violence," he said. "We're against busing, but we're not racists. We don't object to blacks coming in. We just don't want our kids to go out."

But the possibility of violence, in Charlestown and elsewhere, is a worry to safety officials. On the first day of school, they plan to have 2,100 policemen plus federal marshals on the streets. National Guardsmen will be ready to move in if needed.

The police will concentrate around three high schools. Two are proven trouble spots—South Boston and Hyde Park. The other is Charlestown High, a school that

sits near the crest of Bunker Hill. It will be integrated for the first time.

THE PRESIDENT of the Home and School Assn. (Boston's version of the PTA) at Charlestown High is Tom Johnson, a city street sweeper.

"There won't be too many kids going to school," Johnson predicted. "I hope not. I advocate a boycott for the safety of my children."

If there is enough resistance, the business will eventually have to end, Johnson says, even if it means a constitutional amendment.

"People would be damned fools to give in," he says. "I won't give in one inch. Until the last kid is off the bus, that's when I'll give in."

Johnson maintains that many of the blacks bused into white areas are troublemakers who start fights with the neighborhood children.

Johnson, a stocky man who wears sunglasses indoors, is also on the executive board of Restore Our Alienated Rights, an antibusing group that goes by its acronym, ROAR. It is the loudest and strongest organized opponent of forced integration in the city.

Each Wednesday night, about 600 of its members hold meetings in the city council chamber in City Hall. Their leader and most visible member is Councilor Louise Day Hicks, a former congresswoman who has built her political career on opposition to busing.

Beginning as a member of the Boston School Committee and later in two unsuccessful tries for mayor, Mrs. Hicks has led her supporters—white, working class people—in opposition to integration.

It has been her issue since the state legislature passed a law in 1965 making it illegal for any school in Massachusetts to be more than 50 per cent black.

Other politicians, however, have taken up the antibusing cause. Among them are most members of the Boston School Committee, the elected board responsible for running the schools.

Now, there is hardly a white politician in Boston who will publicly endorse busing. One of those who comes closest is Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, a man whose political family is still revered in Irish Boston.

KENNEDY SAYS busing is one method—although not the best—for bringing about necessary change. And because of

this stand, Kennedy faces booing crowds of ROAR supporters wherever he goes in the Boston area. He is wary about venturing now into places like South Boston.

To these busing opponents, people like Kennedy are responsible for taking away a fundamental right, the right to attend neighborhood schools.

"If my children want to go to school in Roxbury for a particular reason to take some program, they can go," said Johnson, the ROAR leader from Charlestown. "But being forced, that's another thing. The government can come right into your home and tell your children where to go, even if the parents object."

But there are some parents in Boston who question ROAR's reasoning. For one thing, neighborhood schools are not as common as some people say. Before court-ordered integration, about one-third of the children in the system had to ride buses back and forth to school.

And for another, they say, neighborhood schools have never been a right, only a custom.

For whatever reason, however, many parents were willing to let their children stay home when integration began last fall. In that program, 18,000 students were bused. For most of the year absenteeism at the junior and senior level was about 50 per cent.

In these working-class areas, diplomas have never been sacrosanct. In Charlestown, for instance, 55 per cent of the peo-

ple have not graduated from high school. And only 13 per cent of the students who make it through the local high school go on to college.

But there remain, rarely heard, the moderate parents who reject the tactics of ROAR, who would like to keep their children close to home but believe their educations come first.

ONE OF these is Virginia Winters, a mother of 10 who lives in a low-income housing project in Charlestown.

Of the seven who are school age, all but one will be bused out of the neighborhood. "We don't like busing, but we've got to live with it," Mrs. Winters said. "I am an antibuser who is pro-education."

In a place like Charlestown, where people know their neighbors, views like those can cause trouble.

"There has been no out and out harassment," Mrs. Winters said. "It's a very subtle thing. It means peer ostracism. All of a sudden, you are viewed as different from a lot of people, and now you find some people don't want to be seen talking to you on the street. They are afraid of being branded probusing, as I have been."

Even though it would be easier to keep them home, Mrs. Winters says her children will be in school opening day.

"My kids need an education to survive. Five years from now, I can't see my kids saying, 'Thanks, Mom, for keeping me out of school so I can't get a job.'"

L. T. Anderson

Youth Not Known For Relentlessness

The news story about the straw poll taken at the convention of the Young Democrats of America told us that delegates favored Sen. Birch Bayh for president.

Deep in the story was a more significant bit of news. Only 40 per cent of the delegates bothered to cast ballots. It is a fact borne out by statistics that spirited young people are anxious to express their opinions anywhere except at the polls.

The quadrennial summing-up by Scammon and Wattenberg invariably reveals a distinct lack of interest in national elections on the part of young persons eligible to vote, and did so even before Sen. Jennings Randolph labored mightily to extend the vote to 18-year-olds.

MY SON, a young Democrat, occasionally confronts me with the unassailable evidence of corruption, blundering, cynicism, or mental aberration among the older people who manage the nation's affairs. He likes to linger on the example of Hubert Humphrey, who chose to be loyal to Lyndon Johnson rather than to the masses of aggrieved Americans, declared the Vietnam War a "glorious adventure," recognized reality too late, lost an election, blithely switched positions, and was returned with a gratifying vote to the Senate where he opposes full amnesty to young war resisters who were right when he was wrong.

To this I reply that Humphrey was returned to a seat of power with the assistance of the young people of Minnesota who didn't bother to vote. I further observe that when George McGovern made an undisguised appeal for youth support he was heeded in the streets but not in the voting booths. Thus the young people helped give Richard Nixon to the nation and the courts.

Casual observation at my own polling place convinces me that the affairs of government are left almost solely in the hands of that comfortable class which has already got pretty much what it wants. It is amusing to daydream of the panic that would ensue if the young people of America ever actually approached the polls in an organized attempt to rid government of the paunchy drones presently in charge.

But it is only a daydream. The young people of America, even when they are gathered at conventions, don't exercise, or even recognize, their own power.

If 90 per cent of the delegates to the Young Democrats convention had agreed upon a single candidate and if young people were known to be relentless voters, Hubert Humphrey would be wearing jeans and Earth shoes.



'The Town, Is One Square Mile of Clean, Narrow Streets Charlestown Could Become Newest Flashpoint in Boston Turmoil