

## Book Corner

### Southern Regional Report

The successful efforts of Memphis, Tennessee, to desegregate its schools in a peaceful manner during the past school year are examined at length in a report issued today by the Southern Regional Council. The report is authored by John Egerton, a Tennessee native and long-time education writer.

An introduction to the report notes that the Memphis story is indicative of SRC's long-term interest in matters relating not only to school desegregation and education but to positive efforts by local leadership to meet and try to solve some of the most difficult administrative problems facing all cities in the South and the nation today.

Egerton chronicles the events leading up to and through January 24, 1973, when the country's tenth largest public school system began implementing the initial phase of a court-ordered desegregation plan, and 65 buses — the first ever used in Memphis — rolled through the city streets.

How did it happen that in a city where there had been organized resistance and organized support, threats of disruption and rumors of violence, feverish strategy sessions, intensive planning, meticulous preparation that the atmosphere in Memphis on January 24, 1973, can be described by Egerton as one of "subdued anticlimax?"

About that day he writes, "Absenteeism was high, but nobody bothered the buses, or the kids, or the teachers." A one-column headline in the afternoon *Memphis Press-Scimitar* read "Quiet Day As Busing Is Started." "Absences, Calm Mark Busing," said the next morning's *Commercial Appeal*. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* had reporters in town for a couple of days, and two of the television networks noted the event briefly on their evening news programs.

Egerton asks, "What is the significance of the events of January 24 there? What are the implications for urban school systems elsewhere in the country? How did Memphis do what it did, and why did it do it? What has happened since then, and what is likely to happen next?"

Egerton's dominant impression and tentative conclusions are these: "Memphis has started to bus children to school in the face of strong opposition, and has done it in a manner that is, on the

whole, impressive. The city is deeply and seriously divided within itself on the issue of school integration. The hardest phase of desegregation by busing still remains to be faced. The job of making integration a success for individual students and teachers is just now beginning. And the city's search for equity and stability is still a long way from being finished."

In tracing the events leading up to and through January 24, Egerton begins in March, 1960, when the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) first filed a desegregation suit against the Memphis school system. Then there were just over 100,000 students in the schools — about 55 per cent of them white — and segregation was absolute.

Egerton points out that as the Memphis school system has grown in the past decade, so has its percentage of black students. "As the black enrollment grew," he writes, "the city annexed portions of surrounding Shelby County and managed to retain a white majority in the schools, but by the fall of 1970 the enrollment of more than 148,000 was slightly over 50 per cent black."

Today, after the implementation of the court-ordered busing plan, blacks make up 60 per cent of the total public school enrollment.

But for Egerton, the real Memphis story is not the "kaleidoscope of legal maneuvers, pressure-group strategies and statistical changes." He maintains that "A more complex and more illuminating story lies in the actions of powerful and influential Memphians in the final weeks and days leading up to January 24, when the city was finally faced with a court order that could no longer be avoided."

In October, chamber of commerce officials led in the formation of IMPACT — Involved Memphis Parents Assisting Children and Teachers — and with help from the school board staff they got a \$90,000 grant from the federal Emergency School Assistance Program to work in earnest on community acceptance of desegregation.

IMPACT was launched early in November. Said its chairman, Rev. James H. Holmes, "This program has been developed over the past several weeks out of a groundswell of interest from parents, students, teachers, citizens generally, and a number of organizations."

By the time IMPACT was announced, out: newspaper and television advertise-

ments, fact sheets, a telephone rumor control system, neighborhood meetings, its plan of action was already mapped a speaker's bureau, church and organizational support, research and trouble-shooting were all included in the strategy.

The Southern Regional Council was invited by leaders of the Chamber, the black community and the school system to assist IMPACT in its program, and three representatives of the Council were in Memphis during December and January as participant-observers.

In essence, the Memphis desegregation story is one of how a classic conflict developed between two powerful forces, and how that conflict came to be peacefully resolved.

Of the Memphis story, Council officials observe: "In a very real sense the Memphis story is a success story, a success hammered out in tough and realistic sessions between opposing forces, a success brought about against a background of much turmoil, citizen misunderstanding, all in a city which only five years ago was almost prostrated by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., all in a city which too often in the past had seemed wedded to the past."

### Laughing to Survive

From the irrepressible scholar of humor who claims that it is better to teach English than Chemistry, since an incorrect mixture of authors will not blow you up, comes a mini-anthology of light verse and playful prose: *It All Started With Freshman English — A Survival Kit for Students and Teachers of English and a Relaxed Review for Those Who Are Happily Past it All* (McGraw-Hill, \$5.95).

Author Richard Armour — it could not be anyone else! — gives the works to works from *Beowulf* to *The Forsyte Saga*, from the *Bay Psalm Book* to Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*. New material dominates a few classic favorites.

In his 47th book Armour proves again that his yoke is easy, his burden is light. Weighty problems are not now and have never been the province of this emeritus English professor who pokes good clean fun at his profession, and at a host of writers both mighty and mitey.

As Armour notes, "Once you discover parody and are willing to be a little irreverent about books and authors you really love, and once you learn how good it feels to have students laughing with you rather than at you, English is better than anything. Anything, that is, that you are likely to do in a classroom."

ALUMNUS (Continued from Page One) constant remarks that Teachers' College was a triple A rated college."

Mrs. Holmes has taught twelve years in Los Angeles. She holds a master's degree from Pepperdine University. She has done further study at the University of the Pacific, Mount Saint Mary's College, and the University at Los Angeles. Mrs. Holmes who presently serves as administrative coordinator in the Los Angeles school system is married to Robert Holmes. They have two children, Valerie 9 and Robert, Jr. 4. When asked how she felt about how TC has grown from a teachers' college to a liberal arts institution Mrs. Holmes stated, "The progress is beautiful."

### African Seminar Held

Twenty-two Houston Area educators are in their first week of a six-week African Seminar. They are getting first hand knowledge of Africa in Africa.

Dr. Cynthia Shepard Perry, associate professor of international education, is director of the seminar, which includes university professors, experienced school personnel from HSD, and representatives of Texas Education Agency.

The purpose of the project is to develop more knowledgeable, fully qualified teachers and curriculum developers in black studies in Houston through a guided academic and experiential exposure to Africa. The dual goals are to strengthen existing ethnic heritage programs in the University and local district through experienced, traveled teachers; and also to extend those programs beyond local ethnicity to the study of cultural unity and diversity on an international scale.

The group is touring four African nations, and expects to spend at least one week in each of them. They will visit Sierra Leone, Ghana, Liberia, and Nigeria. While in each country, they will participate in discussions and seminars at a major university in the nation.

The project will help to strengthen black studies offerings in the public schools, and will result in instructional modules for ethnic heritage programs throughout the state and nation. More importantly, the intent of the program is to influence a stronger, more relevant African Studies curriculum in the public schools of Texas through the inservice preparation of existing teachers.

Participants of the seminar will conduct a two-day state-wide symposium for Texas teachers tentatively scheduled for mid-November.

The passenger list includes: James Altman, history teacher, HSD; Dr. J. Don Boney, chief instructional officer, HSD; Peggy Boney, teacher HSD; Dr. Harvey Cormier, foreign language instructor, TSU; Mary Louise Garcia, Chicano studies teacher, HSD; Larry Garabaldi, black studies teacher, HSD; George Haynes, Associate Superintendent, HSD; Joseph E. Lewis, black studies, HSD.

Also, Barbara Marshall, theater director; Lawrence Marshall, area superintendent, HSD; Bernice McBeth, math laboratory, HSD; Sylvia Perez, multicultural teacher, HSD; Dr. J. O. Perry, director, Teacher Corps/Peace Corps, TSU; Dr. Cynthia S. Perry, associate professor intercultural education, TSU; Dr. E. C. Powell, head, department of sociology, TSU; Iris Powell, graduate student, business, TSU; Frances Ryan, teacher, Austin; Thomas Ryan, teacher certification, State of Texas, Texas Education Agency; Jo Nell Sanders, multicultural teacher, HSD; Carol Simms, associate professor of art, TSU; Jeannie M. Walker, black studies teacher, HSD; Dr. Walker Zimarian, program specialist, multicultural education, TSU.

They are scheduled to return August 5.

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