

# Norfolk Keeps Its Head Above Water

By P. Bernard Young, Jr., *editor of the Norfolk Virginia Journal and Guide, a leading Negro weekly, and member of Norfolk's Citizens Advisory Committee on Schools.*

**N**ORFOLK, Virginia, one of the port cities on Hampton Roads, is a growing community vitally affected by the fact that the Navy maintains around and in it the world's greatest naval center. Currently it is seeking to annex adjacent county territory with a population of about 50,000, in which there are nine schools and 10,000 pupils. To educate the latter would cost Norfolk an estimated two million dollars plus annually. Between 1940 and 1950 Norfolk's population grew from 144,332 to 213,513, a percentage increase of 47.9. The Negro population in 1940 was 46,064 and the white, 98,248. The 1950 census showed 62,826 Negroes and 150,065 whites. The percentage increases during the decade were: Negroes, 37.7; whites, 52.7.

This great and rapid growth has, not unexpectedly, created a crisis in the Norfolk public-school system. Yet about it, it might be said with fairness, Norfolk citizens are in general apathetic. Very few of them attend school board meetings; they do not appear in voluble large numbers before the City Council to protest school budget cuts or sharp slashes in proposed funds for needed new buildings and additions to crowded existing structures; they are not visibly distressed when, as during the past school year, 3,445 pupils (13.5 per cent) of the total city enrolment of 26,360 were in 104 part-time classes, or that these part-time classes were larger than the previous year.

There are in Norfolk, however, hundreds of parents who are conscientious members of the P-TA's, neighborhood clubs, and civic organizations who do have a sustaining concern about the schools. One of the more encouraging recent developments has been the creation of a biracial Citizens Advisory Committee on Schools. But by and large the educational crisis does not get through to the mass of Norfolknians.

That there is an emergency in Norfolk which parallels the national dilemma is easily demonstrated. Between 1941-42 and 1952-53, the overall operating costs for Norfolk schools has more than tripled, the cost per pupil almost tripled. The need for a greater teaching staff and for more classrooms is sharply highlighted by the rise in enrolment figures. In 1941

the total was 23,183; in 1953 it was 26,360. For the term opening this month the increase in enrolment estimated by Supt. J. J. Brewbaker is 1,500.

However, Norfolk has a situation not matched in the average city. Sharp fluctuations in the number of pupils follow the hot and cold war intensities. In addition to having to watch the trends around the nation, the effects of the wartime birth rate, and the economic and social factors determining the teacher supply, this seaport must try to unscrew the inscrutable elements which increase or decrease sharply, between one year and the next, the numbers of service and civilian personnel with children who come to or leave the community.


And there has been, and still is, a further factor which Norfolk, along with other communities in states operating dual systems of schools for the races, faces and finds a definite part of the problem. It was the first city in the South in which colored teachers successfully sought through

the courts a mandatory equalization of salaries for persons with equal qualifications and responsibilities. That the equalization was morally and legally long overdue did not ease the dollar-and-cents pains for the budget makers.

Likewise Norfolk (to no greater extent than most of the South) for years permitted a drastic shortage to occur in Negro school facilities. Until after World War II no new Negro school had been built since the 1920's, and no additions to existing ones. To a greater extent than among the white schools the old buildings were permitted to become obsolete and run-down, a few of them dangerously so. The cost of making them safely usable continues to be great. A few are slated for unavoidable demolition and replacement by new structures. The accumulation of years of neglect of Negro education is an obligation all Southern communities are having to liquidate.


**I**N this connection there are a few related statistics worth noting. Although between 1941 and 1953 the white school enrolment decreased to below 15,000 during ten years, then rose again above that figure to the present all-time high, the Negro enrolment showed an opposite trend.

In 1941 there were 7,808 colored pupils. Their enrolment stayed above 8,000 after 1942 until 1948, when it



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Another in the series prepared by the Advertising Council, in association with the National Citizens Commission for the Public Schools, to call attention to the continuing crisis in American public education.

enrollment was 10,273; the white enrollment, 15,781.

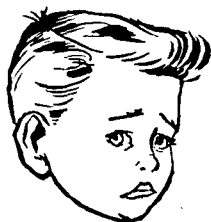
Following World War II the total school enrollment in Norfolk declined to a low of 21,609, but has steadily risen since then each year. Oddly enough, Norfolk authorities report that they have not been plagued by a teacher shortage, at least to the extent a great number of other localities have been.

Assistant Supt. E. L. Lamberth explains that there is a regrettably large teacher turnover but the supply of replacements is adequate because of the same factor inducing the bulk of the turnover, namely, the movement of Navy wives, qualified and willing to teach, who follow their service husbands as they are transferred.

Norfolk stands fifth in the state on average salaries for teachers, and its maximum salary offerings are better than several localities which outdo it on beginning and average salaries. "We believe this holds good teachers longer," Mr. Lamberth said.

ON THE other hand, the teacher question is by no means solved in Norfolk. There are still "emergency" appointments of persons inadequately "certificated" for the positions they hold. A teacher-recruitment committee recently merged with the Norfolk Citizens Advisory Committee on Schools, and the latter group has made recruitment one of its major

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# Albany Makes a Start

By Robert K. Bair, *chemist and member of the Citizens' Committee for Albany Public Schools of Albany, New York.*

THIS is an unfinished but a continuing story. It tells of a community that recognized more than five years ago the need for citizen participation in helping to solve the many problems confronting its public-school officials. It tells how a small segment of the community tried to help—but with limited success. It tells how a larger, more representative group of citizens just two years ago accepted the challenge passed on by the earlier group. It tells what this second citizens' committee has done during the past two years and what it plans to do in the immediate future. It is not a success story yet, but we believe that it represents a good start toward being one.

It is a story of Albany, the 340-year-old capital of the State of New York, a city with a population in the neighborhood of 135,000. About 13,000, or almost one-tenth of this total, attend its public schools—twenty-three elementary and four secondary (two high and two junior high). Almost an equal number of children receive their education at parochial or private schools.

The public-school district in Albany, like those of the other five cities in New York State of more than 125,000 population, is virtually a department of the city government. It does not levy taxes, but instead is apportioned money by the city government from its tax levy. The city government issues bonds and other obligations for educational purposes. The Board of Education, which consists of three members appointed by the mayor, draws up the school budget. This budget, however, is subject to revision by the city legislative body.

The mid-Forties found Albany with many of the public-school problems that were troubling other communities throughout the country. As early as 1948 representatives of six local women's organizations—American Association of University Women, Council of Jewish Women, City Club, Junior League of Albany, League of Women Voters, and Young Women's Christian Association—recognized the existence of these problems. They saw that they must arouse their fellow citizens to their responsibility of helping the city and school officials face these problems. These alert women,

on behalf of their organizations, formed the Albany Know Your Schools Committee.

The committee at once began a study of the elementary schools in a wide variety of areas, such as the school plant and physical facilities, pupils' welfare in relation to increased enrollment, health programs, needs of the exceptional child, school personnel (teacher training, salaries, selection of teachers), supervising personnel, and school finance. Teams made up of two representatives of the committee interviewed school officials and examined in detail the plans of the elementary school plants, carefully filling out a comprehensive questionnaire form based on an outline drawn up by the New York State League of Women Voters. After the studies had been completed, in late 1949, a report was written and numerous recommendations made to the Board of Education.

Somewhere along the line, however, while the schools were being visited or the report was being written, something intangible disappeared—that essential spirit of cooperation between the committee and the school officials that had been achieved at the start only partially and with difficulty. When it disappeared the effectiveness of the Albany Know Your Schools Committee diminished. Another shortcoming was that, since the representatives of the respective organizations had to take proposals back to their executive boards before action was possible, the committee was organizationally unwieldy. The need for a fresh start—for a new committee made up of individuals—became apparent.

SUCH a committee did not come into existence until the fall of 1951—and then as the results of sustained efforts by a handful of leaders of the Know Your School Committee. This new committee was composed of men as well as women from all walks of life who represented themselves, not organizations. It was named the Citizens' Committee for Albany Public Schools, CCAPS for short.

The initial aims of CCAPS were three-fold: to build community interest in the public schools; to secure better understanding between the school board and the people of

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