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Newspaper article, School Funds Stripped, May 10, 1968

Laurance R. Mitlin

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School

by Laurance R. Mitlin
Associate Editor

The impending loss of federal funds by the Starkville School System is causing concern among members of the Mississippi State University faculty who have young children in school. Some have even gone so far as to contemplate leaving Starkville and obtaining a position elsewhere.

But B. Hal Buchanan, superintendent of the Starkville Separate School District says, "We're worried about the quality of the schools, too." He does not believe the loss of up to \$232,000 in federal funds will affect the children of MSU professors, however. Most of the impact will be on the formerly all-Negro schools such as Henderson High School on Highway 82-W. All but \$30,000 of the funds are allotted under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Starkville's problems over integration began when the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) informed the local school board that the "freedom of choice" integration plan presently in effect was not successful in fulfilling its purpose--integrating the schools.

Since its inception two or three years ago, the plan, by which a child or his parents may choose to attend any school in the system, has placed 87 Negro students in formerly all-white schools. No whites have enrolled in formerly all-Negro schools.

After many months of consultation and a one-and-a-half inch

Funds Stripped

thick file of correspondence, the school system and HEW each settled on a different integration plan--neither of which is acceptable to the other.

Starkville wanted to try what Mr. Buchanan calls the "unitary concept." This would involve a single master schedule of courses for Henderson High School and Starkville High School, the formerly all-white school. Certain required courses, such as ninth grade English, would be taught only at Starkville, while other required courses would be taught only at Henderson.

A student who needed these courses would be bussed from his regular school to the other school for the hour of that class. Mr. Buchanan favors this plan because he believes it will enable Negro students to take courses at Starkville High and allow them to still take part in extra-curricular activities at Henderson High. Any student who wishes to attend the other school full-time may do so as under the old "freedom-of-choice" plan.

The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare rejected this plan because they believe it will allow Henderson High to remain as an identifiable Negro school. HEW's criterion for approval of a desegregation plan is whether or not the schools lose their racial identity. If they do, the plan is approved; if not, it is rejected.

Mr. Buchanan and the school board have rejected HEW's "Princeton" or "pairing" plan, partially because it might involve some bussing. This rejection comes in spite of the fact that Starkville's own proposed plan would involve considerable bussing.

Harley Daniels of the Office of Education in Washington does not believe that bussing would be necessary under the "pairing" plan as proposed by HEW. Many Negro children in Starkville live closer to white schools than their present Negro school, and many white students live closer to Negro schools than their present white schools, according to Mr. Daniels.

Under the "pairing" plan, two elementary schools, one previously all-white, one previously all-Negro, would be "paired." One of the schools would house the first, second, and third grade pupils from both schools, the other would house grades four, five, and six.

The two high schools would also be paired, with Henderson, for example, housing the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades, Starkville the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades.

Starkville has also offered to voluntarily follow any court de-

cree ordering desegregation of a district with a situation similar to Starkville without going through a court fight. HEW has also rejected this idea on the grounds that court orders are tailored to specific districts with specific problems. Each district has different problems, and Starkville's problems are unique.

One of the school board's biggest worries, along with their fears of the effects of immediate integration on the children, is the possible reaction among Starkville voters if the board cooperates with HEW. They will follow an integration order handed down by a federal court, because it would remove them from the middle of the battle between the white citizens who believe integration is preceding too fast, and the Negro citizens who believe it is preceding too slowly.

Of the \$232,000 involved, Starkville will try to replace only \$30,000 from local sources. This will involve a tax increase of about two mills. The board is asking for an authorization in an upcoming election to raise taxes to a maximum of three mills.

The additional \$202,000 which Starkville could have received in federal funds this year was earmarked mainly for schools with large numbers of children from poverty stricken families. The district does not intend to make this amount up from local funds. Thus the main burden of the decision not to comply with the HEW guidelines will fall on Negroes.

HEW realizes that the removal of money may not be the most perfect weapon against school

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Exam Schedule

Wed., May 22	8-11	9 MWF
	12-3	3:30 TT
	3-6	11 MWF
Thurs., May 23	8-11	11 TTS
	12-3	4 MWF
	3-6	8 TTS
Fri., May 24	8-11	8 MWF
	12-3	10 TTS
	3-6	3 MWF
Sat., May 25	8-11	9 TTS
	12-3	12 MWF
	3-6	3 MWF
Mon., May 27	8-11	10 MWF
	12-3	7 MWF
	3-6	1 MWF
Tues., May 28	8-11	12 TT
	12-3	2 MWF
	3-6	7 TTS