

# Washington D.C. School Problem Likened to a Time Bomb

Editor's note: This is the last of three dispatches on the racial tensions, rising crime rate school disorders, financial crisis and lack of self-government which have made Washington, D.C., the nation's capital, a "city in trouble."

By LOUIS CASSELS  
United Press International  
Washington - (UPI) - Some months ago, the principal of a public high school in Washington uncovered a flourishing racket. A tough young man of 17 was stealing the books of smaller boys, placing them in his locker, and making the victims pay 15 cents to ransom them.

The principal turned the boy over to city authorities, expecting that he would be expelled and perhaps prosecuted for theft. The next day, the young racketeer was back in class, boasting he had "beat the rap" with nothing but a reprimand.

Lax discipline in District of Columbia public schools is an old story to parents and teachers.

It became a public scandal recently when a committee of prominent citizens published the findings of an inquiry into the causes of an ugly riot which broke out last Thanksgiving Day after a high school championship football game.

**Lack of Control**  
The citizens committee said the stadium riot was the outgrowth of a long-standing "lack of control over hoodlum elements in the school system."

"An atmosphere of 'permissiveness' has discouraged the personnel of many schools and caused a citywide lessening of disciplinary standards," it reported. "Fear rages through many school buildings which have become the tramping grounds for outside influences, including thugs, hoodlums and persons of the lowest character."

The report shocked many Washington residents, including President Kennedy. They got an additional shock this month when Dr. Carl F. Hansen, superintendent of schools,

readily acknowledged that the committee's findings were "borne out in general by commitments of teachers" who responded to his own inquiry about disciplinary problems.

### Blames Minority

Hansen said that most of the trouble is being caused by a small minority of youngsters - no more than 1 or 2 per cent - who disrupt classes and spread confusion. In the past, the schools have tried to find a place for every child, even the most incorrigible, on the theory that it was better to keep them under the tutelage of a community agency than to turn them loose on the streets to get involved in crimes. Behind this policy was the realization that many of the troublesome youngsters had no real homes to be sent to, and no responsible parents to guide them.

The stadium riot and the investigations which followed it have convinced Hansen that Washington's public schools can no longer undertake the burden of "playing substitute for family upbringing." He has served notice on the community that the schools henceforth will expel chronic troublemakers, so that the vast majority of well-behaved children and their teachers can get on with the task of education.

### Offers Alternative

But Hansen offered the community an alternative. The schools will continue to wrestle with the delinquent youth problem, he said, if they are given the "proper equipment" for the task. He said this would include more counselors and social workers, facilities for special classes for disruptive children, and separate schools for "extremely disturbed" children.

### Such facilities would cost a lot of money. And the U.S. Congress, which controls the municipal finances of the District of Columbia, has not been noted in the past for its liberality toward the federal city and its school system. Last year it refused to authorize a \$75 million borrowing which Hansen said was desperately needed to build new schools and relieve overcrowding.

### Hope For Future

But a new day may be dawning. Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) chairman of the Senate appropriations subcommittee for the District of Columbia, predicted recently that his committee "is going to be sympathetic" to requests for more money for Washington schools.

Unlike any other city in the country, Washington cannot decide to expand its own school budget and raise taxes to cover it. The U.S. Congress determines what taxes shall be levied on District residents, and the tax money, once collected, goes into the U.S.

Treasury where it can be appropriated for District municipal operations only by act of Congress.

The federal government, which occupies a large portion of the land area of the District and is its major employer, pays no taxes whatever. Instead Congress votes an annual payment to the District, which is supposed to represent a fair federal share of municipal operating costs. This sum in recent years has been \$30 million a year - about 13 per cent of the District's budget.

### Urges New Formula

Last month, President Kennedy sent a special message to Congress urging that the federal payment henceforth be based on a formula reflecting the actual taxes that the federal government would have to pay if it were just an ordinary business firm located in Washington. The formula would raise the federal payment to \$53 million this year. He warned that unless the federal government begins to carry its "proper share" of the District's financial burdens, Washington will be powerless to cope with the "critical problems" confronting its schools, welfare services, police department and other public agencies.

### Sen. Alan Bible (D-Nev.) of the Senate District committee, has strongly endorsed the President's proposal. Chairman John L. McMillan, (D-S.C.) of the House District committee, has not said if he is for it or against it.

Kennedy also reiterated his long-standing plan that Congress let the District of Columbia's citizens govern themselves. There is virtually no prospect, however, that Washington residents will obtain self-government in the near future. Southern lawmakers, who exercise dominant influence on congressional committees dealing with District affairs, are adamantly opposed to "home rule" for a city whose population is 54 per cent Negro.

### Charge Indifference

Negro leaders charge that racial statistics also account for the "indifference" which many members of Congress seem to display toward District problems, especially the problems of the schools which have an even greater proportion of Negroes (85 per cent) than the general population.

Spokesmen for the House District committee say this charge is unfair, insofar as it may be directed against their committee. They say the record demonstrates the committee's concern for Washington's welfare. They point out in that connection that chairman McMillan has pushed through bills providing more than \$42 million in federal grants for hospital construction in Washington during the

past decade - more than any other U.S. city has received.

Without naming names, Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy said in an interview that "there have certainly been instances where it appeared that some members of Congress, with authority over District of Columbia affairs, have not been interested in seeing progress made here because of the large Negro population."

In fact, he added, there may be some, in and out of Congress, who would like to be able to point to "Washington as proof that Negroes and whites can't live and work together peacefully and constructively in a desegregated society."

The attorney general said that was a very short-sighted attitude.

### Concern of All

"Every American has a stake in making Washington a model city and an example of good racial relationships," he said.

"It's bad enough for America's reputation abroad when racial incidents occur in Chicago or New York or Oxford, Miss. But any serious disturbance of a racial nature in the nation's capital would be a most grievous setback to the whole United States."

The young attorney general said reflectively for a moment, then leaned forward toward the reporter and said very gravely:

"I think you should tell the people of the country that neglect, social unrest, inadequate community facilities and lack of opportunities for young people, especially Negro youth, have created a serious situation in Washington. It is so bad it is a real time bomb. If it goes off, it will do untold harm. I think everyone, not just the people who live and work in Washington, ought to be very concerned about it. After all, this is their capital."

### Spending and Saving Plan Is Recommended

New York - (UPI) - The family with a wise plan for spending and saving will have fewer financial problems and enjoy greater peace of mind than the family without a plan, the American Bankers association reports.

"Another certain thing is that those who save - even though they do so purely for reasons of self-interest - are contributing to the strength and progress of the economy," the association noted.

### ANTI-TELEPHONE POLE

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