BERKELEY

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BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA, IS A compact city of 111,268 residents, housed within 9.7 square miles, with a resulting population density of 11,471 per square mile—one of the highest in northern California. It is a city of socioeconomic contrasts. The "Flats," encompassing the western two-thirds of the city, is a low-lying area containing the city's major business and industrial areas. Here, too, live the vast majority of Berkeley's minority groups and low-income families. The "Hills," which comprises the eastern one-third, is solidly residential, predominantly Caucasian, and generally expensive. Bisecting the Hills and stretching briefly into the Flats is the University of California, Berkeley's major landmark.

Like its sister-cities of San Francisco and Oakland, Berkeley experienced a population loss in the decade 1950–60, falling 2.2% from 113,805 to 111,268. Much of this dimunition was undoubtedly due to the boom of the war years which increased the population, but much can also be attributed to the general flight of Caucasions to the suburbs (Caucasian population fell from 96,268 [84.6%] to 82,081 [73.9%] during the 1950s). By contrast, while the Negro population in 1940 was 3,395 (only 4.0% of Berkeley's total population), in 1950 it was 13,289 (11.7%) and in 1960 it was 21,850 (19.6%). Similarly, Berkeley's Oriental population increased from 1,895 (2.2%) in 1940 to 4,248 (3.7%) in 1950 and then to

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EDITORS' NOTE: *This is a report, condensed by the staff of the* Law & Society Review, *of Professor Heyman's larger study ("Race and Education in Berkeley, California," 126 pp.), conducted in 1965–66 for the United States Office of Education.*

7,337 (6.7%) in 1960. In sum, minority groups had grown from 6.2% of the population in 1940 to 26.1%, twenty years later.

Berkeley has a high proportion of college graduates—30.4%. This is exceeded in California only by Palo Alto, home of Stanford University. The median number of school years completed is also high—12.9. Additionally, University students who make their homes in Berkeley number 16,171, or 14.5% of the population.

Generally speaking, it can be said that Berkeley Negroes are better educated, hold better jobs, and have a higher income than their counterparts in other East Bay cities with significant Negro populations. The median education, for example, is 12.0 years (through high school) compared to 9.7 for Oakland and 10.8 for Alameda. The figure is also less than a year below the overall city median of 12.9. Thirteen per cent of Berkeley's employed Negro population hold professional positions, versus only 8.5% in Oakland. Most Negroes also own their own homes. The result, as one local Negro leader phrased it, is that "Berkeley's Negroes are a good bit more sophisticated than most people think." Berkeley Negroes are overwhelmingly Democratic, and more significantly, have exercised their vote in recent years in large numbers. The Negro community is well organized and operates as a powerful political bloc in local elections.

A noted San Francisco columnist has a habit of calling Berkeley "Berserkly," a phrase which, given the city's wide mixture of competing groups, has a ring of truth to it. Berkeley has a habit of courting controversy and defying logic. In 1964, for example, it resoundingly defeated Proposition 14, a state constitutional amendment prohibiting fair-housing ordinances, by a 2–1 margin; yet just two years earlier it supported a referendum nullifying a fair-housing ordinance of its own. It prides itself on education, but took four years and five elections to pass a school bond issue and then only by the barest margins. It is a major recruiting center for SNCC, and has an active CORE chapter yet it recently gave the conservative California Republican Assembly its president, and has a vocal conservative pressure group known as Berkeley Citizens United (BCU) which extended an invitation to Dallas' County Sheriff, Jim Clark, to speak in May of 1965.

Despite its claimed—and generally real—sophistication Berkeley is in many ways an overgrown town. "It's not hard to learn who controls what," a long-time resident confided. "The city is so small [in size] and its leaders so damned talkative you know everything you need to know

in a few months." Undoubtedly, the comment is an overstatement. But the truth remains that few segments of the community can remain anonymous for very long. Berkeleyians are activists, of all persuasions, interested in their city, and not especially noted for their diffidence.

With this overview of Berkeley's sociological makeup in mind, one can now turn to look at what methods were employed to fight, if not overcome, the problem of de facto segregation.

THE HADSELL COMMITTEE

In May 1962, a delegation from CORE came before the Berkeley Board of Education with a charge of de facto segregation of the schools and demanded a change. Such allegations had been made in the past, but like most other Northern cities Berkeley never sought to implement a fundamental change. No complicated reasoning preceded CORE's demand for an end to de facto segregation: "The city hadn't really done anything," at least as "something" is presently defined. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that, politically, CORE's timing was most propitious. Its complaints came just thirteen months after Berkeley had experienced significant elections in which "liberals" had finally gained control of both the City Council and the Board of Education after years of frustration. Perhaps as significant as the shift in power was the fact that Reverend Nichols of the School Board and Wilmont Sweeney of the City Council became the first Negroes to gain elective office in eighty-three years.

When confronted with the CORE allegations, the Board readily acknowledged the existence of de facto segregation, but postponed consideration of its ramifications until June. This was understandable for the Board was then engaged in its fifth—and first successful—bond election. It was not until September, however, that the charges were again considered. But apparently there was no deliberate attempt to delay the issue, and no new pressure was exerted to produce further discussion. The school Superintendent, C. H. Wennerberg, suggested that a community-wide advisory committee be established to analyze the problem and suggest a solution. The Board accepted his recommendations at the September meeting, and announced that a citizen's advisory committee would be constituted and charged with determining the extent and effects of de facto school segregation as well as with making recommendations. The next three months were devoted to the selection of the committee, which ultimately comprised thirty-six people from all geographical areas of the community. Eight were Negro, twenty-five Caucasian, and three

Oriental, closely approximating the overall city ratio. The committee, which was chaired by Rev. John Hadsell, a Presbyterian minister, came to be known as the Hadsell Committee.

When the Hadsell Committee first convened in January 1963, few of its members anticipated the magnitude of the report it would finally submit. The prevailing view was that a plan embracing compensatory education and open enrollment would be offered "topped off by a stream of platitudes." Possibly, a mild redistricting plan would also be offered. Whereas a number of the group were prepared to press for drastic changes, even though they were not optimistic about the chances for success, the majority of the group had no particular plan in mind.

At their bimonthly meetings, the Committee listened to various reports concerning the local situation—two of these reports seemed to have a pronounced effect. First, the Committee was shaken by a study which revealed that there were wide discrepancies in test scores within the city's school system. Secondly, a description of the New York busing experiment, where it seemed that segregation was merely transferred to separate classrooms, "made 'busing' a dirty word." Two other events, one local, one national, also significantly affected the Committee.

Shortly before the Hadsell Committee was officially constituted, the Berkeley City Council had taken action to implement a far-ranging Fair Housing Ordinance, which was defeated in a referendum by a record voter turnout in April 1963. Two days after the defeat of the ordinance, the Hadsell Committee held one of its bimonthly meetings amidst "a good deal of embarrassment." The voters' decision remained close to the surface in most future discussions and had the curious inverse impact of spurring the committee to do something "meaningful" in order to show good faith to the Negro members particularly, and the Negro community generally.

On the heels of the defeat came Birmingham and Bull Connor. Berkeley was as shocked as the nation, and the expression "no Birmingham here" became a symbolic slogan for the Committee. In the summer of 1963, the full Committee adjourned, appointing an Editorial Subcommittee to draft an initial report. During this period, Birmingham was followed by Danville, the death of Medgar Evers, and the March on Washington. The Subcommittee's desire to "do something dramatic," to create "a bombshell," seemed to grow with the summer's tension in the South. The Subcommittee's sentiments were shared by the vast majority of the full Committee, as was indicated by an informal poll of the group

asking for opinions on proposals ranging from open enrollment to redistricting.

The Subcommittee, realizing that any major tampering with the lower grades was politically unacceptable and would result in continuance of the status quo, concentrated its attention on desegregating the junior high schools. ("We thought the best we could get was junior-high redistricting . . . it represented the most the city would take.") A number of possibilities were considered: busing, of course, had already been rejected by the full-Committee; open enrollment was considered "too weak"; the Princeton Pairing Plan was deemed unfeasible both because the junior highs varied drastically in size and because the problem of transporting children seemed insurmountable. The only alternative left, and the one to which the Subcommittee devoted most of its time, was redistricting.

Berkeley then possessed three junior high schools; Garfield, located in the northeast where Thousand Oaks, the Hills, and the Flats merged together; Burbank, toward the northern perimeter of Southwest Berkeley; and Willard in the South Campus area. Only Willard had a racial composition acceptable to the Subcommittee (45.6% Caucasian, 45.5% Negro, and 7.9% Oriental). Garfield was 85% Caucasian, 4.8% Negro, and 9.8% Oriental, while Burbank at the other extreme was 75% Negro, 14.5% Caucasian, and 9.3% Oriental.

In the abstract, the solution seemed fairly simple—redistrict Garfield and Burbank, and leave Willard unaffected. In practice, however, this proved extremely troublesome. Most of Garfield's students lived in the Hills, on the side of the school away from Burbank. In the Burbank area the problem reversed itself—most Negroes lived to the south of this junior high, again at the furthest point from the alternative school. The Hills also posed the additional dilemma of transportation. Many of Garfield's students presently walked to school, but if transferred to Burbank they would have to take buses.

The potentially explosive nature of the plans added to the Subcommittee's difficulties. Garfield was not only the Caucasian junior high school of the city, it was the prestige institution as well. Many Garfield parents would even have protested sending their children to Willard, let alone Burbank—which in the eyes of the Caucasian community was physically and socially the worst of the three junior highs. In spite of these problems, the Subcommittee was determined to return with an effective proposal. "We had decided to redistrict," one member remarked,

"now the only problem was political—how could we make a good political decision?" And by "good" he meant a plan which would maximize integration without unleashing such opposition that the community would rebel against any change.

Finally, a new district line for junior highs was agreed upon: Burbank students transferring to Garfield would come from northwest Berkeley; Garfield students replacing them at Burbank would come mainly from the Hills, which had been cleaved in two by the proposed change. Despite the Subcommittee's good intentions, the new boundaries did not affect a significant improvement in Garfield's racial composition, and still left Burbank with a preponderance of Negro pupils.

Armed with this proposal, the Subcommittee reported back to the full Hadsell Committee in the fall of 1963. The Committee considered holding a public meeting, to hear public sentiment before preparing a final draft, but the Board quashed any suggestion of an open forum for the Committee. Well aware of the probable uproar that would arise, it wanted the Committee to function with a minimum of public pressure. The Board's attitude was "we want *your* ideas—we'll handle the public." After a series of weekly meetings, the Hadsell Committee approved the Subcommittee's proposals by a vote of 27–4. Their proposal was officially submitted to the Board of Education on November 19, 1963. Two weeks later, the Board held a public hearing which 1,200 people attended. To judge by the many speeches, the city was overwhelmingly in favor of the report. At a second meeting in January, which 2,500 attended, while the vast majority again expressed assent, these public statements were deceptive. A large number of persons were believed to be adamantly against the heart of the Committee's proposal—redistricting. The local newspaper and one group, the Berkeley Citizens United, publicly expressed outright disapproval. And many individuals, while not expressing their opinion publicly, were sufficiently vocal in private. A local newspaper poll, for example, found over 80% against the plan. While the percentage can be questioned both methodologically (the number of respondents was never revealed) and sociologically (the *Gazette's* readers probably include a higher proportion of conservatives than the city as a whole), it was nevertheless disquieting.

Those opposed to the Hadsell Committee's redistricting proposals fell, roughly, into four groups. At one extreme, stood a group, including many Hill liberals, who, while favoring integration, felt the plan was unfeasible. They argued that the depressing effect on the Garfield students

shifted to Burbank far outweighed the slight gain in racial balancing. Second, a greater number of the opposition constituted citizens who favored integration in the abstract but became uncomfortable when their own children were threatened. Most were prompted by fear, but a fear which derived more from class than race; they opposed Burbank because it reputedly contained a number of hoodlums who happened to be Negroes, not, probably, because it contained a majority of Negroes some of whom happened to be hoodlums. A third faction was comprised of people who deplored Birmingham, but who did not want to institute disruptive changes in the status quo. A fourth group included people who did not want their offspring associating with either Negroes or hoodlums—and most certainly not a combination of the two. Few in this faction deviated from their support of the opposition. Surprisingly, however, even this group had little objection to compensatory education or open enrollment.

Such a wide span of beliefs account in part for the silence of the opposition during both public hearings. But of greater importance was the difficulty of expressing disapproval of redistricting without sounding like a bigot. These considerations might have accounted for the failure to organize any group to voice opposition in marked contrast to the supporters of the plan, who had an abundance of organizations among them CORE, NAACP, and the local Democratic Party. The Berkeley Citizens United was the only pre-existing opposition group, and its extreme positions were distasteful to a large percentage of the opponents.

The solution finally selected by the Board originated with a Burbank English teacher, Miss Ramsey, who arrived at her "plan" almost by chance. The previous summer she had been reading *Youth—the Years from Ten to Sixteen,* by Gesell, Ilg, and Ames, and one passage remained in her mind:

> Viewed in developmental perspective, the fourteen year-old is definitely "outgrowing" the limitations of the lower grades . . . But in this early phase of transition he may not yet be in a favorable position to meet the stresses and competition of a big strenuous high school. He may need somewhat specific rearrangements in the educational system to bring to fulfillment promising potentials which he now embodies.

After hearing of the Hadsell report, Miss Ramsey found the proposed redistricting "completely impracticable" as it affected too few children. Recalling the observations in *Youth,* she wrote a letter to the school Superintendent suggesting what later came to be known as the Ramsey

Plan—one school for ninth graders, with the remaining two being redistricted to accommodate the seventh and eighth grades from the entire city. Her letter eventually found its way to Reverend Nichols, a recently elected Negro member of the Board of Education; he was greatly impressed by it, and asked a speaker to offer it as an alternative at the January public hearing.

Soon after the second public hearing, the Board publicly considered the Hadsell report and, somewhat surprisingly, three of the five members expressed disapproval of redistricting "at this time." So the Board voted to send the report to the Superintendent's office for further study, instructing the Superintendent to ascertain the staff's reactions and recommendations. The Board members undoubtedly wished to give the community more time to digest possible boundary changes. Also, staff study was a necessary prerequisite to any major educational plan. In March, the Superintendent reported to the Board that most teachers opposed redistricting, and favored either the Ramsey Plan or the Princeton Plan as alternatives. Upon hearing Wennerberg's report, the Board authorized a study of the Ramsey Plan.

Redistricting had become a dead issue; this shift, extremely swift and complete, is not difficult to understand. Redistricting, even among the Hadsell Committee, had never been embraced very enthusiastically. It was too artificial, accomplished too little, and divided the community too much. It was a plan born mainly of necessity rather than choice, a basically defensive solution. Many felt it was unfair because it discriminated against some Hill children while leaving others unaffected. Even the Negro community voiced some reservations. Some Negroes resented the continual criticism of Burbank—"our school"—which many viewed with pride. In short, redistricting had few ardent supporters. This lack of enthusiasm, however, does not mean that Berkeley would necessarily have voted the plan down, for "at least it was a change," and a substantial segment of the community believed that some change was necessary.

The Ramsey Plan, which eliminated most of the more serious objections to redistricting, seemed to be the perfect solution: it would integrate the schools, creating racial balancing closely approximating the city-wide proportions without producing the "depressive effect" caused by schools with a preponderance of low-achieving students; it would involve the city as a whole, eradicating the problem of educational discrimination in the Hills; and it would change the image of Burbank from a "bad" to a

"good" school in the eyes of the Caucasian community, which redistricting obviously would not have accomplished.

On May 19, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent and his staff, the Board unanimously accepted a modified Ramsey Plan, some compensatory education proposals, and a revised tracking system. It was decided to proceed with the Ramsey Plan in two stages:

Phase I: Integrate Garfield and Burbank in the coming fall by sending seventh and eighth graders to Garfield and ninth graders to Burbank.

Phase II: Add Willard to the system the following year, 1965, and revise its boundary lines to assure racial balance.

Recall petitions began circulating three days after the Board meeting. The primary instigator of the recall election was an organization named PANS (Parents Association for Neighborhood Schools), a curious political entity from its informal birth in February 1964, to its dissolution seven months later. From the beginning PANS was split between those who wished to use the organization as a respectable platform from which to persuade the Board to retain the present attendance boundaries and those who were prepared to seek to oust the Board members if the staff report was accepted. The latter group prevailed and the head of PANS stated on May 19: "Should the Board insist on adopting the Ramsey Plan, or any other such change, the association will institute recall action against the Board of Education." The ensuing extraordinarily bitter campaign was punctuated with charges of "racist" and "unwarranted social experimenting." The election was held on October 6, 1964, and the incumbents won reelection by a surprisingly large margin, a phenomenon as inexplicable to the victorious Board as to the chastened opposition. The import of the victory, however, was clear to all; Berkeley had accepted a concrete and meaningful step in school integration. The acceptance was not transitory, for in the general School Board election held in April, 1965, the incumbents again won an overwhelming victory.

Why the stunning victory for the Board? PANS blamed it on many factors; their opponents' superior organization, their own failure to avoid the stigma of recall, and the fact they could never escape the issue of race. One member attacked voter apathy, another believed " 'recall' kept a lot of people home."

Each of these factors, with the possible exception of apathy, undoubtedly played a role in the recall's defeat. The Board did possess a superior organization, the same people who were responsible for the liberal's

resurgence in the 1961 election. They also had "the troops"—the legmen to ring doorbells and shepherd reluctant votors to the polls. But, while organization and precinct workers can waive party symbols and direct people to the ballot box, they cannot instill basic beliefs and values, and it was here the election was won.

If the recall election did not reveal Berkeley's feelings about racial justice, the general election which followed just one month later did—Proposition 14, the anti-Fair Housing Constitutional Amendment which swept the rest of the state, met defeat in Berkeley by a margin of nearly 2 to 1—34,285 to 18,253.

The Board's action and the community's response have had radiating consequences.

First, the Negro community obtained desired reform through conventional political channels. Moderate and rational Negro leadership prevailed and was strengthened by this victory.

Second, the Caucasian community had to face the race issue. It had to understand that its solution is as important for the well-being of Caucasians as for Negroes, and had to begin to realize that there are no "easy" solutions that will permit a continuance of the status quo which largely means physical psychological separation of advantaged Caucasians from disadvantaged Negroes.

Berkeley should be able to achieve full school integration. It has a modest-sized population, it is compact, it is a university town with relatively liberal city and school legislatures, it has a significant middle-class Negro population, and much of its Caucasian population has confronted racial problems directly over the past few years.

EDITORS' POSTSCRIPT

While Berkeley does not claim to have achieved the goal of school desegregation to any significant degree at this time, it has taken definite action to insure racial balance in the near future. On May 16, 1967 the Board of Education adopted a resolution calling for "desegregation of all Berkeley schools in September 1968." The Board called for the Administration to develop and present plans that will accomplish this goal. The timetable is quite specific:

> The Board regards the complete desegregation of its schools as such an important and significant undertaking that sufficient time must be devoted to the planning and preparation for the transition in order to assure success. Therefore, no elementary desegregation plan will be implemented in

> September of 1967. We authorize the administrative staff to begin *now*, planning such items as teacher preparation, curriculum development, etc., and submit a plan or plans to us for *discussion* as early as possible, but not later than October 1967, so that we may adopt the most effective plan as early as possible, but no later than January or February of 1968, and *spend* the remaining time prior to September 1968 refining the plan and preparing for full implementation.
>
> The Board, gratefully conscious of the intelligent interest of this community, invites the community to submit ideas and suggestions in the months immediately ahead so that the best possible plan may be developed.

The Superintendent coupled this unanimous resolution of the Board with a plea in his regular newspaper column for the community's aid in formulating plans for the forthcoming integration program.

The Berkeley plan is thus in its most formative period. At the present time the Ramsey Plan has been implemented with a change in the Garfield-Willard boundary. A program for the busing of 235 elementary school students has been accomplished with the aid of federal funds. But both of these steps are viewed by the Administration as minor steps in a wide plan yet to be formulated.

In addition to the resolution adopted by the Board another important development has occurred on the Berkeley scene. For the first time since 1960 the number of Caucasian students in the district has increased. Since 1960 there has been a net loss of over 300 Caucasian students a year. At the same time Negro enrollment has stabilized, with an increase of only 41 pupils rather than the usual 200. Oriental and "other" enrollment dropped by 68 in a single year. Therefore, the current racial breakdown of the Berkeley Unified School District is 50.3% Caucasian, 40.8% Negro, 7.9% Oriental, and 1.0% "Other," compared with 49.6% Caucasian, 49.6% Negro, 8.5% Oriental, and 1.4% "Other" in 1965. It is, of course, impossible to explain why such a reversal has taken place. There is no guarantee that such stability will continue after the comprehensive plan goes into effect in September 1968. The greatest significance may be in the contrast it provides to developments in other cities undergoing the similar problem of racial integration.