

THE ILLUSTRATED NEWS

WEEKLY CIRCULATION - 35,000

SCHOOL BOYCOTT SHAPING UP FOR FALL



DR. S. M. BROWNELL

William Thomas, president of the Parents Committee for Better Schools, asked the Board of Education Tuesday to relieve overcrowding at Northwestern High School. Mr. Thomas said the organization has collected 3,000 signatures on petitions demanding action.

Northwestern was built to take care of 1,700 students and will have more than 3,800 students in September.

Mr. Thomas said that when parents asked to have some Northwestern students transferred to Mackenzie High School, which is only slightly overcrowded, they were told by school administrators that this could not be done because Mackenzie is in another school district. Mr. Thomas pointed out to the Board of Education that in spite of this rule Northwestern, with 2000 more students than it should have, receives students from twelve schools which are not in its district.

Mr. Thomas said that repeated efforts have been made by parents to get relief but school administrators have been unconcerned and uncooperative.

"This overcrowded condition did not suddenly just occur," Mr. Thomas said. "It has been going on for years, but no attempt has been made to do anything about it."

Superintendent Brownell said that very little could be done to relieve the situation within the next two years.

"What of the students there now?" Mr. Thomas asked. "They're being shortchanged and in two years it will be too late to do anything to help them. An overcrowded school must sacrifice quality to make room for quantity. The curriculum offerings at Northwestern are not as broad as in certain other high schools.

"We ask the Board of Education to equalize overcrowding. It is not fair for Northwestern to have 2100 more students than it should have unless every high school in the city is just as badly overcrowded."

Mr. Thomas reminded the Board of Education that the report of its Citizens Committee stated that many children from the South and Southwest districts are poorly prepared for high school because of living conditions and inadequate elementary and junior high schools in those areas. These children, he said, are sent across district lines not to less crowded schools where they could receive more of the counseling and education to which they are entitled, but to Northwestern where they are further disadvantaged because of overcrowding.

Mr. Thomas said that children at Northwestern attend school only half of each day. He related this to the high crime rate in the tenth precinct, pointing out that young people who are not in school full time can easily get into trouble. Many students at Northwestern live in the tenth precinct.

Following are the schools in the South or Southwest district which send their children to Northwestern: Hancock, Kennedy, Clippert, Owen, Tilden, O.W. Holmes, Couzens, Edmondson, Poe, Chaney, Potter and Craft.

The petition circulated by the Parents Committee for Better Schools states: "We, the undersigned, respectfully request the Board of Education to eliminate the overcrowded conditions at McMichael Jr. High and Northwestern Senior High Schools by the commencement of the fall term of September, 1962. If the overcrowded conditions are not corrected by September, 1962, we feel we will be unable to encourage parents to enroll their children in a school environment where the child cannot obtain the optimum in educational opportunities."

Mr. Thomas would not say whether this meant parents would keep children home if the organization's demands are not granted.

"We'll just wait and see what happens," he said. "It's up to the organization as to what our future program will be."