

nificantly to the public lack of confidence in the Office of Education and its administration of the guidelines. For Negroes, the posture of the state's "Establishment" did little to reassure them that they could attend desegregated schools without fear of confronting hostility and possible danger. As the summer wore on it became obvious that the state's posture would significantly contribute to the failure of freedom of choice to abolish the dual school system in South Carolina. Every public statement, no matter how much it was couched in terms of legal questions, seemed to point to the fact that South Carolina school administrators and the state's leaders did not want to have more than a token number of Negroes in the schools with whites.

THE BURDENS OF FREEDOM OF CHOICE

During the freedom of choice period itself it was clear that the choice was not as free as the guidelines intended. The guidelines specifically stated in section 181.49 that no student could be denied his choice for any reason other than overcrowding. In Orangeburg County District #2 the chairman of the school board of trustees told one Negro parent that her child's application to attend the desegregated school had been rejected because the board did not feel that his grades were high enough to demonstrate that he could perform satisfactorily in the desegregated school. Also in Orangeburg #2 some Negro students who chose to attend the desegregated school were rejected but were not told why their applications for transfer were refused. This was in violation of the guidelines.

In Williamsburg County a Negro family was threatened that they would have to move off the land of the owner if their child did not change his choice from the desegregated school. In Dorchester County District #2 Negro parents from a rural area near Summerville were told by the superintendent that the "guidelines do not apply to rural areas" and that their children could not be picked up by the school buses going to the desegregated schools because it would not be feasible to reroute the buses. Approximately 79 of these children who had chosen to go to the desegregated schools in the district were refused transfer in spite of the fact that the guidelines *did* apply to all areas in a school district, urban and rural; and subsequent investigations showed that school buses take white children from the same general area as where these Negro children live to the desegregated schools where the Negro children were denied entrance. In Dorchester #3 approximately 200 Negro children chose to attend the desegregated schools but all of these were rejected for overcrowding. Only the 30 Negro children who attended the desegregated schools in Dorchester #3 last year were allowed to return. The children who were rejected were notified only three days in advance of the 1966-1967 school term that they would not be allowed to attend the desegregated school. Parents from the area reported that the desegregated schools are not at all overcrowded. Now both District #2 and #3 face the possibility of losing their federal funds. Reports from Barnwell District #19 indicated that some Negro parents have been told that they would have to either move or take their children out of the desegregated schools.

In many counties throughout the state Negro parents were reluctant to send their children to the desegregated schools because of a fear that they would suffer physical harassment, social isolation from their classmates, and academic failure. Other parents were reluctant to transfer their children for fear that the parents would lose their jobs. In most school districts, officials made no effort to communicate with the Negro community in an attempt to alleviate these fears. Where such contact was made it was often relayed through the traditional middle-class Negro leadership which has little effective contact with the grass-roots members of the community.

One superintendent said: "We operate on a freedom of choice basis. We haven't done anything for or against them coming. We feel that is the best method." This was typical of school officials who were reluctant to take any action which might infer that they were trying to aid the transfer of Negro students to desegregated schools. As a result, Negro parents and students found little reason to believe that they would not undergo considerable hardship if they transferred to the desegregated school. Assurances of concern, protection, and respect for their rights as citizens and human beings were generally not forthcoming from school officials. Without some personal expression of these