

Private Schools Thrive in South, But Finances Restrict Quality

By JAMES T. WOOTEN

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CANTON, Miss., Jan. 30— classroom within her budget
The pretty young wife with but beyond the Federal Gov-
champagne hair waved good-by ernment's reach. Using pre-
to the children from her 1970 cisely this pitch and the impact
hardtop sedan, pushed a of recent Supreme Court de-
chrome button on the dash- mands for integration—including
board and watched the tinted the latest ruling, which will
glass windows slide quietly affect 14 more Southern dis-
shut. tricts Monday—the private

"You know," she drawled school business is booming in
pleasantly, adjusting the vol- the Old Confederacy.

ume on a Nat King Cole stereo But there are indications that
tape, "I thought about this a the schools are hampered by a
lot and I just couldn't stand to lack of money, resulting in a
have my kids in with all those lower quality of education.

Negroes." William F. Simmons of the

So, on this frosty morning in White Citizens Councils of
early January, she had driven America, a white supremacy
her children to the Canton group, estimates the growth

Academy, an abandoned tent Continued on Page 34. Column 1
factory hastily converted into a private school.

For her, it was an almost ir-
resistible appeal: a segregated

Private Schools Are Booming in the South Despite Some Economic Deficiencies

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of his organization's private schools in the Jackson, Miss., area to be nearly 3,000 in the last six weeks. There are similar reports from Florida, Georgia and Alabama.

But there are signs throughout the South that the magnetism drawing hundreds of white parents to "segregation academies" is substantially less than permanent.

Negative Factors

Their financing, from tuition, donations or endowments, is generally inadequate and becomes a negative factor in long-term improvement plans. As a result, their curriculums are generally not on a level with public schools in the same area. Their teachers as a rule earn less and are therefore not usually as qualified as their public school counterparts. And their facilities and equipment are seldom comparable to those available in the public system.

Nevertheless, their market is large. It is generally believed that there are at least 400 such schools in the South. Recent news agency reports, based on state-by-state surveys, listed the total as nearer 700, with enrollment figures that vary from 350,000 to 500,000. But later checks of specific schools in Mississippi and elsewhere disclosed a tendency on the part of public officials and private school administrators to exaggerate.

300,000 In October

In late October the Southern Regional Council, a research organization in Atlanta, placed the enrollment in private schools at 300,000.

Their report does not reflect the growth of the schools since the Supreme Court decision of last Oct. 29 that, in effect, ordered the complete and immediate integration of public schools in 30 Mississippi districts, including Canton. Outnumbered 4 to 1 by Negroes, all but about 100 of the 1,300 white youngsters left the Canton public schools and enrolled at the academy.

A later ruling with a deadline of Feb. 1 in 14 districts in Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia and Florida is expected to send hundreds more white students into the academies.

What they will find in their new environment is not expected to differ substantially from what the children in the Canton private school have discovered.

Their new school was founded over the Christmas holidays to escape the impact of the Court's decision of Oct. 29. The faculty is drawn from the ranks of retired teachers, housewives and a few recent college graduates, all of whom are employed at salaries at least \$200 below the average salary of public school teachers in Mississippi—an average that ranks far below the national teacher-salary standard.

According to the Office of Education, the average annual salary of public elementary and secondary school teachers in the United States in the 1967-68 school year was \$7,630. In Mississippi during the same period, public elementary and secondary school teachers had an average salary of \$4,735.

Tuition is \$30 a month for each child, with a \$75 monthly maximum for one family. Over a nine-month academic year, the tuition would amount to less than the total spent per student in the state's public schools, which is approximately \$290 and is one of the lowest in the nation.

Annual Charges

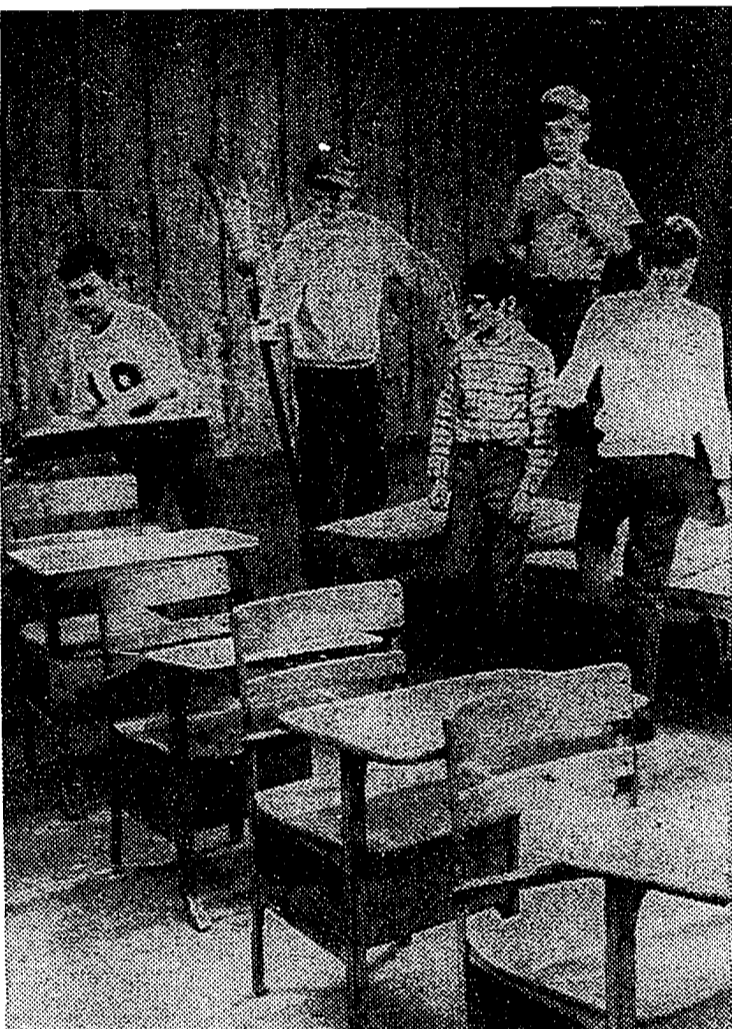
Tuition at other private schools in the South is comparable to the Canton Academy's, ranging from \$15 to \$50 a month, with annual charges at a few institutions reaching as much as \$1,000 a child.

Because money is a factor on the academic level offered by the private schools, the less affluent cannot attend the better schools and are left with those whose curriculums, equipment and faculty offer little more than the basic rudiments of education.

Besides their inability to pay salaries to teachers on a level competitive with the public schools, another impact of the financial plight of the private schools is the lack of facilities and equipment with which to implement whatever curriculum might be devised. In many of the schools, chemistry, biology, physics and other sciences are being taught without a sufficient number of microscopes,



Children and parents at registration at the private academy in Canton, Miss., in an abandoned tent factory building.



Students arrange desks in a classroom at Canton Academy.

test tubes and similar equipment. One high school student in the academy here said the problems at the Canton school.

"about the same, except that we study a lot about the evils of Communism," an experience shared by a young girl who attended a citizen's council school near Jackson.

"We were taught that Earl Warren is a Communist, that the Supreme Court is under Communist control and that integration is a plot made up by Communists and Jews," she said.

There are some in the South who fear the private schools will merely serve as instruments for the perpetuation of the attitude that led to their formation. "It's hard to believe they [the parents] don't realize that it is a system of racism that has brought them to this tragic point," said Winifred Green, a field worker for the American Friends Service Committee and a native of Mississippi.

Financial Inputs

Garvin Johnson, the superintendent of schools in Mississippi, has little faith in the ability of schools like the Canton Academy to sustain themselves financially for a long period of time, even though Gov. John Bell Williams has advocated the maintenance of both public and private schools.

Mr. Johnson remarked recently about "the difficulty public schools constantly confront even with funds from local, state and national" sources.

About 40 per cent of all funds spent for public education in the South comes from the Federal Government. With-

like a school. It seems like an old factory."

Many in the South fear that the absence of large numbers of white students from the public system will bring the public system closer to ruin than ever before.

"The South already provides the least support for its public schools of any place in the whole country," said C. J. Duckworth of the Mississippi Teachers Association, a Negro organization. "If more and more white children go to the 'seg' schools, the general public won't be inclined to pass bond issues and O.K. taxation for public education."

A Birmingham banker ex-

pressed another apprehensive view toward the schools. "The South is coming into its own industrially," he said. "We're getting new and expansion plants from the Middle West and the North, and the first thing these people ask when they come down is about the schools."

Back to Bourbon

Should the public school system be jeopardized by a lack of funds and public support, "the South is finished economically," he said. "We might as well go back to plain old bourbon and forget about champagne."

Despite the fears of public officials, educators and other

Southern citizens, the boom in the private school business does not appear to be subsiding. All across the South white parents are signing tuition checks with John Hancock flourishes, declaring their independence from the Federal judiciary.

"I know these people can't afford it," Governor Williams said recently. "But they got a right to do it."

Kenneth Dean of the Mississippi Council on Human Relations heard the Governor's statement and quoted William Faulkner in response.

"These people," the Mississippi novelist once said, "would start another Civil War knowing damn well they would lose."