When the U.S. Civil Rights Commission released its 355-page report on the progress of U.S. integration August 25, it gave special applause to the city of Berkeley. This prompted Laval Wilson, Berkeley's superintendent of schools, to crow, "We've done the right things for the city's schools." According to the report the chief reasons for Berkeley's success were vigorous community participation in planning the city's desegregation program, healthy minority representation on the district's faculty and administration, and strong teamwork among the city's disparate racial, cultural and political elements in carrying through the program.

But during the last two years the district has been plagued with difficulties which have radically changed the picture. The Berkeley School Board has been wracked with strife; community views have been ignored and the district's minority staff has been decimated by cut-backs. In short, it appears that the Civil Rights Commission, was school integration system, according to the U.S. Commission later gave to the Berkeley school system's racial policies. Even the facade of community participation and how to put together the best system to ending racial discrimination.

The Berkeley School Board's efforts have been of the school board out of a public meeting. Layoffs, which the board has planned in an attempt to balance its 1976-1977 budget. Earlier the board had announced plans to cut back 82 positions - roughly three-quarters of them held by minority teachers. The planned layoffs provoked two months of bitter controversy which climaxed June 8 when an angry crowd of 75 demonstrators chased the white members of the school board out of a public meeting.

Since that time the board has trimmed down the proposed layoffs to 50-75 teachers, but the majority of those still will be minority teachers. There is no question that these factors responsible for Berkeley's successful desegregation efforts have changed radically since integration began in 1964. The question is: will this drastic transformation hamper the board's ability to continue its successful busing program: "I don't think anything to sabotage the desegregation efforts. There's a lot of disagreement as to the future of desegregation in Berkeley schools, but there's no disagreement on the issue of desegregation." Nevertheless, some veteran observers of Berkeley's current struggle say that Berkeley are unconvinced that the community will be united to complete the integration of Berkeley schools in the same way it was united to begin the task. School board member Mary Jane Johnson told the Barb, "It's a different school board in the last year that has been dealing with a different problem in Berkeley...The desegregation fight was a mechanical battle, but the information and the temper of the community at the time. To be sure, you put kids in buses and watched them ride. "What we're fighting now is institutional racism, which is a more complex problem than racial opposition." Johnson told the Barb she didn't expect to see a resurgence of the same sort of teamwork and cooperation in the community that prevailed with a successful busing program: "I don't think people are going to grapple with a problem with the same energy and intensity and group spirit that it did with desegregation."

Protesters at a recent school board meeting didn't exactly agree with the praise the U.S. Civil Rights Commission later gave to the Berkeley school system's racial policies.

Assistant Editor: Gar Smith
Circulation: Mark Matthews