

# C'ville Kids 'Rude' In Protest - McCabe

By MARIE McGEE

She's rapidly becoming known nationwide as the "Pontiac housewife who aims to kill school busing in America."

And you knew Irene McCabe means business if you were one of the 1,300 persons who jammed Clarenceville's Louis Schmidt Auditorium Monday night to hear her views on law and why the busing movement must be stopped.

It was an emotion-charged evening—a lot like sitting atop a powder keg waiting for the fuse to go off.

The volatility level soared at times as a band of students persisted in giving their views favoring busing—if it meant giving black students an equal education—to the jeers of adults.

Police roamed through the auditorium ready to step in in case of a disturbance.

But an unruffled Irene McCabe took it all in stride. Dispensing her own brand of charisma, she implored "Clarenceville parents" to get into the busing fight now.

"HIRE ATTORNEYS, organize and unite. Do it NOW," she emphasized. "Don't wait until it's too late—and the buses start rolling."

"I speak from experience. Pontiac was never represented," she added.

"Use our attorneys. Take advantage of their research in the case," she continued.

She offered the names of three attorneys who work with the National Action Group (NAG), the anti-busing group she helped organize in Pontiac.

She also urged Clarenceville residents to join NAG, which now has 251 chapters, she reported.

"We've heard from all the states but three," she said proudly. "This issue has united the country."

ANOTHER MAIN objective for worried parents should be the bombardment of their legislators with anti-busing letters and telegrams.

This will help bring about a constitutional amendment "that will put an end to the busing question forever," she said.

An admitted believer in integration accomplished naturally (she feels open housing would have worked if given a few more years), Mrs. McCabe said that U.S. Rep. Jack McDonald (R-Farmington) has sponsored an amendment (House Bill 620) prohibiting busing simply to achieve racial balance in the schools.

At the moment, she said, the bill is stuck in the House Judiciary Committee where its chairman (Emanuel Celler) is reportedly reluctant to release it.

The bill's release can be achieved through a "discharge petition" signed by 218 congressmen, Mrs. McCabe pointed out.

"Write your congressman. They pay attention to the mail they get from their constituents at home," she said. "I know. I found that out when I was in Washington last week."

SHE SAID that NAG also was initiating a nationwide "chain letter" approach to aid in the discharge petition drive. "That's when I write to five out-of-town relatives and friends urging them to write to their representatives. They, in turn, do the same thing."

NAG will also begin pushing the use of "popular opinion" telegrams. Target of these will be U.S. Sen. Birch Bayh, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which is also considering a similar Constitutional amendment sponsored by Michigan Sen. Robert Griffin.

"It can be done," she said confidently.

NAG, SHE explained, in an opening statement and over the protests of the young dissidents—was "totally committed to the neighborhood school" concept.

Studies prove, she said, that busing is "injurious" and only creates prejudices.

"This is a social experiment," she declared, "and you are the pawns."

As she spoke, Livonia police officers—with walkie-talkies in

hand—circulated through the crowded aisles. They said they had been summoned to the meeting by a Livonia school administrator who had been at the meeting and had become alarmed at the intenseness of verbal confrontations between students and adults.

But even the presence of the police officers did little to ease tensions heightened by the frequent outbursts from the students as they attempted to question Mrs. McCabe.

AT ONE POINT, clutching a hand mike, Mrs. McCabe left the speaker's table and walked to the end of the stage and publicly berated the student group.

"In all the public meetings I've attended, I've never seen conduct of this caliber," she said.

She labeled the youthful protestors as "ill-mannered and rude."

After that, she refused to answer any of their questions.

A little later in arriving for the meeting called for by Mrs. McCabe was preceded by Dr. Martin Wachler, Clarenceville Board of Education president, who gave a short address to "set the tone of the meeting" and "to reassure you a little."

He joined the audience after asking for "calmness and maturity."

Also invited to the meeting, in an effort to round out the program, was Charles Harrison, a member of the Pontiac NAACP and a member of the County board of supervisors commissioners.

Unable to stay for the entire evening because of a previous commitment, Harrison was quickly asked his opinion on busing by the audience.

He replied "I am not in favor of busing, but if an ill exists in our society and busing is one of the remedies, let's cure the ill."

TARGET of some of the audience's pent-up emotions was School Supt. David McDowell. At the outset of the meeting, he attempted to remain as factual as possible in explaining events leading up to Federal Judge Stephen Roth's recent ruling and the present state of affairs as it affected Clarenceville.

He said he felt busing was "an adult fight" and that he "despised children being held out of school for any reason."

"It's a legal fight and a school boycott will have no impact," he added.

He said the school district would keep in close contact with its legal advisers, Dell Schantz, Booker and Schulte.

McDowell also said that the Clarenceville board had been told that where school districts probably wouldn't be allowed to give testimony in the integration court suit.

"unless we are part of the problem or the solution."

"Maybe we could petition to be heard," he said, "but again, the court would decide."

ANGRY PARENTS pressed McDowell for his personal views.

McDowell finally answered: "All right, I'll tell you," even though he said he had been "advised" before the meeting not to do so.

"I feel the neighborhood school is the most valuable contribution to our educational system. But I feel there's a problem in Detroit. We've got to help with the problem. It won't just go away."

In his opening remarks, Dr. Wachler had told the audience that neither he nor McDowell could speak officially for the board of education.

"That can only be done in legal session," Dr. Wachler said. He added that McDowell's presence at the speaker's table was merely that of a "resource person."

Dr. Wachler said he felt that it was "his (Wachler's) duty to keep the slate clean—free of any extreme or binding statements that may later come back to haunt the school district."

He said he was going to encourage the board to set up some type of telephone information service whereby residents could call for up-to-date information on the busing situation.

HALF-WAY through these remarks, Mrs. McCabe made her entrance.

Dressed in a chic green polka dot mini dress with shiny brown knee-high boots, she smiled and waved while the audience gave her a standing ovation. It was one of several she received before departing about 10 p.m. for "another meeting" at an undisclosed location.

After her departure, members of Clarenceville's "concerned parents" organization, lead by Mrs. Gertrude Walsh, took down the names of persons who volunteered to help with the

anti-busing organization.

Pleased with the turnout, Mrs. Walsh admitted she was upset over the disruptive tactics of some of the young people.

"They made me so darn mad," she said. She said the idea of the forum "was to give everyone a chance to give his views—even the kids." After the meeting, she and her co-workers agreed that it was possibly a mistake to have opened the discussion to the floor.

"We should have just let Mr. Harrison and Mrs. McCabe speak," said one of the evening's organizers.



CLARENCEVILLE'S Schmidt Auditorium was jam-packed for a public forum on busing Monday night, and young people lined up at the

microphone to pepper Pontiac's fiery Irene McCabe with questions. (Observer photo by Harry Mauthe)

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