



On July 30 there's to be a Special Town Meeting in Barnstable. Among the articles to be considered and voted upon is the proposed new Middle School and plans for an addition to and renovation of the present high school.

Since 1967 when plans to build a new high school were presented and defeated at Town Meeting (estimated cost: between \$8.1 and \$9.6 million), the School Committee, two School Building Committees, the Committee of 100, and Town Meeting members have all given the problem of our schools' overpopulation much time and thought.

One proposal for land acquisition was defeated. Another was accepted. Funds for preliminary plans, for relocatable classrooms, for the sewer line extension, for extending day classes, for additional relocatable classrooms, for additional land acquisition, and for preliminary architectural plans, have been appropriated and spent.

All-in-all, since additional classrooms to accommodate the children living in Barnstable was first proposed, the town has spent \$2,153,000, in direct costs, to study and plan for a new school.

Of that, \$270,000 went for land acquisition and \$700,000 for sewer extension lines to the present high school site.

If this seems to you, as a tax-payer, a sensible way to run things, your ideas of economy and mine are quite different.

Let me be honest with you, however; I was among those who opposed the 1967 recommendation for the nine million dollar school. It sounded to me like too much money. That was before I studied the problem. I only wish I had the chance today to vote for the proposed plan I voted against in 1967!

Only three years ago, as a Town Meeting Member, I favored the proposal to spend an

estimated \$12,500,000 for a new high school. So did a great many -- more than the necessary two-thirds majority -- of the other elected representatives of the taxpayers.

Enough shortsighted taxpayers, however, got enough signatures to call for a public referendum. Under our Charter, it's necessary that a two-thirds majority vote for the question. Not enough did, so it lost.

In dollars, that exercise has cost us an estimated two-and-a-half million. Every month we delay it's estimated the price of the present project increases \$225,000.

What are the needs? Between 1967 and 1973 over 2,500 more children enrolled in our education system. The schools were close to maximum capacity in 1967.

What happened to the extra 2,500 children? How did the school solve the space problems during those last six years?

We, the taxpayers, purchased relocatable classrooms. Into the old Community College building went 300 children. The Osterville School Administration Building was re-converted to classrooms, and Administration moved to the dormitory building of the old Community College; these buildings became available when the new college was built in West Barnstable.

Study periods in the high school were eliminated, freeing those rooms for classes; this plan left youngsters wandering around with no place to go -- called, euphemistically, Open Campus. The extended-day plan, with high school classes held from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. was tried. Busing costs were doubled, family-life disrupted, teacher's salaries increased.

Finally, in 1973, the high school went on a four-day week for students. Teachers, of course, continue to work five days. This increased the capacity of the high school by one/fifth. Each student has an additional day off each week. Youngsters from homes with both parents working are unsupervised on their extra day off.

The town holds a temporary waiver of the state education laws to allow a four-day week at the high school. This year the high school still operates on a four-day week.

Of the relocatable classrooms at elementary schools, one is at Barnstable-West Barnstable, one at the Osterville Annex, and two at the Cotuit-Marstons Mills School.

The present high school - (grades 9-12) has a capacity of 1200. Enrollment now is 1600; projected enrollment six years from now is 2200.

The present Middle School (grades 6-8) is scattered in three different buildings, all in need of renovation; enrollment is 1500. Projected enrollment in six years is 2100.

The present elementary schools (grades k-5) are already over-crowding the relocatables. Present enrollment is 2700; projected enrollment in six years is over 3300.

We will have 5800 youngsters entering Barnstable classrooms this fall, anticipate over 6,000 in the fall of 1975, and expect 7700 by 1980.

If we begin building a new Middle School and construct an addition to and renovate the present high school in September of this year, the buildings will be ready for occupancy by September, 1976, when the projected total enrollment in the school system will be 6,366.

What's all this going to cost you, the taxpayer, in dollars and cents? Less than \$1.50 per thousand dollars of assessed value of your real estate. That figure will decrease over the next 20 years by a small amount each year.

Delay in providing school facilities has already cost you money. Inflation has taken its toll. Further delay will cost you more -- and not only in dollars and cents for building.

Satisfactory housing, whether for school or residential purposes, is important to our whole community. Overcrowding is one of the

causes of increasing delinquency, vandalism, and kids raising hob with school property -- as well as private property outside of schools.

When you put 5,000 people, of any age and background, into space built to accommodate only 3,000, or 4,000, every one of the 5,000 becomes uncomfortable, feels his personal space requirements are encroached upon, and every one of them is going to react, in some negative way.

One reason we choose to live on Cape Cod is there's still some space around us. We left cities and suburbs -- or avoid going there to live in spite of the economic advantages they offer -- so we can feel free to spread out a little.

Elbowroom gives us a feeling of ease with ourselves and our neighbors. We who live here year-round recognize the economic need to put up with crowded conditions in summer, but we're always relieved when the tourists depart; then we can relax and spread out again into space they occupy during peak summer-tourist months.

Our school children experience the same feeling of "being in a zoo" that we get in an over-crowded place. We want to get away from that crowded feeling. So do they. Even adults, who have learned to control their impulses, can be incited to riot in a crowd. Children are even more apt to react badly to crowds.

Families who outgrow their homes respond similarly to cramped quarters. The house that's well-kept and tidy with two or four residents, soon becomes run-down and unkept if it must house six or eight people. A two-bedroom home may be adequate for four persons; for eight, it's not long before it becomes a shambles.

The school situation is the same. The quality of education will continue to deteriorate if we do not provide adequate housing for our kids.

Yes, it's expensive. Not providing it is also expensive.