

90% BOYCOTT HITS PROBLEM SCHOOL

136 Students Out in 'Rights' Protest by Galamison

By MARTIN TOLCHIN

A total of 136 students, mostly inveterate truants, stayed out of school yesterday, thereby aligning themselves with the civil rights movement.

This commitment came as the Citywide Committee for Integrated Schools began a campaign to shut the city's schools for problem children by leading a successful boycott of Public School 617, in Brooklyn.

Ninety per cent of the students stayed home from the school, which serves violent, disruptive children.

Declaring that the boycott would last "indefinitely," the Rev. Milton A. Galamison, demonstration leader, said that it would be extended to the 14 other "600" schools.

He said that the schools would be boycotted because they provided an inferior education for their 2,000 students, who are predominantly Negro and Puerto Rican. The Brooklyn clergyman charged that these were poor textbooks, inadequate facilities, no curriculum, untrained teachers, and improperly screened students.

State Supreme Court Justice M. Henry Martuscello signed a temporary injunction against the boycott yesterday afternoon. He ordered the boycott leaders to appear in court Friday morning and explain why a permanent injunction should not be issued.

May Extend Boycott

But a source close to Mr. Galamison indicated that the boycott would be extended on Friday to Public School 614, Queens.

James B. Donovan, president of the Board of Education, termed the boycott "a reprehensible act." He said at a news conference that he would move in Family Court to have Mr. Galamison arrested for violating the Compulsory Attendance Law.

A 10-day jail sentence is the maximum for exhorting school children to defy the law, Mr. Donovan said.

"Whether or not the boycott continues, the offense has been committed," Mr. Donovan said. "This is no more a civil rights demonstration than if someone urged children to demonstrate for civil rights by seeing how many homes they could set fire to."

Twenty adult pickets carried signs at P.S. 617 that read: "Sorry—This School Is Closed," and "600 Schools Do Not Educate." But the students indicated that they were delighted by any excuse not to attend.

"Nobody else is going," a 14-year-old said. "Why should I go?"

"Why are we boycotting?" asked another. "Because I hate teachers."

"We follow the majority," said a third. "The majority wins."

The daily truancy rate for the "600" schools is 30 per cent, the Board of Education reported.

Of the school's 152 students, 105 are Negro, 17 are Puerto Rican and 10 are white. Twenty are mentally retarded, 20 have spent time in state mental institutions, two have returned from city psychiatric hospitals, 84 were suspended from other schools and 22 are on probation in active court cases.

Hot Lunch Missed

A 14-year-old wearing a light blue sweater huddled in a doorway a block from the antiquated, red brick schoolhouse in the Williamsburg section. It was lunch time, and hot meals were being provided by the school. Nevertheless he preferred to stay on the streets.

Sponsors of the boycott served cold sandwiches and milk to 25 children who assembled at the South Third Street Methodist Church, where Mr. Galamison strove vainly to keep order. The youths puffed cigarettes, slammed folding chairs, rolled on the floor and screamed at one another.

"Look, baby," the minister told a 16-year-old, "take your hat off. You know better than that."

Mr. Galamison had sent leaflets to their parents in which he asserted:

"Your son is being used for experiments in education which do not benefit him, and which you are not told about."

The clergyman said yesterday that he had no specific experiments in mind but was referring to the entire program. He maintained that not all of the students were volatile, aggressive and impulse-ridden, as reported by the Board of Education.

The disproportionate number of Negro and Puerto Rican students, Mr. Galamison contended, indicated that some were bright and had become discipline problems only because their regular classes were too slow.



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LEADS SCHOOL BOYCOTT: The Rev. Milton A. Galamison at the South Third Street Methodist Church in Brooklyn with some of the pupils who stayed away from P.S. 617, one of city's schools for problem children. Mr. Galamison led boycott of the schools as part of campaign by Citywide Committee for Integrated Schools to end special program.