

Busing of Pupils Rejected At Hearing in Glastonbury

By DENTON L. WATSON

Glastonbury by a three-to-three vote Thursday voted against participating in the proposed plan under which children from Hartford would be bused to the town.

The vote was taken at a public hearing that lasted more than two hours, and in which many local residents gave their opinions on the plan. Under the plan considered, 25 children would have been bused to local schools.

The program, as outlined by state officials and whose provisions were summarized at the meeting by Glastonbury Superintendent of Schools Dr. Hugh A. Watson, would have cost the

town nothing, since the federal and state governments and City of Hartford, planned to pay the cost.

Attendance at the hearing was one of the largest Glastonbury ever saw. The auditorium of the Glastonbury High School, which seats more than 300 persons, was packed, and there were many more persons in the school's cafeteria and gymnasium, where speakers were located.

Emotions, too were well controlled, although the chairman of the Board of Education, Robert Merritt, a few times rapped sharply his gavel for order. As the hearing began, Merritt ruled that those who approved the plan and those who were against it, had 15 minute intervals in which to speak—a total of three alternate 15-minute periods for each side.

The board's chairman also said he checked with the Town Attorney on whether or not the Board of Education had a legal right to act on the question, as opposed to having a referendum.

"If it is in the opinion of the board," he said the Town Attorney told him, "there will be educational benefits to the children of Glastonbury, and if the program will be of no cost to the town, then we should act on it."

Also, Merritt said, there is no provision in the statutes that a referendum should be held on an educational question, unless a regional education program is involved. Also, he said, there is no provision in the Town's Charter for a referendum to be called on the busing question.

First to speak on the busing plan were persons who supported it. Three Glastonbury Councilmen strongly approved the plan, although as private residents of the town.

Edward A. Richardson, a member of a local town board, said the busing plan is the "hottest issue ever to hit Glastonbury."

He said that there has been the claim in town that "this is regionalism, and regionalism is bad." But, he continued, he hasn't heard anyone inveighing against the Metropolitan District Corporation, "a regional organization with strong powers." Neither has he heard any opposition to the Capital Region organization, of which Glastonbury is a member. There has also been no opposition to federal and state aid programs, he said.

Richardson also dismissed the claim that "Negro children are pawns of politicians." He added that he believed that "racism" is the reason why the plan is opposed.

Councilman James McIntosh calmly, but strongly supported the plan, referring to his child-

hood, when he had the opportunity to attend school with Negro children.

"There is the risk the experiment will fail to help those children bused and locally; there is the risk Glastonbury will be required to pay additional taxes for the program; there is the risk this is the first step toward regionalism," McIntosh said. But he considered Glastonbury's commitment to help Hartford moral one, he said.

In addition to Councilman J. Keith Gustafson, the Glastonbury Human Rights Council and other unaffiliated residents, expressed their approval of the plan. The Glastonbury Education Association and several high school students supported it.

Leading the "Voters for Glastonbury," who opposed the busing plan, was James O. Sullivan. He first read a letter sent to the Board of Education this week outlining his organization's views on the plan.

Sullivan introduced at the hearing a petition he said was signed by 1,919 residents who opposed the plan. And this, he said, "should be taken as a mandate to keep busing out of our town."

Members of the Board of Education who voted against the busing plan were H. William Reed Jr., Dr. Arthur A. Brown and William L. McGaw. The members who voted for it were Mrs. Alice G. Davis, Mrs. Eleanor R. Geiser and Robert Merritt, chairman of the board.

Because there was no majority approval for the plan, the motion on the question was lost, according to the board's rules.