

# Flood

signed to black neighborhoods simply don't show up for class or have transferred to private institutions. Since 1972, white enrollment in the public schools has dropped from 70 percent to 34 percent.

The committee's freedom-of-choice plan would allow both black and white parents to shop around for better schools. In many cases, children would still be bused. But committee coordinator Elizabeth Jones believes busing itself isn't bad; the problem is having no choice about it. "We would oppose an involuntary assignment if it was across the street." As the committee sees it, the new plan would create a "buyer's market." Schools of inferior quality would draw lower enrollments which would, theoretically at least, force the Boston school board either to improve or close those schools. The parents also believe that their program will defuse racial tensions.

In a poll taken last month by The Boston Globe, 79 percent of the blacks surveyed said they favor free choice, even though most feared it would be construed as a setback for the civil-rights movement. The five members of the Boston school board approve of the free-choice plan. Civil-rights activists are divided on the issue. Johnson insists that freedom of choice is not a sop to segregationists, despite the fact that parents could select an all-white or all-black school. But Thomas Atkins, general counsel for the NAACP, is distressed at the prospect of losing Judge Garrity's plan. "Constitutional decrees aren't overturned by plebiscites," he snapped recently. "If one system has developed holes you plug up the holes, not scrap the whole system."

Judge Garrity, who had hoped to step away from the protracted case in June, will stay on the job until the Black Parent Committee submits a written version of the plan. Even if all parties to the original suit agree on the terms of the proposal, Garrity could rule that it doesn't fulfill the legal requirements for desegregation. In any case, the Boston controversy is still a long way from being settled. Just last month a high-school teacher in the Charlestown section was knocked down, kicked and punched when he tried to break up a fight between black and white students.

## California Counties Still Bugged Down

The National Weather Service had predicted rain, but nothing like the record 16 inches that fell on the San Francisco Bay Area during two days last January. The freakish storm turned the mountainsides into torrents of mud that flowed over towns and rural houses. While the cleanup continues, local officials and private citizens alike grumble that Washington hasn't exactly flooded them with relief funds. "On TV you see the Federal government taking care of things during a disaster," says Santa Cruz county supervisor Joe

Cucchiara. "But that's not how it is."

The storm, which left 36 people dead and 477 injured, caused an estimated \$111 million in damage to roads and other public facilities. The counties can't afford the repairs. "We've always depended on the state and the Federal government," explains Cucchiara, but Proposition 13 has depleted state reserves, and U.S. agencies will reimburse only half of what the counties ask. The counties want to improve and make safer the roads and bridges that they rebuild, and that, of course, costs extra. The Federal government doesn't want to pay for improvements.

Individual flood victims can't get enough funds to rebuild or repair their homes, either. Sheila Delaney, who lives in Santa Cruz's devastated Love Creek, says that she doesn't know of anyone who has received a



James D. Wilson—NEWSWEEK

### The Soules: Cleaning up and getting ready

Federal loan. "The Small Business Administration wasn't even going to let us apply because they said our income was too low. But we managed to buy a house and pay for it on our income, so we obviously know how to manage money." Government officials insist that the SBA has in fact approved 258 loans totaling almost \$4 million.

Most residents are determined to put the nightmare behind them and to prepare better for future disasters. "We have strapped furniture to the wall and stocked up on water and candles," says Joe Soule, 26, whose house in Point Reyes Station sustained \$80,000 worth of damage. Others made homeless by the storm will probably never return. A study released this month by the Army Corps of Engineers says that more mud slides are likely in the Love Creek area.

EILEEN KEERDOJA with MAC MARGOLIS in Boston and SHARON WALTERS in San Francisco