

## 200-Bev Accelerator: Moving into a WASP's Nest?

*Chicago.* The white "noose" is drawn as tightly around Chicago as around most other cities in the nation. More than a million of the 6.6 million inhabitants of the Chicago metropolitan area are Negro. Almost all the Negro population, however, is concentrated in the downtown ghettos. Few make the exodus into the suburbs which lie beyond. Figures compiled by the Illinois Commission on Human Relations show that only nine Negro families moved into white suburban areas around Chicago from 1945 through 1962; this figure increased to 325 in the 4-year period from 1963 through 1966, but it still represents an infinitesimally small proportion of the population.

The racial composition of communities is not customarily a subject of professional concern to scientists, but in recent months racial integration of the Chicago suburbs has become a relevant matter for those high-energy physicists interested in the construction of the 200-Bev proton accelerator at the Weston site 30 miles west of here. In 1966, after choosing six finalists in a national competition to provide a site for the massive accelerator, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) let it be known publicly that the civil rights situation around the sites under consideration would be an important criterion in final selection. Then, much to the surprise of civil rights leaders, the AEC picked a location in Illinois, the only state of the six finalists which did not have an open-housing law. (The other finalists were sites in New York, Michigan, Wisconsin, Colorado, and California.)

To say that "all hell broke loose" after the announcement of this decision might be a slight exaggeration, but certainly Weston ranks among the most hotly disputed locations which have been chosen for federal projects. Civil rights groups in Illinois and elsewhere have asked that work on the accelerator be delayed until the state of Illinois

passes a fair-housing law, by which the nondiscriminatory sale of houses can be enforced. These groups have been given powerful political muscle by the addition to their ranks of Senator John O. Pastore (D-R.I.), the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. Until this month, Pastore delayed Joint Committee approval of the AEC 1968 appropriations because of the Illinois state legislature's failure to pass an open-housing law.

On 14 June, Pastore's effort to delete from the 1968 AEC authorization a \$7.33-million authorization to begin design work for the Weston accelerator site was defeated 11 to 3 by the Joint Committee, thus giving the first official Congressional "go" signal for the accelerator. But this signal does not mean final victory in the battle to begin building the accelerator at Weston. Although the initial authorization is expected to pass the House without difficulty, it is likely to undergo a more rigorous workout in the Senate. The portion for Weston will then have to be approved by the Appropriations Committees of the House and Senate;

critic Pastore sits on the Senate committee and serves on the appropriations subcommittee which passes on AEC matters. And, even if all goes well for the accelerator this session, the bulk of the funds will require congressional approval in 1968 and in subsequent sessions.

One of the reasons why there is still some doubt about the future of the Weston accelerator site is that many people in Illinois display a curious ambivalence about the machine's worth to their state. This is a little surprising when one remembers the great efforts made by almost every state to gain the project. The governmental and business executive leadership of Illinois also worked hard to obtain the accelerator for their state, but their avidity is not matched by many of the state's citizens and their elected representatives. Although the passage of even a mild open-housing law would eliminate most of the national criticism against choosing an Illinois site, as of this writing the Illinois legislature has not passed such a law and has shown great reluctance to do so. It failed to enact such legislation despite the stimulus of the delays which Pastore effected in the passage of the authorization for the accelerator and despite the AEC's efforts. In April, AEC Chairman Glenn T. Seaborg and three of his fellow commissioners traveled to the Illinois capital, Springfield, to point out the correlation between open-housing legislation and retention of the accelerator site in the state. At that time, Seaborg



The half-occupied hamlet of Weston (population—550) is the only village located within the 6800-acre tract, primarily farmland, which comprises the site for the 200-Bev accelerator. On a billboard on the outskirts of the village, Weston bills itself as the "Future Atomic Research Capital." [Chicago *Sun-Times* photo]

was quoted as having mentioned that a state law would be useful, partly because open-housing "commitments sought from communities in the Weston area have failed to materialize."

Seaborg had made a valid point. Despite the pressure which the proposed accelerator placement generated, the only community in the area surrounding the site to enact an open-housing ordinance was Weston itself. The half-occupied town of Weston, which is something of a real estate "lemon," has everything to gain from the accelerator site and nothing to lose by passing an open-housing ordinance, which it did in February. Officials close to the accelerator project say that Weston will be leveled to provide room for construction; thus, the grateful inhabitants of Weston can profitably get rid of their hard-to-sell homes.

The reluctance of part of the population of Illinois about the accelerator can be illustrated by the case of Barrington, a rich suburb to the north-

west of Chicago. When the AEC listed the six possible locations for the accelerator, it offered two sites in Illinois—Barrington or Weston. Many of the citizens of Barrington openly opposed building the accelerator near their town. The residents of the area no doubt acted from a variety of motives, but news commentator Edward P. Morgan seems to have been close to the mark when he said: "Nobody can blame an affluent country squire, a baron of Barrington, so to speak, for objecting to a nuclear monstrosity rising next to his well-manicured estate. The chances are, however, the Barringtonians were equally upset by the prospect of blackening their property values with a Negro next door." One Barrington resident is reported to have expressed his reservations in a public meeting by saying, "We have tried to create a sanctuary for our children here, a sanctuary for our children." After such objections, Barrington was withdrawn from the list of possible sites.

Although the reaction of some Bar-

rington citizens was doubtless exaggerated, the Barrington attitude has enough similarity to that of other residents in the western suburbs to have given a warning to the AEC. The feeling of a "sanctuary" seems to be quite important to residents of the western Chicago suburbs. Many have moved from the city, having chosen to become "refugees" from the racial and other problems of urban living. Having fled to their suburban sanctuary, they wish to keep it "safe." Many rely on the city for their job opportunities but do not wish to help shoulder its burdens. Unemployment is very low in the area, and the residents tend to have well-paid jobs. The area tends to be fairly conservative in its politics. Obviously, such characteristics are also representative of other suburban areas in the nation:

#### Reasons for the Struggle

Why has a national fight ensued over the placement of the accelerator site in Illinois? A first explanation is connected to the fact that the \$375-million accelerator seems like a great prize to any area of the country; political and business leaders anticipate that new industries and top-level scientific personnel will be drawn to the vicinity of the accelerator. Furthermore, the prize has been long and publicly discussed; groups throughout the nation have been mobilized to attract the accelerator to their own states. Representatives of the defeated states have some justification for waxing indignant over the selection of a site which does not meet the criterion of equal opportunity. Pastore, who originally favored the Brookhaven site on the eastern end of Long Island, has played a key role in keeping congressional eyes focused on the racial disadvantages of the Illinois site.

Pastore and other Congressmen have been made well aware of the opposition of civil rights groups, especially of the NAACP, to the Illinois site as long as the state does not have an open-housing law. Because of the extensive publicity given to the competition for the site, the civil rights leaders have found the placement of the accelerator a highly useful device to focus national attention on the placement of federal installations in nonurban areas. Also, for the Illinois civil rights activists, the Weston site offers a handy knife to cut away at the white suburban "noose" which constricts Chicago's Negro population. In the opinion of Chicago civil

## Pastore Wants Accelerator Deferred

*The following paragraphs form part of the statement on the 200-Bev accelerator by Senator John O. Pastore (D-R.I.), Chairman of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, in the committee's 19 June report. Senators Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) and George D. Aiken (R-Vt.) agreed with Pastore, but a substantial majority of the committee voted to begin design work for the accelerator.*

I believe the request by the AEC . . . should not be granted at this time.

This project should be deferred for a number of good reasons:

- preferences as to type of machine.
- priorities in a heavily committed economy.
- problem of water supply at site suggested.
- public policy questions involved. . . .

From the six finalists among the considered sites, the AEC chose a location in the only state of the six which does not have open-housing legislation.

Having introduced civil rights and nondiscrimination as a major issue, the AEC then conveniently set it aside. In effect, the Commission took a bold and forthright public position—while, privately, its position was one of compromise and retreat. . . .

However, we certainly should afford time to the people of Du Page and Kane Counties—time and opportunity to demonstrate their willingness to assure that full civil rights will be respected and practiced, particularly with regard to the availability of housing.

Sooner than that, we should not be committed to the construction of this significant project in that controversial area.

In the name of advancing science and technology, we should not be guilty of retreating from our boasted principles of equity, equality, humanity. . . .

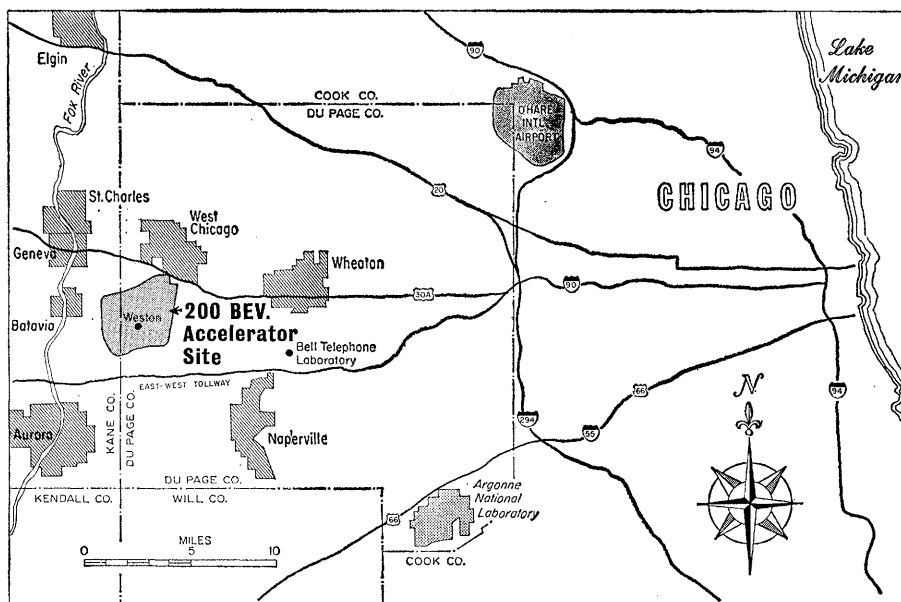
rights leaders, it is especially important to cut through to the western suburbs since this region represents the principal area where quantities of land are still available for suburban expansion around Chicago.

The particular site chosen by the AEC almost guaranteed a hot civil rights struggle. This site is located near a city which is one of the major centers of Negro population in the country, yet the site itself is too far from the city to make commuting feasible. Civil rights leaders and other area residents agree that few qualified Chicago Negroes will be willing to commute 30 miles to the Weston site. The distance is long, the winters are snowy, public transportation is of little help, and the workers could pick up equivalent jobs closer to their homes. Furthermore, the site has been placed in an area of labor shortage. Industries in the adjacent towns along the Fox River are short of labor. Construction at the site, manning the accelerator, and staffing industries attracted by the machine will require an influx of workers from outside the immediate vicinity. Whether these workers be white or Negro, they will need nearby housing.

#### Small Negro Population

What is the actual housing situation in the area? It has often been noted in the last few months that in Du Page County, where the accelerator is to be located, there are about 550 Negroes in a population which totals more than 300,000. Is this fact a result of accident or design?

To ascertain the answer to this question, it might be helpful to look at the experience of a single Negro couple, Mr. and Mrs. Marvin L. Montgomery, who sought housing in the western suburbs. In a sense, Marvin Montgomery is a figure of importance in the story of the struggle for Negro rights in the United States. In 1960, Montgomery was the president of the freshman class at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College at Greensboro, a group which helped initiate the sit-in movement to integrate Southern public facilities. Last year, Montgomery, an architectural engineer, was working for the Veterans Administration in Atlanta. In the spring of 1966, he was transferred to the Veterans Administration hospital at Hines, west of Chicago. He was assured by his (white) supervisor in Illinois that he would be able to find adequate housing in the area of the



hospital. In an interview, Montgomery explained that he had expected to find such housing: "I figured that my wife and I being college graduates with an income of over \$10,000 a year, that we wouldn't have any trouble. I was willing to pay anywhere up to \$200 a month for an apartment. People didn't care. I was a Negro. That was what shocked me, that they weren't willing to let me move in."

Montgomery said that he looked for housing for several weeks in the spring periods of both 1966 and 1967. He explained that, for several days, he would watch an advertisement for an apartment that looked suitable and then go to see the agent. He said that he tried 33 real estate agents but could not get a suitable apartment from any of them. "Some of them wouldn't even speak to me," he explained. Last year, Montgomery set himself up in a tent in front of one of the suburban realtors who had refused him housing. "I thought it would trouble their consciences. It didn't. I still couldn't find a place to live." Failing to find housing near the hospital, Montgomery changed jobs and moved to Chicago. "I can't keep giving up jobs because of housing," he said. With a surprising lack of bitterness, Montgomery seems to lament how little the civil rights activity of his generation has seemed to accomplish: "In North Carolina, we fought to buy a hot dog or hamburger. Now we all have our degrees, we want to make a contribution to society, but we still can't find decent housing. I guess I'll have to be fighting civil rights till the day I die."

Citing his own experiences, Montgomery has publicly argued that the accelerator should not be built in the Weston area until an adequate state or federal open-housing law is enacted. "Thurgood Marshall would have trouble finding a place to live in the western suburbs," he said.

#### Argonne's Experience

A more comprehensive view of the prospects for finding housing for Negro employees can be gained by examining the situation of the Argonne National Laboratory. The Laboratory is located in the southeastern part of Du Page County, the same county where the 200-Bev accelerator is to be built. Of the more than 5200 employees at the Laboratory, 225 are Negro. According to figures taken from the 1965 Argonne annual report, almost half of the white employees live in Du Page County, and only one-fifth of the whites travel more than 15 miles to Argonne. Virtually all of the Negro employees commute more than 15 miles.

John T. Bobbit, the assistant laboratory director, emphasizes that there is very little housing for the \$5000-a-year employee around Argonne whether he is colored or white. There are, however, 58 Negro employees at Argonne who earn more than \$8,000 annually and 19 who draw salaries of more than \$12,000. Most of these people could afford to live in the area if housing were available. Virgil Trice, who heads the fair employment practices committee at Argonne, said, "It is understood by Negro employees that Du Page County is closed to Negroes."

Trice, himself a Negro who commutes 22 miles a day each way to and from Chicago, believes that most of the Negro professionals at Argonne would move into the area if housing were available. Trice noted that Negroes have suffered repeated insults from real estate dealers in the area and that the "existing real estate industry is not available to Negro employees." Trice said that Argonne was trying to help overcome this problem to some extent by maintaining an open-occupancy listing "to try to create a substitute for the real estate industry."

#### WASP's Nest?

Several residents, including the head of the Du Page County NAACP, Kennard Williams, indicated that the county was primarily for "WASP" (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants). In an interview Williams said that he thought there had been "wholesale collusion" against both Negroes and Jews in housing in the county.

Williams said that Wheaton and the adjoining towns of Glen Ellyn and Winfield are the only communities in the county where real estate agents show some of their listings on an open-occupancy basis. He said that some people who had helped Negroes to obtain housing in the county had received threats, that there had been cross-burnings, and that his own mailbox had been blown up recently, despite his 12 years of residence in the county. Many of the 550 Negroes in Du Page County live in a lower-income pocket in Wheaton; the small number of middle-income Negroes in the county live primarily either in Wheaton or in the small town of York Center, a community founded by the Church of the Brethren. Williams said that he had received no complaints about discrimination in public accommodations or in jobs in Du Page County, but he noted that there are no white-collar Negro employees of either the county government or the various municipalities and that there are no Negro police officers in the county.

Although the bulk of the accelerator site is in Du Page County, a part of it lies in the eastern part of Kane County. Some of the Kane County towns along the Fox River could reasonably expect to house employees connected with the accelerator. The Fox River towns have been established longer than many of those in Du Page



Senator John O. Pastore, leading critic of the Illinois accelerator site.

County, and some of the residents are more optimistic about the ability of their towns to assimilate newcomers, including Negroes. At present, there are no Negro families in Geneva, four Negro families in St. Charles, and about 100 Negro families in Batavia. Probably because of its long-resident Negro community, Batavia seems a little more open than the other towns and has a handful of Negro families in middle-income housing. Public facilities in these towns seem to be open to Negroes, although some establishments have been opened only recently. These three towns, however, represent a relatively high-income area. Little low- or middle-income housing exists, and area residents think that lower-income Negroes connected with the accelerator will have to find housing in the city of Aurora to the south.

#### Limited Housing

Of the 71,000 people in Aurora, approximately 4600 are Negro. According to Emily Gibson, the head of the Aurora NAACP, Negroes and people of Latin descent are confined to restricted ghetto areas in the city. "This is still a closed community, though technically integrated," she said. She doubted that workers connected with the accelerator could find enough housing in Aurora. "The ghetto is teeming; there are sometimes two, three, or as many as five families living in a house," she said. Mrs. Gibson thinks there is little middle-income housing for minorities in Aurora, and a highly insufficient number of lower-income units. Mrs.

Gibson said that public facilities were integrated in Aurora, although she and other NAACP members had to sit-in last autumn to accomplish integration of some remaining commercial establishments. In a protest in Aurora last October, involving 400 civil rights demonstrators, some carried signs calling Aurora "Selma Up North." Mrs. Gibson reported that crosses had been burned on the lawns of two of her NAACP board members last autumn and that she had received telephone calls from people who had threatened to bomb her home and kill her children. Although she terms Aurora a community which is "backward in every way," she says that she thinks there has been "less hard-core racial hatred" directed against Negroes recently.

The AEC points out that the accelerator construction will not begin for another 18 months and that the agency will continue to work on improving housing conditions. Certainly, if construction were to begin next week, it would be impossible for many employees, especially Negroes, to find adequate housing in the area of the accelerator site. Since significant legal changes affecting housing seem unlikely in Illinois in the near future, there will have to be a substantial shift of attitudes if Negroes and other minority groups are to gain equal access to housing in the area. If Negroes are able to find people who will sell them suitable houses, most residents in the area, both white and Negro, believe that Negroes will be able to move in without incident. "These people are not violent like those in Cicero," one white resident explained.

The struggle over adequate civil rights guarantees for the Weston site will continue in coming months, both in Congress and in Illinois. In the retrospect of history, the civil rights struggle over the 200-Bev accelerator site may well be judged of great importance. In light of the AEC's experience with the Weston location, federal agencies are likely to take a much harder look at the racial situation in areas where major federal installations are contemplated. And, in view of their success in commanding national attention to the Weston site, civil rights groups will be sure to challenge all future placements of important federal installations in lily-white regions.

—BRYCE NELSON