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Courthouse Blast Stirs Old Fears

By Philip D. Carter

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CAMBRIDGE, Md., March 11 — While a dozen armed state policemen in work clothes poked through the rubble of the bomb-damaged Dorchester County Court house here today, a middle-aged white woman took picture from a street corner and cried.

Cambridge was showing its scars again, and the ragged wound in the courthouse wall was not the only reason for tears.

Cambridge High School, completely desegregated last September along with the rest of this Eastern Shore community's schools, closed early today because of a bomb scare, and at Mace's Lane Junior High, tense white parents, frightened by rumors of violence, started arriving at noon to take their children home.

By official assertion of police chief Brice Kinnamon, the town's 13,000 residents were calm. "I've never seen the people of Cambridge when they're not calm," he said.

Others told a different story.

Seated in the living room of her semiduplex apartment in the town's overwhelmingly Negro second Ward, black leader Elaine Adams, 37, offered a somber prediction: "At the rate its going now, it could really mean destruction."

And in front of the junior high school, an unidentified white mother declared that "there's just definite proof there's going to be trouble out here today."

Inside the school, Tom Flowers, supervisor of secondary schools for the county board of education, assured a reporter that "there's been no incident here today. It's just panic," he said.

"People are concerned about the bombing, certainly," he added "but this is just the normal adjustment problem of a school this size."

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In the school's dining room perhaps 50 students lingered over their lunch of hot dogs and beans, neatly segregated by race and sex except for one small inter-racial group of boys.

Complete Background

Although the bombing of the courthouse could have been the simple work of one person acting alone, Cambridge's recent history of racial disorder has far more complex roots.

In the 1950s the town's economic backbone, a seafood packing plant, suffered financial collapse. Unemployment rose to 22 per cent and reached much higher levels among the Cambridge's black minority.

In the past 10 years the town has managed to attract some 13 new industries, ranging from electronics firms to major printing plants to new, more solidly backed seafood plants. Unemployment has substantially fallen, to about 8 per cent.

White spokesmen proudly recite such statistics of economic growth, and minimize what many refer to as "the racial thing."

But in the past seven years, the civil rights revolution has flared into open confrontation between blacks and whites in the streets of Cambridge in three times: 1963, 1964 and 1967.

On the night of July 24, 1967, black power spokesman H. Rap Brown addressed a Second Ward crowd of about 400 and then walked with 40 young followers toward the white center of town. Police fired on Brown, wounding him with a shotgun pellet. That night two square blocks of the Second Ward burned to the ground in a \$300,000 blaze, and Brown was later charged with inciting to riot and arson.

Officials View

Today, Dorchester County State's Attorney William Yates II saw the two recent bombings as "related" acts of "intimidation" intended to prevent Brown's trial from being held.

"I think they're trying to prevent the trial from taking place," he said, But "they're not going to scare us off, I'll tell you."

The outcome of the trial will have little direct bearing



By Bob Burchette—The Washington Post

Elaine Adams, Cambridge activist, seeks information.

on the problems of Cambridge's Negroes. According to Mrs. Adams, who heads a local activist group called Cambridge Black Action Federation, the black community's seven-year-old demands have won scant attention.

"The issues here are the same old four—housing, employment, recreation and education," she said.

In her appraisal of Cambridge she ticked off many points made by white leaders, but made it clear they lead her to different conclusions. Like the whites, she acknowledged that the black community now has 150 new public housing units—but 225 were promised, she said.

"Industries Fearful"

In the employment, she said, "The industries are very fearful. Some industries do have black supervisors, but its merely there for a front."

She said that recreation for

the black young, is mainly limited to an evening basketball league sponsored by local industries. A swimming pool ordered desegregated several years ago was shut and has remained closed. Its present owner, Mrs. Adams observed, is police chief Kinnamon.

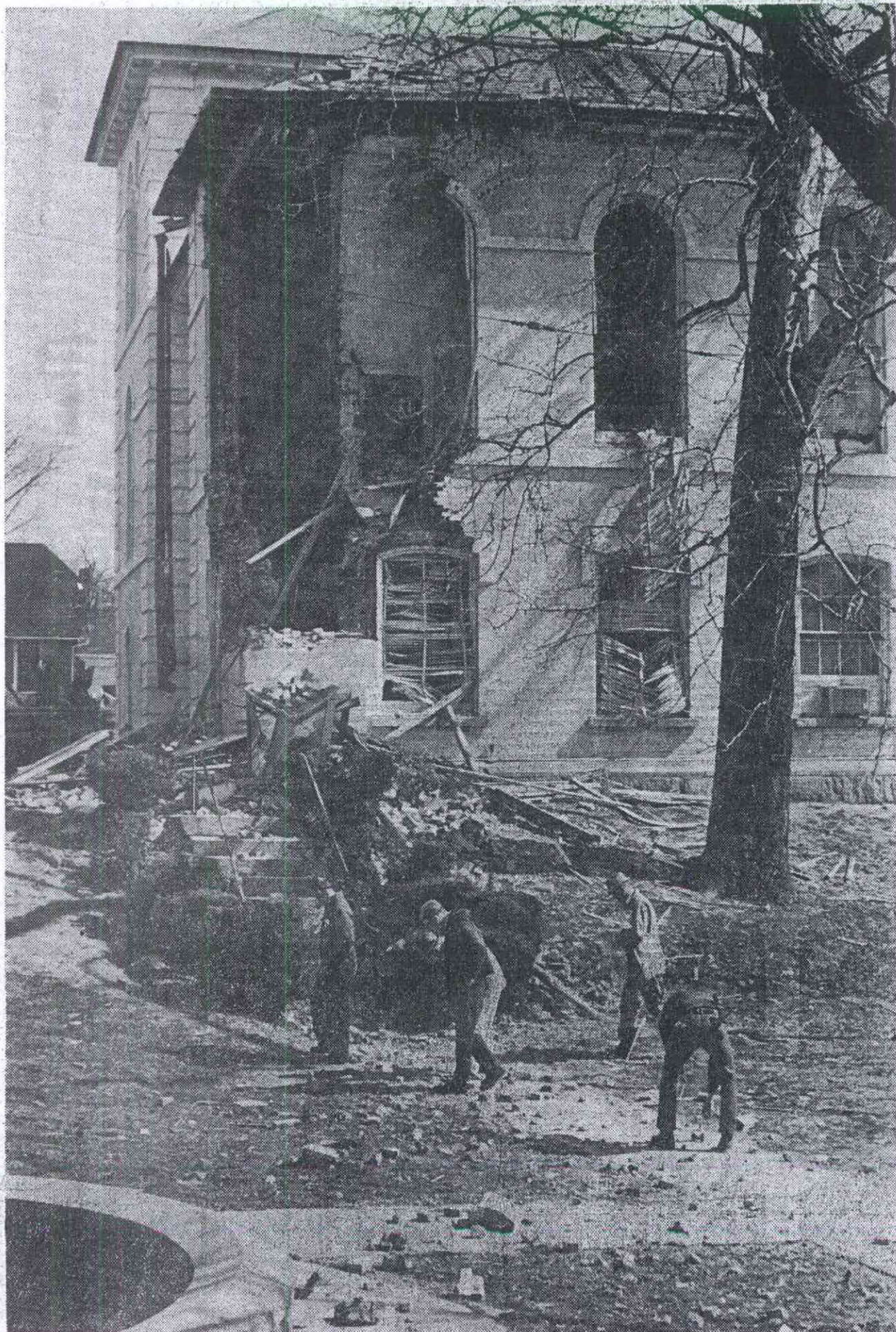
She conceded that school integration has won a certain measure of success, "but when I went into my daughter's classroom, they had it fixed so that the whites outnumbered the blacks. They have it arranged so it won't be equal."

City officials said that considerable progress has been made since the summer of 1967 in "housing and everything else in the world."

Mayor Osvrey C. Pritchett said, "We do everything according to the courts. We're abiding by the law. Whatever the courts say, we'll do."

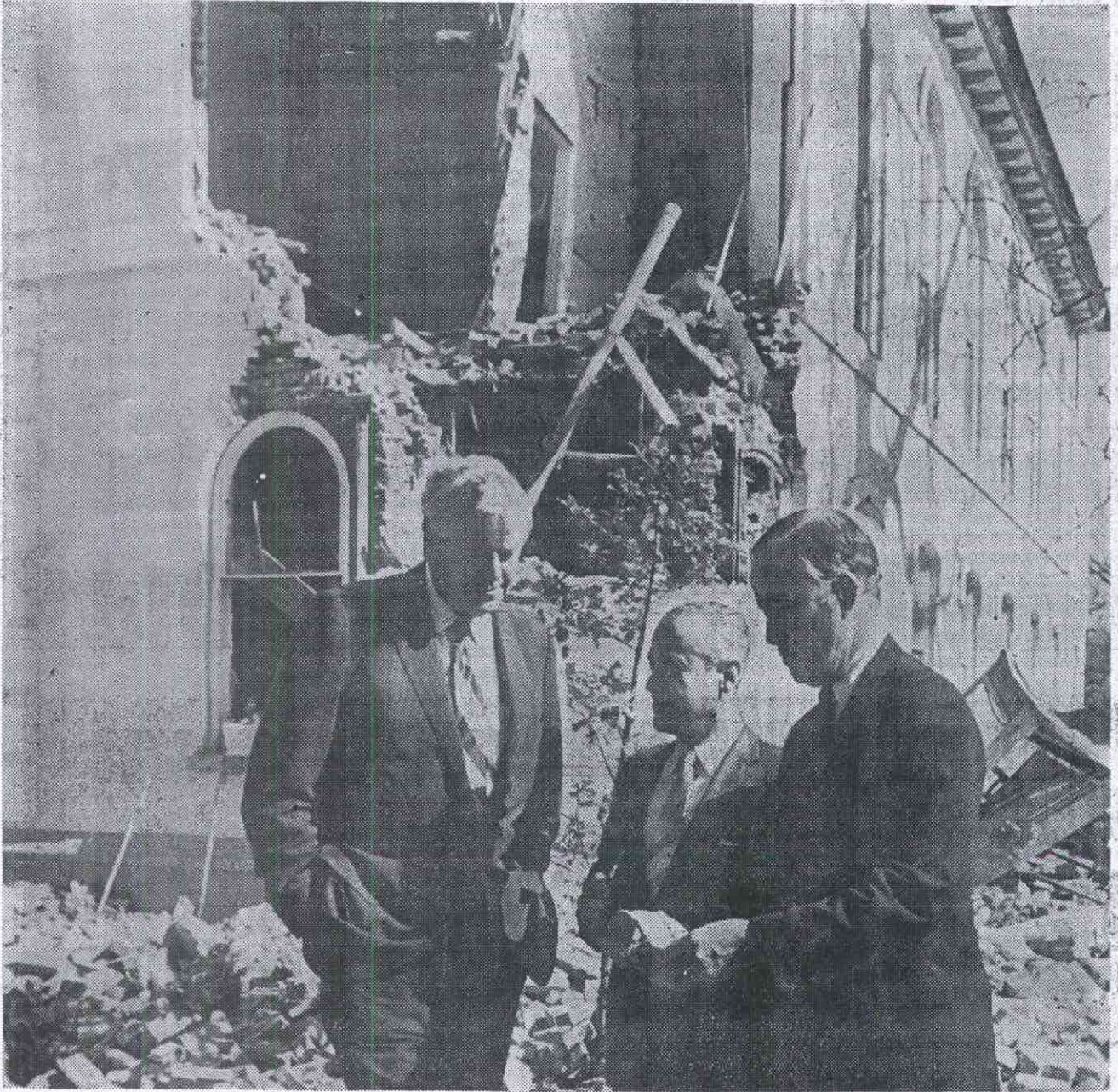
"Can't Do It All"

The mayor added: "The city can't go out and do everything without the money. It's getting



By Bob Burchette—The Washington Post

Police and FBI men look through rubble for evidence concerning the bombing of the Dorchester Courthouse.



By Bob Burchette—The Washington Post

Rep. Rogers C. B. Morton (R-Md.), Gov. Marvin Mandel and Sen. Charles McC. Mathias (R-Md.) inspect bomb damage.

to be time for people to do something for themselves and help themselves. You can't do it all overnight, and I think we've done extra good."

But Hobart D. Adams, who took charge of Cambridge's anti-poverty program last August, expressed a somewhat less sanguine view. "There has been some change," he said. "We get cooperation now when we talk to people about OEO programs.

"Even the city council, is more liberal than before, when you couldn't even talk to them," he said. "But there's still a long way to go as far as intermingling of races is concerned."

It was not clear whether Adams, a Negro, has much of an audience among the town's whites. Perhaps more typical was the Eastern Shore's Republican Congressman Roger's C. B. Morton a farmer from nearby Easton.

Standing at the edge of the courthouse rubble today, he delivered this soliloquy:

"I Love This Town"

"I love this town and I have been with it in some of its hardest moments, and I think that there could be a concept developed, erroneously, that Cambridge has not made progress in its total environment and in its total society, and I'd like to lay that to rest.

"This community has engaged in one of the most Herculean bootstrap operations—more new industrial jobs have been developed here than in any other city in the district, more programs . . . have been put into effect. Civic leadership here both in the black community and in the white community has done a fantastic job to bring Cambridge up by its bootstraps to the viable community that it is now . . .

"I hope that this one incident won't either affect the morale of the people in Cambridge themselves or change the public view of this really dynamic community."

Elaine Adams had something quite different to say. "We're silent now," she declared, "we haven't said a thing, and instead of conditions getting better they are getting worse.

"As long as you stay quiet," she said, "they think you are dead. When you're raising hell with them they stay on their toes."