

Work train, school bus collide

ROCKMART, Ga. (AP)—Seven children died and 72 others were injured Wednesday when a work train backed into a crowded school bus and dragged it hundreds of feet before leaving it crushed beneath the caboose.

The dead ranged in age from 6 to 12. The driver of the bus was also injured.

"I looked up. I saw the train coming, then I heard a thump when it hit and everybody started rolling over. Everybody was screaming and crying," said Bobby Bannister Jr., 15, one of the youngsters on the bus. He was not seriously hurt.

All but five of the injured—four children and the bus driver—were treated for cuts and bruises and released, said Don Tate, administrator of the Rockmart-Aragon Hospital.

One of the children hospitalized was in critical condition and another in guarded condition. Officials said there were 79 children on the bus, which had a seating

capacity of 66. Georgia law permits 20 per cent overloading.

Tate earlier had reported that about two dozen children were hurt, but he said the rest were brought in later with minor injuries.

"These children had crawled out from the windows of the bus and went to a nearby store, telephoned their parents and went home," Tate said.

Southern Railway flew its chief surgeon, Dr. Max P. Rodgers, to the scene to assist local doctors. The railroad also offered to provide free of charge any medical assistance needed.

The 11-car train was in the area clearing up an earlier derailment along the Southern Railway tracks when it backed through the crossing. There were warning signs but no flashing signals.

Darrell Smith, who works at a general store near the rural crossing in northwest Georgia, said he saw the bodies of several children strewn along the tracks as he raced

to the crumpled bus.

"It was pretty horrible," Smith said. "The kids were hollering, trying to get out. One was half hanging out."

Smith said the bus stopped for the crossing then "started on across. The train was backing up. It seemed like it speeded up and hit the bus."

State Trooper Charles Sanders said a brakeman was in the caboose as the train backed south at the crossing but he did not see the bus.

"The engineer said he was sounding the whistle on the train approximately eight cars up," said Sanders.

He said the brakeman had called to the engineer, "The crossing is clear. Come on back."

Sanders said the brakeman, who was knocked to the floor by the impact, told him he did not know that the train had hit the bus until the train came to a halt.

Authorities said Billy Kellett, 50, driver of the bus, had been driving the route for several years and was

well acquainted with the crossing. Kellett was injured.

The bus was headed for Aragon Elementary School which some of the children attended. Others were

to transfer to other buses headed for Rockmart High and another elementary school.

Rockmart is about 35 miles northwest of Atlanta.

Buses may increase to cover enrollment

By BARBARA WEST
Staff Writer

The need for more bus service was discussed at the Shuttle Bus Committee meeting Tuesday.

Dr. Charles W. Powell, chairman of the committee, reported a study of the existing and planned apartment complexes is being made by Eugene C. Oates, director of civilian students activities. The results will help determine any changes in the shuttle bus system for next year, he said.

He added that next year's projected enrollment includes 4,500 freshmen and many of them will be day students.

"This puts us back in the bus business even heavier for next year," Powell said.

The committee will begin preparing appropriations request from student services fees for next year when Oates' study is completed. Changes in routes are also being

considered. The committee discussed changing the current Route 1 to exclude the Monaco area, making these apartments part of the south-bound route (Route 2).

Under the proposed plan the new Route 1 buses will leave campus by the main gate and serve only the apartments on the opposite side of Highway 6.

Some problems discussed by the committee included the availability of lubricating oil and anti-freeze, road conditions in the area near Mobiltown Trailer Park and a possible 50 per cent cut in diesel fuel allocations by the Federal Energy Office.

Ed Dummer of Transportation Enterprises, Inc. said, "If they cut us 50 per cent, it will get us again teetering on the brink of disaster."

Jim Diller, local manager of TEI, reported that some damage has been done to the buses by the poor road conditions behind Shipley's Donuts.

Elementary school bombed in protest

CHARLESTON (AP) — An elementary school was bombed Tuesday as new violence flared in Kanawha County's seven-week-old school book protest.

The bombing occurred less than a day after presidential aide announced that the White House was seeking a "constructive compromise" to end violence that has included several shootings.

A stick of dynamite thrown through a window of Midway Elementary on Campbells Creek,

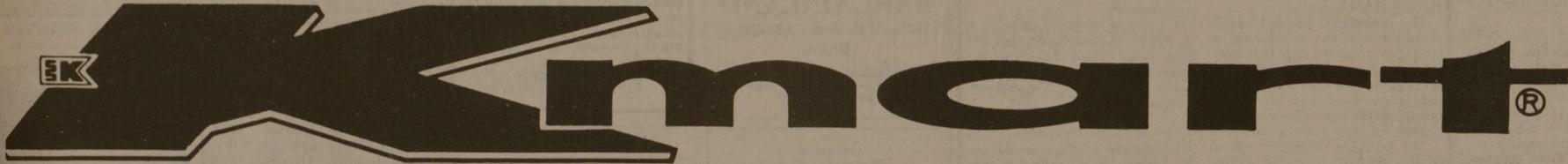
southeast of Charleston, caused an estimated \$1,500 damage to furniture, windows and equipment, officials said. The blast occurred about 3:30 a.m. and there was no one in the building.

Damage was confined to only one room and the school was opened for classes Tuesday, but no pupils attended classes.

Another room in the same school was damaged Oct. 9 when a fire bomb was thrown through a window.

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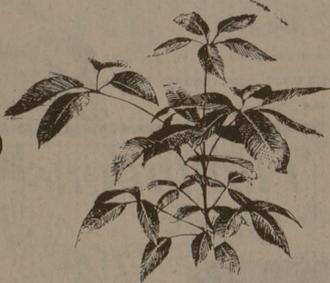
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