Martin Says Court Hurt Jackson Schools

AUBURN, Ala. (UPI) — Dr. John Martin of Auburn University, looking back on his former job as superintendent of the Jackson, Miss., schools, said today every attempt was made to comply with legal requirements in that job but there was a conflict with a good educational program.

"We made every attempt to comply with legal requirements, but we also wanted a sound, creative educational program," he said.

"The continuous change on the part of court orders constituted four different desegregation plans within a six-month period," he said. "This involved 55 schools, nearly 2,000 teachers and about 40,000 students."

In a press release from Auburn, Martin said he was neither bitter nor pessimistic. He was quoted as feeling his most recent experience provided a valuable background in his new job as associate director of the Auburn desegregation the "problem now is that school personnel are not prepared adequately to cope with the problems and issues."

"Change is not innovation simply to be new or to cater to a permissive society," he said. "When children with varied backgrounds and experiences are put together, teachers — both black and white, and some for the first time — will see each child as an individual with different capabilities, hopes, aspirations and skills."

"The three R’s are no longer applicable in isolation," he said.

Martin said in his new job he will try to help bridge the gap and help introduce new teaching methods to meet the new times.

Through the Auburn Center, designed to assist where assistance is asked, teachers and administrators list problems they have or expect to encounter. As the list lengthens, it is apparent that some are related and that a single approach can solve several problems, according to Martin.

Martin resigned his Jackson job after 14 months of "unremitting disruption from the courts." He was assistant superintendent of the Atlanta schools before that Mississippi assignment.