Far more important to the Council's aims, however, and another illustration of its grip on the state government was the decision by the State Sovereignty Commission in late 1960 to donate $50,000 a month from state tax money to support the Council's radio and television programs, Citizens Council Forum. The members of the commission, formed by the Legislature in 1956 to protect the sovereignty of the state of Mississippi, include the Governor, and are nearly to a man Council members.

The grant, combined with a lump sum donation of $35,000, has brought the Council nearly $100,000 from the public treasury. Although an internal power struggle in the Sovereignty Commission resulted in a $500-a-month cut in the donation, no one seriously believes the commission will eliminate it altogether in the near future.

There are many other examples of the Council's influence in the state government. Perhaps most significant is the fact that William Simmon, editor of the Council's newspaper and administrator of the state Council association, has become a constant companion of Governor Barnett, traveling with him when he makes out-of-state talks (many of which Simmon reportedly writes) and sitting in as an "observer" at most meetings of the Sovereignty Commission.

During the last regular session of the legislature in 1960, that body acted as little more than a rubber-stamp for bills which had Council endorsement. One gave local governments the power to secede from their parent churches, taking church property with them, if they found themselves in conflict with the national denominations' doctrines. It was passed despite claims that it violated the constitutional separation of church and state. And that the Governor Barnett's major appointments were of men who were on the Council's church groups, has been no secret.

Individual Councils vary from town to town, but the general pattern is much the same. (Continued on Page 125)

One may screen new members more rigorously than another; some are relatively inactive. Most hold annual membership drives during which they make heavy use of newspaper advertising.

One Council advertised that prospective members need merely "walk into the back." In another town, a membership application could be filled out at the local hotel. In countless restaurants across the state, Citizens Council literature can be picked up with the toothpicks at theendedor's counter.

The local organization's president is invariably a prominent citizen, and the board of directors is drawn largely from the community's Who's Who. When meetings are held, which isn't often, the same rough form of Robert's Rules of Order followed in most civic clubs is observed. The chairman begins by calling on the president, who often a Baptist—"for a prayer." Committee reports, if any, are heard, and the main business of the evening follows.

As often as not, the meeting will be open to the public, and will feature a main speaker and several lesser lights. The featured attraction may be the vitriolic speech against segregation and state's rights, lashes the Supreme Court, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, church groups beyond the "moderate" and "conservative" spectrum, and warns of dire ends with a call for a united front of dues-paying members to stem the tide of change.

At a meeting of the council, the main order of business may be anything from a discussion of the difficulties of collecting dues to the formulation of a plan to deal with a local white or Negro "trouble-maker." One or two hotheads will jump up and let loose with impassioned speeches calling for radical and immediate action—usually a midnight call on the offender. The conservatives then will make themselves heard, calm down the firebrands and soothe the proper.

As a result of the perpetuation of conservative control, no act of racial violence in Mississippi has ever been directly connected to the Citizens Council. Those incidents that have occurred may be indirectly traceable to the climate engendered by the Council, but its is a theoretical relationship. The Council has found it doesn't need to operate that way to get results.

Initially, the fear of economic pressure against discriminating whites and Negroes was the main weapon, and to some extent it is still used, particularly against Negroes but as the Council has developed it has found that the isolation of moderate and liberal whites from the rest of the white community and the complete destruction of interracial community life are far more productive and far easier to accomplish.

To a degree which is hard to convey, a person who does not live in Mississippi, the Citizens Council has managed to divert the spotlight of most white Mississippians for integration into a mold which includes the total rejection of any deviation from the status quo. Blind adherence to "our way of life" is the reaf of the Citizens Council's coalition.

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