Citatel of the Citizens Council

While other Southern states move toward at least token desegregation, in Mississippi the diehard white-supremacists are firmly in control.

By HODDING CARTER III

GREENVILLE, Miss.

THE roll-out of Southern communal movements which have begun at least token public-school integration in response to Federal court-ordered desegregation was significantly lengthened this fall with the peaceful desegregation of schools in Dallas, Memphis and the Deep South was shattered for the rest of the Black South.

But one state, which shares with Arkansas and South Carolina the distinction of maintaining total segregation at all levels in the public schools, which is formed into a strength to stiffen rather than crumble. The state is Mississippi. After seven years of mounting pressure, it is virtually impossible to find any public manifestations of the falsity of many whites are privately expressing.

As the pressure has intensified, in fact Mississippi resistance has tended to stiffen rather than crumble. It is that the New South was allowed a completely unified front in defying the recent Interstate Commerce Commission ruling on the desegregation of interstate facilities. State laws were invoked in every city to preserve segregation in the local waiting rooms and terminal restaurants. And when the Justice Department promptly asked Federal courts for a restraining order, there was little doubt that the state will be maintained until the last legal maneuver is exhausted.

The observer would be hard pressed to find a major church which is a significant segregationist force. There is a handful of white dissenters, and there is a growing number of such white church groups, but neither is formed into a strength that is an "influence in the state," as was the case in Mississippi for the continuation of segregation in Mississippi in pervasive, sometimes subtle and immensely strong. To a high degree it is vested in the Citizens Council.

It is difficult to explain to an outsider just how powerful a force this white-supremacy group has become. Perhaps the best point to grasp is that the Citizens Council in Mississippi is not a matter how dubious its aims, re- purgant its methods or dispicable its philosophy—is not made up of hooded lynchmen, but from the community's civic leaders. The conservatives call it a "local organization" 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 by the local public-school integration bills which had Council endorsement. One gave local schools the right 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's major appointments were of men who were on the Council's church groups.

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