Cidetail 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. \( \text{**The** roll-call of Southern communities which have begun at least token public-school integration in response to Federal court pressure was significantly lengthened this fall with the peaceful desegregation of schools in Dallas, Memphis and Louisiana. In the last two cities, massive resistance on the secondary school level was encountered in the Deep South was shuttled for the first time. With the termination of the sit-in movement involved was not impressive, the psychological effect on the rest of the Black South was profound. \} \)

But one state, which shares with Arizona and South Carolina a distinction of maintaining total segregation at all levels in the public schools, almost no signs of yielding—Mississippi and most white Southerners have drudgingly begun to accept as inevitable. The state is Mississippi. After seven years of mounting pressure, it is virtually impossible to find any public manifestations of the faltering many whites are privately expressing.

As the pressure has intensified, in fact, for Mississippi resistance has tended to stiffen rather than crumble. It is the one Southern state which showed 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 prevent desegregation in the local waiting rooms and terminal restaurants, and although the Justice Department promptly asked Federal courts for a restraining order, there was little doubt that the law will be maintained until the last legal maneuver is exhausted.

The observer would be hard pressed to find a major civic or political segregationist force. There is a handful of white dissenters, and there is a growing number of whites who are against segregation, but neither is formed into a strength that can influence greatly. Support of the Council's newspaper and administration 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 repeatedly writes) and sitting in as "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 segregationist groups the right to invite to meals 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 Governor Barnett's major appointments were of men who were on the Council's insurance.

Individual Councils vary from town to town, but the general pattern is much the same. 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 the customer's check.

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, found it doesn't need to operate. The chairman begins by calling on the minister—most often a Baptist— for a prayer. Committees report, 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 is inevitably a speaker who can screen new members of the Council. But the event ends with a call for a united front of dues-paying members to stem the tide of change. At one meeting, 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 hellhounds will jump up and let loose with impassioned speeches calling for radical and immediate action—usually a midnight call on the offender. The conservatives will then make themselves heard, calm down the firebrands, and state the proposals.

As a result of the perpetuation of controlled, the 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 it is a theoretical relationship. The Council has found it doesn't need to operate that way to get results.

Initially, the use of economic pressure against besieging 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 tactics of moderate and liberal whites are the more productive and far easier to accomplish.

To a degree that is hard to convey in prose, in Mississippi, the Citizens Council has managed to divert the enmity 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 re- frain of the Citizens Council's editor of Greenville, Miss. last year. He is the author of "The South Strikes Back."