MISS-CITIZENS' COUNCILS

ASSOCIATION OF CITIZENS' COUNCILS
OF MISSISSIPPI

STATES' RIGHTS
RACIAL INTEGRITY

GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI

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IN RETROSPECT

The fourth anniversary of the birth of your Citizens' Council movement was quietly observed on July 11, 1958. It is fitting that some of us who have taken part in the resistance movement against forced integration look back over the past four years and make an appraisal of the situation then and the situation now.

How successful have our efforts been, combined with those of many thousands of other patriotic Americans?


"Segregationists in the Deep South have won the first round against racial intermixure in the public schools." . . . .

"The South has built a strong set of obstacles blocking the road to future integration. Here is the fruit of the segregationists' energetic and skillful work:

1. THE principle of uncompromising segregation has been made to reign without effective challenge in state and local politics. With exceptions interesting only as curiosities, Deep South politicians do not and cannot breathe a public word to the contrary.

2. MODERATES—those who oppose overnight and large-scale school integration but who nevertheless believe that some steps should be taken in the next few years leading to admission of some Negro students to hitherto white schools—have been placed on the defensive, so much so that they are scarcely to be heard in public.

There is almost no debate. Only rarely is there a white voice raised in the press, the pulpit and the universities suggesting some forthright movement toward desegregation. And needless to say, the white man who speaks out directly for prompt integration is virtually a sideshow freak.

HOLD COMMUNITY REINS

3. AT LEAST in its outward forms, leadership of community institutions such as state and local offices, the press, the church and the civic, welfare, service and social organizations is predominately in the hands of the unyielding segregationists.

4. THE movement which had taken place since World War II toward interracial cooperation and toward some kinds of integration has been brought almost to a halt. . . .

5. THE phrase of the "Liberal Underground"—a name wryly bestowed upon themselves by those who would like to see prompt movement toward compliance—is that "the chan-

nels of communication are down." People of differing views on the race issue simply don't discuss them with each other, much less publicly debate them.

6. THE Supreme Court decision has been repainted to appear as an order for instant and complete school integration, everywhere, in every school, in massive amount. When the white South now says, as it does with virtual unanimity, "It can't be done," the "it" is automatically understood as meaning a Supreme Court decision for immediate and full-scale intermixure of white and Negro students. . . .

A SPREADING CONCEPT

SIGNIFICANTLY, that view of what "it" means appears to have been made into the dominant image in the rest of the Nation, too.

The importance of that conception, of course, is that once it has been embraced, consciously or subconsciously, as what the Supreme Court ordered, the Southern position of "It can't be done" has to be conceded... For good reasons or for bad ones, large scale integration of all Southern elementary and high schools seems, to almost all observers, Northern or Southern, as out of the question in the immediate future.

7. A REGIONAL gospel has been established that any Federal effort to force integration will be met by closing down the public school system. The farther south you go, the slighter is the action that is deemed to be "forced integration."

The state of affairs outlined above did not just happen. It was planned that way, and with great skill. It was the achievement of determined, energetic and effective men. Some were organized formally in such groups as the White Citizens' Councils; others acted informally, but no less effectively, in political or community groups.

The speed of their work, the completeness of their control of political bodies and agencies at all levels, their seizure of the offensive and their deftness in framing the issue in the terms they wanted—all this bespeaks a high order of skill and technique. . . .

THERE ARE parallels in the quick shifts of governmental, press and community attitudes in all the Deep South states. In many places there appears to have been a moment, whether of a few days or a few months duration, when leaders of opinion—not necessarily or even usually the political figures—were prepared, although reluctantly and unhappily, to take some first tentative measures leading to full compliance in the next several years.

Then something happened. The mood passed, to be replaced by an adamant resistance led and controlled by the segregationists, militant and well-organized.


"Thus was formed the first Citizens' Council, a movement that in a few months swept the South and gave loud voice to the Southern resistance to school desegregation.

At that time desegregation seemed inevitable and not far off. Today, in the Deep South, it seems unlikely in the foreseeable future. At that time the South was divided, perplexed, resigned. Today the Solid South is a fact, and its resistance to desegregation is granite. Let us study the remarkable achievement of a resistance movement that has uncompromisingly set its face against the mainstream of American thought as expressed by the Supreme Court of the land—and has thus far got away with it."