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THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE PLAN

BY

WALTER WHITE

It is to be hoped that the honorary degrees they were to receive the following day from the University of Florida did not influence the opinions expressed on the Southern Regional College Plan at Gainesville, Florida recently by Owen D. Young, New York industrialist and educator, and Oliver C. Carmicheal, president of the Carnegie Corporation. But whatever the reason for their praise of the proposal, they have lent their personal and organizational prestige to as brazen a scheme to circumvent decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court as has been concocted in the history of America.

The South has been driven into a corner by Supreme Court decisions against the total denial of professional and graduate training to Negroes in Southern tax-supported universities. But the old South is determined to hold on to racial segregation even in the face of bankruptcy if they obey the edict of the Supreme Court that they must supply "substantially equal" facilities to Negroes. To get off the horns of this dilemma, even temporarily, 29 Southern Senators have introduced S.J. Res. 191 asking the "consent of Congress to the compact regional education entered into between the Southern states at Tallahassee, Fla. on February 8, 1948".

Enactment of such legislation is required by the Federal Constitution which prohibits states entering into compacts without prior consent of the Congress. The Southern governors piously declare that such regional schools are to be created for both "white and Negro" students. Not one of them nor any of the 29 Senators who introduced S.J. Res. 191 (including inexplicably Senator Alvin Barkley of Kentucky, Senate Minority Leader, liberal Senators Claude Pepper of Florida and Harley Kilgore of West Virginia, and several other Senators who either ought to know better or are vulnerable politically) believes for a minute that within foreseeable and calculable time the existing white schools of law, medicine, engineering, dentistry, pharmacy, forestry and graduate education are going to be abandoned and their students sent off to regional schools.

Whatever shrinking private funds for education may make necessary in the future, the sole purpose and intent at present of the regional plan, which experienced and wise Americans as Messrs. Young and Carmichael should have been intelligent enough to see, is to set up segregated regional schools for Negroes and not for whites. Intelligent Negroes and whites, particularly the former, see through this dishonest scheme and will oppose it with all the organizational and political power at their command. The Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled that each state must meet its obligations to its citizens within the boundary of that state--which incidentally happens to be the Bible of the states righters.

Obviously aware both of the doubtful constitutionality of such enabling legislation as well as of the rising opposition, proponents of the plan are attempting to jam this legislation through Congress with unprecedented speed. Representative Sam Hobbs of Alabama secured almost instant approval by a Judiciary Subcommittee of the resolution (H. Res. 334) he introduced in the House of Representatives. Almost equally swift was the Senate in announcing hearings on S.J. Res. 191. But they were not swift enough to stop requests of the opposition to be heard.

It is already evident that any Senator or Congressman from Northern or Border states, irrespective of party, who votes for the regional plan in its present form will incur the wrath of Negro, labor, church, and other voters. One of the immediately apparent manifestations of the real purposes back of the legislation is its failure to include provision that there shall be neither discrimination nor segregation in the proposed regional schools.

Even if the Congress is either so deluded or dishonest as to approve S.J. Res. 191 and its House counterpart, it can be safely predicted that the constitutionality of the legislation will be promptly and unequivocally challenged in the courts. The establishment or attempted establishment of regional schools for Negroes while existing state graduate and professional schools for whites continue in operation will be in direct opposition to the entire trend of United States Supreme Court decisions of the past decade.

This attempt of the South, aided and encouraged by Messrs. Young and Carmichael, provides an ironic as well as amusing commentary on

the current "revolt" of some of these same Southern governors who emit daily tirades against "Northern" and "Federal interference". An Associated Press dispatch from Gainesville, Fla. dated March 5th reports that the Southern Regional Education Council proposed a \$76,400 budget "to get its plan for cooperative schools rolling". The story adds that "the funds will be sought from several philanthropic educational organizations"--presumably from way down South on Fifth Avenue in New York City where the offices of the Carnegie Corporation are located.

These same governors threaten virtually every act of non-violence or violence against Congressional legislation to abolish lynching, the poll tax and job discrimination. But it seems to have no reluctance in asking the same Congress to enact federal legislation to enable the South to perpetuate educational discrimination and segregation and to circumvent the clear and unmistakable mandate of the United States Supreme Court. We can believe that the Southern Governors are honest only when they come into court as well as the Congress with clean hands by abolishing the legal fiction and judicial myth of "separate but equal" facilities.

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WHITE WALTER

March 19, 1948

Mr. Walter White
National Association for the Advancement
of Colored People
20 West Fortieth Street
New York 18, New York

Dear Mr. White:

I certainly thank you for your kindness in sending me a release of your March 11 syndicated column on the Southern Regional College plan.

You are to be commended for the forthright analysis which you have given this situation and for the position which you have taken. I assure you that we are all grateful to you for the fine leadership which you are giving us and our race in these problems during these perilous times.

Sincerely yours,

WHG/czs

Wm. H. Gray, Jr.

With the Compliments

of

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