

Mississippi is a state which overlays with the myth of a gracious past the reality of its brutal present. James Silver, professor of history at the University of Mississippi since 1936, writes in his book, "Mississippi: The Closed Society" that in times of crisis such as the present challenge to white supremacy in the state, "...the society tightly closes its ranks, becomes inflexible and stubborn, and lets no scruple, legal or ethical, stand in the way of the enforcement of the orthodoxy. The voice of reason is stilled and the moderate either goes along or is eliminated. Those in control during such times of crisis are certain to be extremists whose decisions are determined by their conformity to the orthodoxy.... Eventual disaster is predictable."

Professor Silver's words have evoked a reaction from his fellow whites which serves as a testament to his prescience.

The Council of Federated Organizations--COFO--is this summer attempting to breach the walls of the closed society. COFO is made up of CORE, SNCC, NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. To alert the public to the conditions in which COFO must work, the organization held a hearing in Washington on June 8, just thirteen days before three workers in the Summer Project disappeared in Philadelphia, Mississippi.

The panel included Dr. Harold Taylor--a Pacifica Board member incidentally--Paul Goodman, Joseph Heller, and Murray Kempton.

On June 16, Congressman Don Edwards of California, and William Fitts Ryan of New York joined with others in inserting the text of the hearing into the Congressional Record.

The testimony of COFO workers and native Mississippians confirmed starkly the report of the Mississippi Advisory Committee of

Thus, we were told federal troops ~~could~~ could not be sent to Harlem, but there was not a whisper about Mississippi.

The very lives of civil rights workers require an end to this vacillation. The future of American politics hinges on the Democratic Party's reaction to the Goldwater candidacy. Those who fight for civil rights are especially concerned because they are likely to be the victims of Johnson concessions to the right-wing of his party.

Civil rights organizations ask the President, in the words of a certain Republican politician, to give them a choice, not an echo.

----Michael Tigar

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