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Influences behind social change in Atlanta, Georgia

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INFLUENCES BEHIND SOCIAL CHANGE IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA

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PREFACE

A great change of social attitudes has taken place in the city of Atlanta within an extremely short time. To the Negroes, who have waited almost 100 years to be really free, the change appears slight. However, to one who was reared in the "big house" on what amounted to a plantation in Georgia, the change is almost unbelievable.

The greatest change--the transformation of the mind and attitude of the common citizen--is the least apparent and to a large degree an immeasurable one. There have been, however, significant happenings in the city that are indicative of this great change. The reader should keep in mind the fact that these more apparent changes primarily stem from the basic, but less noticeable change mentioned above.

INTRODUCTION

In November of 1957 a manifesto or statement dealing with the racial crisis was drawn up by Atlanta ministers and released for publication. Eighty ministers signed this "radical" statement. Almost exactly a year later a second manifesto was released emphasizing the same principles laid down in the first manifesto. Sixteen different denominations were represented by this second statement. Three hundred and twelve ministers and rabbis signed this document. Thus, within a period of a little over one year the number of ministers taking a widespread public stand moved from zero, to eighty, to 312.

The Episcopal Church, the United Liberal Church, and the Quaker House recently have successfully integrated. Moreover, approximately 50% of the current "kneel-in" demonstrations have been effective. That is to say that although the churches do not as of yet actually have Negro members, they will be seated if they choose to attend. Several churches have publicly issued an invitation to any Negroes who may wish to worship with them.

The transit system of Atlanta, which has traditionally been segregated, was completely integrated by a court order. The intrastate bus and train terminals, with their accompany-

ing cafeterias, also complied with this order. There was absolutely no violence with either of these changes.

The public golf courses in the city, along with all the park facilities, were considered very exclusive insofar as Negroes were concerned. Today these courses are integrated and the transition has apparently been very smooth. Indeed, one often sees Negroes and whites playing together in a foursome.

The restaurants in the large downtown department stores have always been closed to Negroes, although their dollar was counted on to help empty the shelves of merchandise. However, as a result of the nonviolent "sit-in" demonstrations, an agreement has been reached whereby the restaurants will serve Negro customers beginning in the fall of 1961. This coming event seems to have been fairly well accepted by the store officials and by the people.

Perhaps the biggest change has been the stand taken by the Governor and the legislature of the state in regard to the public schools. In the campaign of 1958, the then would-be Governor, promised to use force, or even to close all schools in the entire state to prevent "any breakdown at any time, at any place in the existing pattern of segregation". Under his leadership laws were passed during the legislative session of 1960 designed to provide massive resistance to

school integration. This was the same plan adopted by Virginia which made it imperative that all schools close if the segregation policy of any school were eliminated. A year later the legislature again listened to a speech from the Governor, and again following his lead, passed legislation which would keep the schools open and allow local option with regard to pupil placement.

These are several of the major changes. Our task is to attempt to get behind these obvious changes and to determine why they occurred. What was involved? What were the factors at work? What were the pressures that were undoubtedly brought to bear on the situation? These and other questions were at the heart of the writer's queries as he sought his information. After having read fairly extensively in this area as a background for this study, (see bibliography) the writer went to Atlanta and devoted twelve days to interviews with Negro and white leaders. Churchmen were consulted, university men were questioned, civic leaders expressed themselves, a member of the press had his say, and a member of the legislature voiced his opinion. But perhaps most important of all, the writer feels that he was successful in capturing the general climate existing among the people of Atlanta.

No claim is laid to this work being an exhaustive study--it is quite the contrary. There are a good number of coun-

cils and groups that have devoted themselves entirely to bringing about this change that were not consulted. The writer is aware that he only "scratched the surface". However, the writer does not intend that this should be understood as an apology. He maintains that the following pages give a true indication of the various factors at work in changing social attitudes in Atlanta.

CHAPTER I

STATE AND REGIONAL INFLUENCES

1. The Press

Although the Atlanta papers have the reputation of being fair in their coverage, it is not difficult to recognize that their policy is a liberal one. The press in Atlanta has in many ways assumed a prophetic role. It has worked in close co-operation with those who have issued the manifestos. Top coverage has accompanied each of the proclamations. However, the actual printing of the manifestos was not made known until they were available on the news stands. Through this manner the impact of the manifesto upon the public was not reduced or eliminated because some opposing faction had gotten wind of it and answered it before it actually appeared.

The press served to keep not only the people of Atlanta, but the entire state disturbed about the impending crisis facing the schools. It also placed the fact that there was a crisis squarely before the people. The ordinary citizen of the state did not want to be worried or disturbed. He found it much more comforting to rely upon the politicians to solve his problems. The Atlanta papers effectively shook this confidence and dispelled some of the illusions of the people of Georgia.

In an effort to keep the issue before the people, and to imply what the economic situation would be if the public schools closed, the Constitution's business editor conducted a statewide survey. The purpose of this survey was to determine the reaction to closed schools which might be expected from administrative, engineering, and research personnel in thirteen major industrial plants and the state's four major universities. Among this group, his results showed that:

> Three out of four people...would be willing to send their children to public schools integrated to some extent...17.1 per cent of those in key industrial and university positions say they plan to leave Georgia if their children's public schools are closed. Moving away was listed as the second alternative by 21 additional parents...[1]

The influence of the press can largely be attributed to a very perceptive journalist, Pulitzer prize-winner, Ralph McGill. One cannot measure the influence his columns have had. However, his influence in the social change is indicated in part by the fact that every leader of both races attributes to his pen a highly significant place in the various factors that are responsible for the current trend in social attitudes. They are quick to point out that in the Southern states where attempted social change ended in discord and violence, there was no counter-part to this outstanding col-

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[1]Jim Montgomery, Atlanta Constitution, November 30-December 2, 1958.

umnist.

With his exceedingly good judgment and penetrating insight, he pointed again and again to the heart of the matter. His outstanding style of writing and his ability to communicate to every reader challenged both rural farmer and state politician. He continually called upon the people of Georgia to accept their responsibility in the area of race relations and to make the realm of social change keep pace with the vast growth the South was experiencing in other areas. As one who is very proud of the South and who deeply loves its ways and its people, he appealed to his readers to show to the nation and to the world that side of the South of which all its people are justly proud. In this manner, Mr. McGill greatly stimulated both the average citizens and the lawmakers of Georgia.

Another important function performed by his front-page column was to give emphasis and support to any group or individual who had courageously spoken his convictions about the sit-in demonstrations and the school situation. This function becomes increasingly important as one views the following development. There were among the citizens of the city and state, the leaders in the communities, and among the local and state politicians, many latent liberals. None of them, with several outstanding exceptions, had been outspoken

because they feared they would only be one voice crying in a wilderness. The radical conservatives had always yelled loudest, thus giving a false impression as to the number and strength they represented. (The conservatives were in great majority, and because theirs was the only voice heard, each liberal thought he was alone in his convictions and lacked the courage to stand by them publicly.) With Mr. McGill's lead being followed by other columnists, the latent liberals suddenly became active as they realized that they now had a very effective voice. This well-expressed voice has grown increasingly stronger and more vocal.

Other papers throughout the state have followed the example of the Atlanta papers. Their position in regard to the schools can best be seen by selecting excerpts from several of them as they voiced their opinions in regard to the crisis brought about by the order to integrate the University of Georgia.

> Carrollton Times Free-Press: ... it is important that the law-makers of Georgia be told immediately that public education must be continued...
>
> Valdosta Times: This session of the General Assembly may well be the last chance for Georgia to act to keep public schools open. Unless there is calm, considered thinking on the part of the legislators, there is grave danger that Georgia will see a period of confusion that will be of tremendous hurt to the entire state...
>
> Brunswick News: ...To close it (the university) would bring an irreparable loss to the state of

> Georgia and its citizens and to the cause of education generally.
>
> Macon News: ...To close the public schools when this (desegregation) comes about would be madness. To fail to prepare the legislature now convened for this eventuality borders on madness.[1]

Other leading papers could be cited, but these will suffice to show the present climate of the press. It is very significant, and should be noted that of the four papers quoted, three of them are located in South Georgia. The significance becomes apparent when one realizes that they are in that section of Georgia where the population is predominantly rural and where the conservative faction is far stronger than in any other section of the state.

With a writer of the caliber of Ralph McGill sounding the bugle call to papers throughout the state and continually placing before the people, plain, unadulterated truth, the press in Georgia promises to become even more significant as an initiator of Social change. The following is a portion of one of Mr. McGill's columns; the emphasis is the writers. He has underlined certain words to call to the reader's attention the sincere feeling and compassion Mr. McGill has for the people of the South. The recognition of this element has been one of the primary factors in causing the words of this

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[1]Southern Regional Council, pub., "Press Reaction to Closed Schools," New South, XVI (February, 1961), 6-7.

writer to strike deeply into the hearts of Southern white men. Says Mr. McGill,

> There are many good people who are quite honest in their opposition to the changes in American life and who do not comprehend the fact the Constitution of their country is equally applicable in all public fields of life. They have been deceived, and are still being deceived, by the extremist leadership. A great many letters ask, "Why don't you promote our side?" One's compassion is stirred by such letters because what they want is to be told that the change will not come and may be avoided. They do not want to hear the truth because it is, to them, unpleasant. Therefore, they prefer falsehood and deception to the facts. Change is coming. If intelligently met and understood, it need not bring any shock or great difficulty. It is only when there is long defiance of law and of court orders that violence and grief come.[1]

2. The Southern Regional Council

There are a good number of councils and societies which have devoted themselves to changing social attitudes in Atlanta. Among them are the Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity, the Georgia Council on Human Relations, and the Southern Regional Council. The writer has chosen the Southern Regional Council as an outstanding example of the work of these organizations.

The Southern Regional Council is a biracial organization

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[1]Ralph McGill, "The Catholic Bishops Speak," The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, February 26, 1961, p. 1.

which grew out of the Interracial Commission founded in the 1920's. It serves the whole region as a fact-finding organization and as a source of advice. The Council has set itself to an educational task. It has endeavored to bring the people of the region to see that desegregation is right from every vantage point and to make perfectly clear the many perils involved in racial violence.

To do this job the Council has taken advantage of every available opportunity. It has been a dynamic undertaking. The Council has not simply gathered the facts and presented them to the people. The members of the Council have done this continually, but they have also been alert to every development and every good editorial and speech on the subject of race relations. They have selected the best of these presentations, printed many copies, and have widely distributed them. They have gathered the facts concerning the happenings in Little Rock, Virginia, Tennessee, Louisiana, and all other places in the region where racial tension has been evident. They are continually doing research as to what is involved in social change and presenting their findings to persons in key positions.

Well documented materials have been sent to Chairmen of Chambers of Commerce and to mayors throughout the South. This material dealt with the various products of racial vio-

lence or the failure to settle sit-ins. The economic situation in Little Rock was presented. It was pointed out that not only has new industry ceased coming to Little Rock, but that the two most profitable businesses have been moving van companies. Virginia, it was also pointed out, has shown a marked decrease in new industry. The material cited a Virginia legislator as estimating that Virginians would have to raise $200,000,000 for private schools. It contrasted the situation in these two states with the situation in North Caroling, where the court order was obeyed and industry is booming.

The Southern Regional Council mailed school superintendents well written pamphlets dealing with the multitude of problems encountered when the schools are closed. These brochures were written from an impartial stance. They simply stated the facts concerning the costs per child in private school education as over against the cost per child in public education. These leaflets also listed some of the practical difficulties and legal problems encountered when the public schools are made to give way to private schools. No clinching argument was needed at the end of such presentations. The facts spoke clearly enough.

It should be emphasized that the Southern Regional Council did not devote all of its research to discovering why the

South should not continue its policy of segregation. Indeed, a great deal of its efforts were directed toward a positive, constructive approach to the problem. The same Chairmen of Chambers of Commerce and mayors who received material dealing with the economic and social chaos resulting from racial violence also received proven plans of instruction as to how violence could be averted. They received instructions as to how sit-ins could be settled, and a detailed analysis of the work of the law enforcement agencies in cities that had experienced a racial crisis was made available to them. These booklets examined step by step the plans and action taken by the law enforcement groups which failed to avert violence and those who succeeded. In this manner they gave valuable information to those who would soon face the crisis.

The school superintendents who received pamphlets entitled, "If the Schools Are Closed...", also received a detailed booklet entitled, "Organizing to Save Public Schools...". One of the Southern Regional Council ladies spent her time traveling throughout the region holding inter-faith workshops for church women. These workshops dealt with what the women could do to help settle the race problem in a real Christian manner. Their discussions and plans ranged from organizing on a community-wide basis to writing letters to legislators.

The Council provided a leadership program. This in-

volved having an individual, supported by well-documented presentations and arguments, travel through the region visiting the members of the power structure. Outside of their complete co-operation with other councils and agencies, perhaps the most important function performed by the Southern Regional Council was to act as a liaison between students and officials in the sit-in demonstrations. Being a biracial organization, they were in an excellent position to perform this function. When the students involved in the sit-in demonstrations in Atlanta and the officials of the department stores and city officials cast about for a "go-between" for their negotiations, they mutually agreed on the executive director of the Southern Regional Council.

3. The Sibley Hearings

The Sibley Hearings were the work of the nineteen man commission appointed by the legislature to sound out school sentiment across the state of Georgia. John A. Sibley, a former counsel for the Coca-Cola Company, chairman of the executive committee of the Trust Company of Georgia and a director of Georgia Power Company, West Point Manufacturing, Equitable Life Assurance Society, and other corporations, was selected to serve as its chairman. Probably the actual purpose which the legislators hoped these hearings would serve was to influence the judge who issued the order for the de-

segregation of Atlanta schools, to grant them a delay upon seeing the feeling of the state. However, what was intended to be a delaying stunt devised by the legislature actually turned out to be a highly important contributing factor toward influencing the law-makers to comply with the court order. It should be stated that Mr. Sibley's personal inclination was toward segregation. But Mr. Sibley was a dedicated business-man, and he wanted a solution that would keep Georgia business thriving. He believed that solution could be found in the local option plan. But his personal feelings were not important, for he completely sublimated them in his effort to make the hearings tell the real story as to how the people of Georgia felt about the school situation.

The Sibley Hearings were held in every district of the state of Georgia. Usually held on a Saturday afternoon on the traditional courthouse square, these informal gatherings attracted large segments of the rural as well as the urban population of Georgia. Mr. Sibley did a superb job as chairman. There were no heated arguments; none were expected of called for. To the contrary, only a simple answer was called for to indicate one's opinion in regard to two basic questions. They were in essence, would you rather have some integration and keep all of the schools open, or would you prefer to close all schools rather than permit integration even on a limited

basis? With these basic, straight-to-the point questions, Mr. Sibley sought to determine exactly what the people thought about the issue. Eighteen hundred black and white Georgians voiced their opinions.

There were many aspects of the Sibley Hearings that contributed to their being a factor for social change. Its first contribution was inherent in the very nature of the inquiry. Because of the two questions and two questions only, the people were made to see that there was a crisis. They became realistic and realized that they had to make a serious choice that would not only affect the "city folks" in Atlanta, but themselves as well. Their age-old philosophy of "let's ignore it, maybe it'll go away," was shattered by the realization that they had to decide whether or not their children would attend school the next September.

The eyes of the people were opened to a considerable degree with regard to the politicians of the state. For decades, the red-suspendered "Eugene Talmadges" had won every election by assuring the people that they would keep the "nigger" in his place. The rural people had taken them at their word and with the aid of Georgia's infamous county unit system, elected them and left everything in their "capable" hands. This had been much easier. Then, too, the average farmer, generally speaking, did not have a burning desire to

keep himself abreast of the happenings of the times. They were, for the most part, poorly informed about the developments in the outside world. They lived a fairly comfortable life in a culture in which the traditional moral concepts and mores were still intact, and they were perfectly content to live their lives in the stable, undisturbed society. The only indication they had as to what was going on in the State Capitol was what the candidates told them from their soap boxes every four years. They liked this arrangement. Indeed, they wanted it this way. Mr. Sibley's commission confronted them with the fact that their representatives to the outside world had failed. It impressed upon them the necessity of their assuming their rightful responsibility in the over-all picture.

It is doubtful that anyone's social attitude was changed in the actual process of the hearings. (Although there were some, it was reported, who expressed surprise that many of the Negroes exhibited as much racial pride as the white people, this insight would not produce any appreciable change in one's basic outlook.) However, the Hearings did set in motion a process that was extremely healthy, and without its presence social change could not have become a reality. It encouraged the people to express themselves and to get their feelings out in the open. This eliminated the possibility

of pretending that there really wasn't a problem. In the discussions that preceded and followed the Hearings, the people, many of them for the first time, did some serious and constructive thinking about their common problem. People began to talk not only about their old standard prejudices, and to examine them more closely, but they also began to consider what decision would be best over the "long haul". This line of thinking, initiated by the Hearings, undoubtedly led to inevitable growth for those people who would engage in it.

The Sibley Commission very effectively did what the members of the legislature had directed it to do; it felt the pulse of the people of Georgia. But the reading of that pulse was not at all in accord with what the law-makers had estimated it to be. Out of the eighteen hundred people who testified at the Hearings almost 50% of them wanted to maintain public schools at all costs. And, to those who conducted the Hearings, it was perfectly obvious that those people who were for integration were less willing to testify than the segregationists.

In the face of a Federal court order, the legislators of Georgia appointed the Sibley Commission in the hopes that first of all it would create a delay in the proceedings; secondly, although this was not overtly mentioned, they hoped that it would provide them a clear mandate from the people

to continue in their stand to stave off integration even at the cost of the public school system. They gained a slight delay, but they were shocked to discover that not only did they lack the full support of the people in what they were doing, but that they did not even correctly represent the people.

At this point it becomes necessary that one understand the manner by which the politicians hope to get elected each term. Throughout the country the structure of the state government is such that in the elections, the rural areas are heavily weighted against the urban areas. In Georgia, the system of discounting big city opinion has reached its ultimate expression in the county unit system. The county unit rule applies to counting votes in the state primaries, and in Georgia, the winning of the Democratic primary is the same as being elected. An example of how this system works can be seen in the 1958 vote for governor. Fulton County, in which the city of Atlanta is located, cast 83,000 popular votes, which were reflected in six county unit votes; but Lee, Glascock, and Webster Counties, which cast respectively only 617, 551, and 442 popular votes, had two county unit votes apiece.[1] Thus, the state politician could afford to ignore the liberals of Atlanta and win an election just by getting the vote

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[1]Helen H. Miller, "Private Business and Public Education in the South," Harvard Business Review, XXXVIII (July-August 1960), 84.

of the rural Georgians.

Atlanta occupies a central position in the Deep South, and due to this fact, it is the transportation and communications hub of the region. Its population has more than doubled since 1940. It now has over one million people. It is the perfect example of the explosive growth of the modern urban center. Moreover, it is an educational center as well, with ten major colleges or universities. In a city of this nature there are always progressive liberal people.

The politicians of Georgia had effectively ignored this voice for decades. Then, with the influence of the press and other factors making the liberal voice sound even louder, the politicians looked to the rural people "from whence cometh their county unit votes". They did not recognize the voice they heard.

With the wide publication of the somewhat surprising report, more and more people who could not by any stretching of the term be called "liberals", but who did have a genuine concern for the public schools of Georgia, began to voice their concern and to make their voice heard in political circles. It developed to the point that a real clamor went up from the people, and the frightened politician was compelled to hear.

4. The Louisiana Situation

The tremendous social and economic upheaval which accompanied New Orlean's refusal to comply with a Federal court order to desegregate her schools could not have occurred at a more opportune time for Atlanta. Coming as it did just prior to the legislative assembly, it appeared to be the grand climax to everything the liberals had been saying. The sad events of New Orleans provided a real life classic illustration of what many of the leaders of Atlanta had been saying could happen to a city and state that chose to ignore the demands of a Federal court.

It is true that both Little Rock and Virginia had provided tragic examples of what happens to a community when it ignores the order of a high court. Although these happenings probably had some influence on the Atlanta scene, it was not appreciable. Little Rock and Virginia have always been considered pretty far removed from Georgia. Whereas Arkansas had always been thought of by Georgians as a border state, Louisiana had always been considered a sister state. New Orleans and Atlanta have been referred to as the twin cities. Therefore the people of Georgia had the truth thrust upon them that the same thing could very easily happen in Georgia.

Atlanta has been for some time, and is becoming even more, a white-collar town. The voice of commerce has a loud

hearing in Atlanta. After detailed reports of the economic stagnation in New Orleans reached the hands of the business leaders in Atlanta, they immediately began to use their influence in every way possible to avoid the same thing happening in Atlanta.

The rapid successions of Federal decisions against the officials of Louisiana had a very sobering effect on the lawmakers of Georgia. It served to discourage them in regard to the elaborate plans they had worked out to preserve segregated schools. They began to realize that their plans were just as vulnerable to the authority of the Federal courts as the Louisiana plans had proven to be. The Governor of Georgia had observed the futile efforts of the Governor of Louisiana to buck Federal authority. He had seen him lose battle after battle, had seen decision and decision go against him until many of the high courts and most of the nation held him in low regard. He had seen him grow weaker and weaker, until he realized that the Governor of Louisiana had to a large degree lost his power as a political figure. The Governor did not want this to happen to him; he was too shrewd to let it happen.

The Governor could have fought the court's decision by closing the schools. He could have closed them so tightly that perhaps it would have taken Federal troops to open them,

as was the case in Little Rock. The Governor of Arkansas became the hero and idol of every rabid segregationist in the state. In so doing, he assured himself of the seat of governor as long as he desired it. This no doubt was his intention originally, and there is a possibility that the same general plan was followed by the Governor of Louisiana. This assumption will be discredited or proven by the next gubernatorial election in Louisiana.

Being a highly intelligent man, the Governor of Georgia was completely aware of this possibility. However, he did not choose to follow in his neighboring colleagues' footsteps. He had several outstanding reasons for this decision. For one, his political ambitions were higher than the governorship of Georgia. He is closely related to the Talmadge family of Georgia by strong political and family ties. This family of Georgia had almost completely controlled the higher politics of Georgia for generations. Their "dynasty" began with Eugene Talmadge. He served as Governor until his death, and the next election year the people went to the polls and overwhelmingly elected his young son to replace him. So great was the people's support of this family that a big row was raised upon the death of Eugene Talmadge about letting the Lieutenant Governor complete the term. Many of the people wanted to install his son immediately. The son

served as Governor the full limit of years one could serve in that office and then was elected United States Senator. With his support, a close friend, Marvin Griffin, was elected Governor. At the same time, the present Governor was brought out of obscurity and elected Lieutenant Governor. At the end of his term Griffin stepped aside and the present Governor won with a wide margin.

In addition, the Governor is married to the niece of Georgia's very prominent United States Senator, Richard B. Russell. With these connections his political career had moved along with precision and without a hitch. It was widely known that he was being groomed for the office of United States Senator, and perhaps an even larger position. There was also good reason to believe that he was being seriously considered to fill an important post in the President's cabinet. In consideration of his ambition and these various factors, Vandiver decided that unlike several of his colleagues, he would have to be concerned about the eyes of the nation, and not just the opinion of segregationists in Georgia.

There was another reason why Vandiver could ill afford to do as the Governor of Arkansas had done. This reason grew out of the report submitted by the Sibley Commission. The startling revelation of this report, insofar as the Governor was concerned, was that if he chose to make a martyr of him-

self for the extreme segregationists of Georgia in the hopes that he would popularize himself permanently, he would be pleasing only a scant 50% of the people. Moreover, the 50% that would appreciate such a stand would be made up of a large number of common rabble rousers. It certainly would not include many educators or executives interested in the continued economic growth of Georgia. The Governor could safely assume that the people who would support such a move on his part were not of the caliber that could swing enough influence to send him to the United States Senate. Therefore, if he had made such a move he would have been trapped. The trap would have snapped shut when the people of Georgia went to the polls in 1962. Instead, he saw a way out of his predicament, a way that would gain the admiration and support of the leading 50% of the citizens of Georgia, not to mention the fact that it would reconcile him with the liberals of Atlanta to a large degree. Vandiver saw a way out, and he took it.

It should be mentioned that the election of a Democratic president also had an impact upon the Governor's decision. The President's firm racial policy was well known to the Governor. In light of the fact that they both belonged to the Democratic party, plus the knowledge that the President was giving serious consideration to the idea of appointing him to his cabinet (He eventually invited him to fill a post)

made it all the more imperative that the ambitious Governor at least stay on speaking terms with the President.

The Louisiana situation had a profound effect on those people in Georgia who had previously been only mildly concerned about the public schools. This effect, in turn, had its influence on the Governor and the legislators. Some responsible citizens and an especially large number of educators were enraged at what was occurring in Louisiana. The brave stand taken by the young minister in the face of the school crisis gained the sympathies of liberals and segregationists alike. The nationally televised scenes of hysterical women screaming insults were a source of embarrassment even to many of the rabid segregationists. The feelings aroused by these incidents were expressed through letters of encouragement and praise to the young minister in New Orleans, and through calls, letters, and telegrams to Governor Vandiver and the legislators. All of the correspondence to the government officials had to do with the concern of the people that the same thing should not happen in Georgia.

CHAPTER II

LOCAL INFLUENCES

1. The Mayor and Police Force

The relative smoothness with which the various social changes have been accomplished in Atlanta can be largely attributed to its Mayor, William B. Hartsfield. He has served as Mayor of Atlanta for the past twenty-three years. During this time he has at one time or another been a thorn in the side of both liberals and conservatives. He has always been a nonconformist and opposed to extremes in any direction. The people of Atlanta have recognized him as a completely fair person with a steady voice for even-handed justice.

This reputation has gained him the support of the majority of Atlanta's more well-to-do citizens and the Negro community. His complete devotion to the welfare and progress of his beloved city has gained for him the support of the leading business-men of the city. Because of these relationships it was possible for Mayor Hartsfield to fulfill the very important function of bringing the business-men and the Negro leaders together to discuss the possibility of a settlement with regard to the sit-in demonstrations. The result of this meeting was the truce which is in effect at the present time.

According to the terms agreed upon in the truce, the Negroes would cease their demonstrations, and in return, the department store owners are to desegregate their lunch counters by October 15, 1961.

The bringing together of the Negro and the white leaders to agree upon a truce is a direct result of one of the Mayor's primary aims. Throughout his long term as mayor of Atlanta, he has concentrated upon keeping the lines of communication open between the white and the Negro communities. By being completely fair, he has gained the trust of both business leaders and Negroes. Thus, his aim has to a large degree become a reality. During a recent TV appearance the Mayor proudly stated that in Atlanta, a Negro has no need for protest marches. "He can walk, instead of march, right into the City Hall and talk over his problems with City officials."[1]

Perhaps one of the major contributions the Mayor has made has been in the area of law enforcement. Atlanta has in the neighborhood of 700 well-trained policemen. They have ample facilities and are well-equipped for any situation that might arise. The police chief has modeled his force after the FBI. He has trained his men to enforce the law, regardless of race or personal feelings.

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[1] Ibid., p. 86.

In addition to the regulation training each policeman undergoes, the men on the Atlanta force have had special training on how to handle racial disturbances. Seminars were held regularly on riot control for the entire Atlanta force. To provide extra training for their men in this area, the Mayor and police chief selected leading men from the force and sent them to Little Rock and New Orleans to study the situations there.[1] In these cities where racial disturbances had been allowed to get out of hand, the men studied the methods and techniques of the police. They searched for those things that were done wrong, and then they returned to Atlanta with their findings and sought ways in which they could avoid making the mistakes made in the other two cities. Because of this excellent type of training, Mayor Hartsfield has been certain that, "When racists come to this town, they know they're going to get their heads knocked together."[2]

An important aspect of the contribution the Atlanta police have made, has been their ability to keep the peace and uphold the law without showing favoritism. This has been extremely important in helping to make the social changes in

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[1]George B. Leonard, Jr., "The Second Battle of Atlanta," Look, XXV (April 25, 1961), 34.

[2]Ibid.

Atlanta be effected without violence.

Probably the first action a mob takes is to determine whether or not the law officers really have their hearts in what they are doing. They will determine the extent of their actions in direct proportion to their judgment of how the officers regard their responsibility. Much of the mob action in neighboring states can be attributed to the mob's belief that the members of the police force did not have it in them to interfere with a member of their own race just because he was molesting a Negro. The many unsolved racial crimes in several Southern states have been the direct result of the officials of the law "turning their heads" at a convenient time. One's race has not entered the picture for Atlanta police, and they have not "turned their heads".

During the sit-in demonstrations the Negro students were picketing the largest department store on one side of the street and Ku Klux Klan members were demonstrating on the opposite side. It was exactly the same setting that has been a preliminary to racial violence in several Southern cities. One major element made the Atlanta scene end differently. In between these two groups strode the coldly efficient Atlanta police. They did not smile at the whites, nor did they jeer at the Negroes. And every person who was present knew that if he made one illegal move he would be arrested, no matter

what color his skin happened to be.

There was another side of the Atlanta police that continually spoke to both groups. Under the leadership of the Mayor and the police chief, Atlanta has placed Negroes on its police force. Because of their effectiveness, the number of Negroes on the force promises to increase rapidly. Their presence on the force has undoubtedly been a consolation and an assurance to the Negro community that the Atlanta police were sincere in their efforts to uphold the law. Their presence has been a witness to the white community, in that they have provided living testimonies to the efficiency that can be achieved when men of both races work together as equals.

2. The Manifestos

There have been a number of manifestos, or statements dealing with the racial crisis that have sprung from various organizations in the city of Atlanta, and one or two notable ones have been published from other regions of the state. The earliest of these documents that was of any significance was referred to as "The Atlanta Manifesto". It was drawn up by leading Protestant ministers.

Prior to the fall of 1957, the ministers of Atlanta had not made their convictions dealing with the racial question be known except from the pulpit and through personal contact. Either because of a lack of personal courage, or because of

unseen pressures applied by church superiors, there was not a large number of clergymen who spoke out boldly on the subject, even from the pulpit. In November of 1957, several of the more courageous ministers met and drew up a statement setting forth six principles as essential to the settlement of the racial problem. These six principles were:

1. Freedom of speech must at all costs be preserved.
2. As Americans and as religious leaders, we have an obligation to obey the law.
3. The Public School System must not be destroyed.
4. Hatred and scorn for those of another race, or for those who hold a position different from our own, can never be justified.
5. Communication between responsible leaders of the races must be maintained.
6. Our difficulties cannot be solved in our own strength or in human wisdom but only through prayer and in obedience to the will of God.

The statement was then circulated among the Atlanta clergy so that all ministers would have the opportunity to attach their names to the document. Eighty ministers signed, and it was released for publication. It received widespread publicity, but the repercussions that many of the ministers had expected did not follow.

A year after this appeal was released, the Jewish Temple in Atlanta was bombed. Here was undeniable evidence that when officials of the state failed to show respect for laws dealing with the welfare of the Negro people, one could expect lawlessness to break out against other minority groups. At this very

opportune time the ministers who signed the first statement of concern drew up a second statement. It was built around the six principles originally set forth. It drove home more facts and shed additional light on the problems confronting Atlanta and Georgia. Since it had the developments of a year to draw upon for documentation, this second statement was stronger than the first. The racial crisis which had loomed in the future was now more visible.

When this statement was circulated among the clergy, the Catholics and Jews were given an opportunity to sign. The Catholics did not feel that they could endorse the statement in its present form so they issued an accompanying statement. The Jews signed. Sixteen denominations were represented by the 312 men who signed the second manifesto.

The next year a luncheon was held for the 312 men who had signed the second statement. At this time new developments were discussed, and they reaffirmed the stand they had taken one year previously. They issued a news release reminding the community of the stand which they had taken.

Shortly before Christmas in 1960, this group of ministers, together with Negro ministers and Catholics, prepared and issued a Christmas message. It dealt with the attitude of the community toward the race question and repeatedly stressed how very appropriate the season was for a change in racial

attitudes. A copy of this message was sent to over 700 ministers in the Atlanta area, with a request that it be read from the pulpit on Christmas morning.

There has been some question as to whether or not the ministers' manifestos really served a purpose. Many of the Negro leaders were of the opinion that a proclamation of this nature was extremely weak and ineffective if the churches remained segregated. This objection, while it had some validity, was not completely practical in the eyes of the ministers. The Church had to make a start somewhere. The manifestos were the beginning of the first battle, not the end of the war. Organizations such as H.O.P.E., which have dedicated themselves to keeping the public schools open, were quick to defend the manifestos. H.O.P.E., and other similar organizations, were the direct result of community concern, and they very adamantly declare that the ministers' manifestos were the initiators of community concern. If this was the actual result of the manifestos, and the writer vigorously maintains that it was, they served their purpose well indeed.

There were several statements made by educators which spoke to the problem. The majority of the faculty at Emory University had been making their voice heard for quite some time. With each issue that developed in the crisis, they made their witness. When the New Orleans school crisis had reached

its peak, faculty members of the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, wrote a letter to Doctor Foreman commending him for the forthright and courageous witness he was making.

Perhaps the most important resolution advanced by educators came during the University of Georgia crisis. It was published after the two Negro students, whom a Federal judge had ordered the University to accept, had been suspended. Over two-thirds of the faculty members at the University of Georgia signed the resolution. It stated their acceptance of the responsibility of abiding by the rules of law and morality, urged officials to return the two Negro students to classes, and enjoined the legislators to preserve education throughout the state.

The resolution was frowned upon by some of the state legislators; and immediately upon receiving it, a resolution passed the Georgia Senate commending those faculty members who had not signed the resolution. This action on the part of the legislators caused other college faculties to support the members of the University of Georgia faculty who had signed the resolution. The Georgia Tech chapter of the Georgia Education Association, the American Association of University Professors, and an overwhelming majority of the faculty members at Agnes Scott College and Emory University, gave their support to the educators' resolution. The effectiveness of

the resolution was indicated by the events which immediately followed. Ten of the leading civic, educational, and religious organizations in Athens (the location of the University of Georgia) and Atlanta drafted a statement which called for the same ends as the educators' resolution, and commended the signers for their action.[1]

As the time drew near when the legislators would determine the fate of Georgia's public schools, another group voiced its opinion in the form of a manifesto. This group was also urging that the schools be kept open. It was made up of 419 Atlanta doctors. The statement simply read that the undersigned physicians were in favor of keeping the schools open. Then the 419 names were given. This simple statement had an effect in more ways than one. In the first place, a group of 419 doctors represented a noticeable amount of influence from the standpoint of the community's economy. Secondly, they represented an outstanding secular group who had spoken out on the issue. This encouraged other groups to follow suit. Thirdly, there is no person whose influence is greater, or whose opinion is valued more highly, outside of a minister, than one's family physician.

One of the signers of this statement gave a notable address on the subject of race relations at one of Atlanta's leading Protestant churches. His reasoning, it was safely

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[1] Southern Regional Council, pub., op. cit., p. 4-5.

assumed, represented the conclusions reached by the majority of his associates. The doctor introduced his address by confessing that he was prejudiced. He admitted that he liked to have the menial tasks of his household performed by Negroes whom he had to pay only a minimum wage. He went on to say that he liked to associate with people of his own race and social standing, that he liked to worship in a church whose membership was composed of white people, that he liked his children to go to an all-white school, and that he liked to practice medicine among his white peers. But, he emphasized, he was also a Christian, and this meant that he must believe that God created all men equal. He went on to explain that he was also a scientist and was devoted to objective truth. This devotion, he said, had led him to the conclusion that although there are individual differences in people, there is no such thing as racial inferiority.

The genius of these manifestos lay in their unorganized character. Several organizations, such as the Ministerial Association, had voiced their opinion earlier, but were for the most part ignored. The people could dismiss them from their minds with the thought that they were supposed to proclaim that kind of message. The ministers' manifestos, like the others, had far-reaching results. They confronted the people with the sincere convictions of individual, responsi-

ble citizens.

3. H.O.P.E., Inc.

In December of 1958, right after Virginia's massive resistance plan failed and one month after the second ministers' manifesto, an organization came into being that has had tremendous influence in molding public opinion toward accepting desegregation. The organization was called HOPE. (Help Our Public Education) The organization was made up of responsible people who were concerned about the possibility of the schools being closed, and who wanted to do something about it. Within two months after its organization in Atlanta, some 6,000 Georgians had cometto its support, and the number was growing daily. Moreover, it soon had chapters organized in several other regions of the state.

Part of the strength which HOPE had was attributed to the fact that it was totally unlike a typical organization. It was a completely independent group. The time, leadership, and money it required were donated by responsible citizens. It was completely expendable. There was no conceivable way in which any kind of pressure--economic, political, or otherwise--could be brought to bear upon the group. This was true, not only because the group was independent, but also because it represented a cross section of the people. The cross section also represented a number of different denominations.

Not all of the members of the group were for integration; indeed, a large number of them were not. However, none of the differences which the group shared could begin to compare with the strength of their one consuming purpose--the public schools must be saved. Devotion to this primary interest succeeded in uniting entire communities with a bond that no single denomination or established organization could have accomplished.

After appealing to the sympathetic members of the public and gathering funds, the group began to prepare materials. The materials primarily consisted of facts which the group had meticulously collected concerning what had happened in the Little Rock and Virginia communities when the schools closed. Also included were facts about what would happen in Atlanta if its schools were closed, and the cost of private education as over against public education. In addition to the objective data, the materials contained specific suggestions as to what every responsible citizen could do to help maintain public schools.

In an effort to get the issue before the people, interesting and somewhat amusing use was made of the materials. On one brochure was a picture of a dinosaur with this question underneath, "What happened to the dinosaur?" Having caught the eye with this caption, the words went on to read, "He

didn't change, but the climate did, and he couldn't take it. The climate of opinion _is_ changing in Georgia. Change _is_ coming. Who wants to be a dinosaur?" Another pamphlet had a picture of an ostrich hiding his head in the sand. The words read, "No use hiding our heads in the sand. The ostrich says, 'It can't happen to me. _They_ will provide schools for us somehow.' But--_can they_?" These and factual materials were sent to politicians, mayors, chairmen of Chambers of Commerce, one thousand business leaders, five hundred state and regional heads of organizations, P.T.A. presidents, and clergymen of all denominations.

One of the earliest activities of the group was to cultivate concern over the schools in the minds of parents. This was done through the various Parent Teacher Associations. This task was greatly simplified by the fact that almost all of the members of HOPE were also active members of the Parent Teacher Association. After interest had been created in the problem, the Parent Teacher Associations began to hold panel discussions. HOPE was prepared to make resource persons available for the stimulating discussions. Moreover, when a particular group had developed sufficient interest and concern, HOPE would bring in a well-informed speaker from Little Rock or Virginia who had experienced the problem and its consequences. A question and answer session was always held

after each address.

Procedures of this nature stimulated the people to the extent that they wanted to make their opinions vocal. In order to let the people speak, Parent Teacher Associations throughout the Atlanta area held meetings, discussed the problem, and then voted on the issue. They simply voted whether they had rather have some integration and keep the schools open, or have no integration and close the schools. The meetings drew tremendous crowds, as they had been well publicized by radio, TV, and especially through the Atlanta papers. The vast majority of the groups were in favor of open schools. The Atlanta papers had a field day in presenting these results to the officials and politicians of the state.

Conferences were sponsored and organized by HOPE. One such conference, "Georgia Open School Conference", was held in one of the more fashionable hotels in downtown Atlanta. The conference began with some remarks by Ralph McGill. Then, breaking up into discussion groups, they examined such important aspects of the problem as the legal questions; private schools, what business has at stake, and how to organize a town to keep the schools open. Several experts in the particular field under observation attended each group as consultants. Following the discussion an outstanding speaker suggested ways in which they could maintain an uninterrupted

school system.

In an effort to reach even more of the people, HOPE began organizing public meetings. In December, before the legislators were to decide in January whether or not the massive resistance laws (which made it imperative that all schools close if one were forced to integrate) were to remain the official policy of Georgia, HOPE sponsored a "Save Our Schools Week". At the beginning of the week they requested clergymen to speak on the subject in their churches. During the week a number of petitions that had been circulated by HOPE, and signed by thousands, were presented to the Governor and legislators. In addition, thousands of letters and telegrams were sent to Governor Vandiver requesting that he tell the General Assembly on its opening day that "The people of Georgia want the public schools kept open." The week was climaxed by a state-wide rally, for which purpose HOPE had secured the use of the Tower Theatre in downtown Atlanta.

The battle which HOPE waged against those forces which threatened to have the schools of Georgia closed was not always a battle fought from afar. More often than not when the legislature convened to consider legislation that might have affected the schools, the galleries immediately to their rear were filled with members of HOPE. This was the case when the legislature convened in 1960. It was at this open-

ing session that the Governor made his speech concerning his intention to keep the schools segregated even if all of the schools in the state had to be closed. When it became clear to the legislators that the Governor proposed to leave the massive resistance laws in effect, they rose to their feet with a tremendous, sustained ovation. Throughout the duration of the applause the members of HOPE in the galleries remained seated and perfectly silent. To the Governor, whose speaking platform directly faced the galleries, and to those legislators who noticed the silence behind them and turned to look, their silent protest was most effective.

Prior to the opening of the legislative assembly, several members of HOPE approached the proper authority as to the possibility of having some of their literature placed on the desk of each legislator. He assured them that it was in order, and said that he would see that one of the pages distributed the material. However, the literature was not placed on the desks. Instead, the propaganda of Georgia's leading segregationist was placed there.

The following morning one of the leading members of HOPE took it upon herself to inquire into what had happened to their material. When she confronted the page who was supposed to have delivered the materials, he confessed that one of the officials had taken charge of them. During the process

of her inquiry, a reporter for one of the Atlanta papers heard of her plight and was anxious to take an editorial blast at those who were responsible. He approached her for the details, but she refused him, because she had described the happenings to her state representative and had given those who were responsible for the disappearance of the material 24 hours to produce it. However, when she called at the Capitol the next day, neither the material nor an explanation was in evidence. Thus, she turned to the "panting" reporter and gave him the details.

In addition to the more obvious actions of HOPE, there were several important, unseen contributions. In many ways the public meetings served the same purposes as the Sibley Hearings. They brought the feelings of the people out into the open. Every member of the organization placed a sticker on the rear window of his automobile which read "H.O.P.E." Each time a motorist or pedestrian saw this provocative sticker, it called to his mind the crisis which faced the Georgia schools.

4. The Negro Leadership

The Negro leaders in Atlanta have been an important factor in bringing about the change of social attitudes the city has experienced. It has only been in recent months that the leadership that they have provided for years has

come to light. In and through the various student movements, Negro leadership has been recognized as the most obvious factor for social change in Atlanta.

Negro leaders have been prophets for years. They have tirelessly written and spoken on the issue, but they have not been heard. In recent years, however, responsible leaders like Doctor Clements, President of Atlanta University, have succeeded in moving the people of Atlanta forward. Doctor Clements very courageously ran for a position on the city's school board. He did this in spite of the fact that the various voting districts of Atlanta were laid out in such a way that if any Negro ran for an office he would have to depend heavily on the white voters to elect him. Doctor Clements took this in his stride and was elected by the <u>total</u> city. While in this position he performed his duties so admirably that he was re-elected to the post in spite of the fact that his opponents had plenty of time to organize opposition to defeat him. Leadership of this caliber greatly increased the prestige of his people and their cause in Atlanta.

The first real outward action on the part of Negro leaders toward breaking down the policy of segregation in Atlanta was the effort of several prominent ministers to destroy segregation in the city's public transit system.

This action was almost immediately successful. The practice of discrimination by the transit authorities, enforced by making Negroes sit in the rear, was peacefully and successfully brought to an end.

The day following the luncheon held by the 312 ministers to remind the community of the principles set forth in their previously published manifesto, Negro students from the Atlanta Universities published "An Appeal for Human Rights". This document, which covered an entire page in one of the Atlanta papers, followed the ideals of Democracy and Christianity, and protested against the inequalities and injustices suffered by the Negroes of Atlanta in such fields as education, jobs, housing, voting, hospitals, movies, concerts, and restaurants. After mentioning briefly only a few of the situations in which they were discriminated against, they stated that they had "joined hearts, minds, and bodies in the cause of gaining those rights which were inherently theirs as members of the human race and as citizens of these United States ". This widely publicized appeal was the forerunner or herald of the sit-in demonstrations.

Last year Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., who had become a national symbol of the philosophy and practice of love and non-violence in racial matters, moved from Montgomery, Alabama, to Atlanta. He has made Atlanta, key city

of the South, the headquarters for his new antisegregation organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. With this great leader's influence making itself felt, and the "Appeal for Human Rights" setting forth their goals, the sit-in demonstrators began their task.

The student sit-in demonstrations in Atlanta were marked by precision and co-ordination, and, considering the circumstances, by a remarkable lack of violence. Under the able leadership of Lonnie King, Jr., the group met in a classroom to discuss procedure and receive instructions. After singing and praying, the students would march downtown. There they peeled off into separate teams. Each team circled the block assigned to it, carrying signs directed at stores on that block. During the months that most of the lunch counters were closed due to sit-ins, a car equipped with a two-way radio cruised the city. When an open lunch counter was spotted, the radio car called headquarters immediately, and a group of sit-inners was dispatched to the counter.[1]

The excellent leadership that was provided the students was responsible for the precision and smoothness that characterized each demonstration. The lack of violence which accompanied them was due to the philosophy of non-violence

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[1]George B. Leonard, Jr., op. cit., p. 42.

embraced by the students. This philosophy took its place alongside the excellent law enforcement as a contributing factor in keeping the picketing and sit-ins peaceful. Every student took his oath to non-violence. It stated in part:

> Non-violence does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship... The attack is directed against forces of evil. (It) is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice. At (its) center stands the principle of love.[1]

The sit-ins were concentrated on the large downtown department stores. Rich's department store, the largest in the South, was the primary target. It was in the process of "sitting-in" that the students were frequently arrested. There was a sign hanging in a conspicuous spot in each of the restaurants that read, "We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone." Thus, when the Negroes were refused service, but did not leave the counter, they were arrested on the basis of Georgia's anti-trespass law. The students refused to put up bail, and accepted the jail sentence. They stayed in jail usually for about a week, studied all the while to keep up academically, then posted their bonds.

Another action against the store taken by the students was in the form of a picket or boycott. One-third of Atlanta's population is made up of Negroes. This represents a tremen-

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[1] Ibid., p. 38.

dous amount of buying power to the most popular store in the city. The picketing done by the students carrying signs that read, "Wear old clothes with new dignity", and, "Don't buy at Rich's", was 90 to 95% effective. This successful boycott brought a great deal of economic pressure to bear on the management of Rich's.

This pressure exerted by these two actions eventually won a truce between management and students. Both groups agreed that the sit-ins and picketing would stop, and in return the store would desegregate its lunch counters by October 15, 1961.

The sit-ins aroused the people of Atlanta and the entire state of Georgia, and made them aware of the fact that there would be desegregation. It was necessary for the students to dramatize the events by going to jail in order to call them to the attention of the people; also to point out the great injustices and inequalities to which they were being subjected. The action also proved that the Negroes were willing to pay a great price--indeed, any price--in order to destroy all existing injustices.

The Negro college students were also interested in the churches' policy of segregation in Atlanta. They were convinced that the stigma of racial segregation would not be removed until it disappeared from white Christian churches,

where it began. To encourage the elimination of segregation in the churches, Negro students held "kneel-ins". "Kneel-in" was the term employed to designate the action of a small group of Negro students, who, accompanied by white friends, would come to a white church and request the ushers to seat them.

The kneel-ins were not organized like the sit-ins. One cannot say what effect they have had. It is true that about 50% of them were effective in that the Negroes were seated and allowed to worship. If the kneel-ins had done nothing else, they would have been valuable as a means of compelling Christians to re-examine the ground and purpose of their faith.

5. The Church

The influence of the white churches in Atlanta, as agents of social change, has been to a large degree an unmeasurable one. Their greatest contributions were not of an objective or visible nature. Some of the Negro leaders, caught up in a desparate struggle, have maintained that they had little or no influence. This belief was based on their assumption that the message of brotherhood had no effect unless the hearers were integrated. In other words, they maintained that the churches were rendered completely ineffective, because they did not publicly practice what they preached.

The writer learned of several incidents during his stay in Atlanta which caused him to disagree with the Negro leaders in regard to the influence of the churches. One of the incidents had to do with a statement made by a Jewish social agency in Atlanta. The group was quick to say that the Protestant clergy played a larger role in bringing about social change than any other factor or group. The significance of the Jewish agency's statement was seen when one recognized that the Jewish group would not be overly anxious to give the Protestant church unwarranted praise. Using pretty much the same terms employed by the agency cited above, a leading state representative from metropolitan Atlanta insisted upon giving the Protestant ministers credit for playing the leading role in the social change.

Also in accord with these two testimonies was the reaction of a leader of the Negro teachers in the state to a suggestion made by the clergy. This reaction indicated that at least some of the Negro leaders recognized a certain amount of value in the work of the Protestant churches. In 1959, he approached a group of ministers, and acting in his official capacity, told them that the Negro teachers of Georgia were about to begin their big effort toward achieving equality. The ministers felt that the climate in Atlanta and the state was not yet ready for the proposed effort and suggested that

the teachers delay their action temporarily. They outlined for him something of the work they were doing in Atlanta and the goals which they had for the near future. Because of the obvious dedication of the ministers, the Negro leader agreed to delay the proposed action for two years. This was certainly an indication of respect for the work the churchmen were doing.

The leading ministers of the city have apparently had a good deal of influence on the outstanding business-men of the city. To what degree they have influenced them is purely a matter of speculation. A short time after the ministers had made their public stand, via the minifestos, a small group arranged to have a luncheon with a comparable number of leading business-men. The announced purpose of the meeting was to give the ministers the opportunity of asking the executives' advice. They asked them to make recommendations as to the best course of action for them to take. The actual purpose of the meeting was much more subtle--a hope that these successful business-men would be personally drawn into the situation, and their resulting interest and concern would exert a healthy influence on the problem.

The subtle goal of the meeting later became a reality in and through such men as Ivan Allen. Whether or not the

interest of these men was stirred by the discussion at the luncheon, was, of course, highly debatable. The fact that a strong bond developed between the business-men and the ministers cannot be denied.

The day following the publication by the Negro students of "An Appeal for Human Rights", a group of ministers went out to the colleges to have a session with them. The students told them that they were planning to begin sit-in demonstrations. The ministers told them they would approach the mayor about the possibility of a biracial committee. A group made up of ministers and business-men went to the mayor, and the same group also worked together in getting the students a hearing with the Chamber of Commerce.

A very real contribution was made by the ministers through personal contact with the Negroes. They had dinner meetings with the Negro leaders regularly. This served the very important purpose of keeping the lines of communication open between the two groups. The atmosphere of the group was such that everyone felt free to air his opinions.

The meetings also served as a means of co-ordinating the strategy and action taken by the two groups on the problem. One served as a "check" upon the other. It was highly important for them to work together and not to pull against each other. For instance, one of the Negro leaders started

teaching that it was permissable, indeed even desirable, to break any law that was in contrast to the moral or higher law. The white ministers undoubtedly agreed with the basic philosophy of the teaching, but they had been holding before their white congregations the necessity of obeying all laws. One could immediately see how the effectiveness of each group would suffer greatly with such differences being evident. Regular meetings between the two groups served to reduce such differences in their approaches and thus contributed greatly to their efficiency.

Recently a biracial group of Methodists met for an inner-city workshop in one of Atlanta's downtown white churches. They had lunch together, served by the ladies of the church, and listened to experts in the area of church extension present analyses and the results of surveys dealing with the needs of the city church. After the presentation they discussed which church could best serve which area. When it was determined that the Central Conference could best serve a particular area, the white church in that area agreed to sell its building and facilities at a vast discount.

These arrangements were by no means ideal. The ideal was, of course, <u>one</u> Christian church. However, there was a recognition of their relationship through common concerns and problems. One of the white leaders reflected that the

fellowship of the ministers and laymen of the two conferences was highly significant. The fact that a biracial group met in an Atlanta Methodist Church was of itself an indication of progress in the area of personal contact between the races.

There has been at times a noticeable difficulty in the power structure of the Negro group. The difficulty does not, however, imply that there was a lack of unity among the Negroes. They had achieved a great deal of unity. Whenever a task or problem faced the group it became a basic unit. The difficulty was in the form of some jealousy among the various groups as to who was to be the leader or spokesman. It was with regard to this situation that the white clergy played an important role. They acted as a "bridge" between the groups. Thus, they helped them maintain cohesion.

The action taken within the actual church congregations followed closely the same pattern, with the exception of the work that was done by the Religious Society of Friends. This group's great stress was on inward experience and social reforms. The Quaker House, which has integrated, arranged for seminars to be held. They dealt with subjects such as, "When a Community Desegregates Its Schools", and the "Philosophy and Practice of Non-violence". And with outstanding leaders like Paul Rilling of the Southern Regional Council, and Dr.

Martin Luther King, Jr., they proved to be very effective.

The majority of the other churches primarily relied upon small group leadership and the power of preaching. The ministers cultivated the more liberal and outstanding leaders of their congregations, and then to a large degree turned the responsibility of small group leadership over to them. They proceeded to arrange small group meetings within the church to discuss the problem. These groups, similar to several other organizations we have mentioned, performed the very important task of allowing the people to express their feelings--hostile or otherwise. The group leaders invited young, intelligent Negro students to sit in on these meetings and act as resource persons. They sponsored small dinners with other churches to discuss each other's course of action and the "why" of their attitude toward Negroes who wanted to worship in their churches. These groups were purposely kept small. The problem of kneel-ins was, if at all possible, never allowed to come up at official gatherings. This was in order that conservatives, who might have "stacked the deck", would not push through some hasty legislation that would not necessarily reflect the views of the majority of the church members.

The Methodist Bishop of Georgia has made it plain to all preachers and laymen that he supported a free pulpit. Every minister had the assurance of his support if he ad-

dressed himself sincerely to the question of race relations. Moreover, the Bishop was convinced that the Church must concern itself with large, contemporary issues. The Bishop's stand regarding the problem was indicated by what happened in his congregation one Sunday morning. A group of Negro students chose to attend a service he was conducting. He greeted them warmly and invited them to come and hear him preach at any time.

With this kind of support many clergymen spoke to the issue. They used the power of the pulpit very effectively. None of the leading ministers were hesitant in speaking very directly concerning the problem. One of the outstanding sermons began rather strongly by quoting a song that went like this:

> You've got to be taught to hate and fear,
> You've got to be taught from year to year,
> It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear,
> You've got to be carefully taught.
>
> You've got to be taught to be afraid
> Of people whose eyes are oddly made
> And people whose skin is a different shade;
> You've got to be carefully taught.
>
> You've got to be taught before it's too late,
> Before you are six or seven or eight,
> To hate all the people your relatives hate;
> You've got to be carefully taught.[1]

Many of the messages delivered in the large churches of Atlanta were powerful and most certainly influenced the many people.

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[1]Sermon by Dow Kirkpatrick, Minister of St. Mark Methodist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, February 8, 1959.

who heard them.

CONCLUSION

From a consideration of the forces at work in Atlanta and all of Georgia, it is evident that complete integration is inevitable. The changes which the writer has mentioned have not been easy. The task of those behind the changes has not been simple, nor has it been lacking in disappointments. For people who sincerely believe that segregation is right, every change has and will be slow and exceedingly painful. But the Church is educating the people in brotherhood. The dedication of many civic, economic, and some political leaders has sprung from a basic Christian commitment to justice and the moral law. These forces may be slowed, they may even be sidetracked for a time, but they can never be stopped because God is behind them.

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