

WHY THE INTERRACIAL YOUTH MARCH FOR INTEGRATED SCHOOLS?

By A. Philip Randolph

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

The nature of the problem we seek to resolve is largely emotional, with roots deep in a morass of fears, frustrations, desperation and a guilt complex, born of a long history of conflict, contradiction and confusion over the irreconcilability of moral and religious profession and practice on the part of some southern politicians in the field of human and racial relations.

Therefore, not only are Federal law and court decisions needed, but Federal power is indispensable to back and enforce the law and court decisions to avoid social chaos, troubles, tensions and turmoil.

CONDITIONS BACK OF THE MARCH

This Youth March for Integrated Schools in Washington, D. C. was planned because it is apparent that, despite the notable, monumental victories in the United States Supreme Court and lower courts by the N A A C P for the desegregation and integration of public schools, the civil rights revolution is heading for a grave crisis of roadblocks. Negroes are passing through an hour of trial of faith by fire. The hot winds of persecution are rising. Only the tried, true to the cause of human dignity, will stand.

It is clear to him who runs and reads that the Supreme Court decisions of 1954, 1955 and 1958, striking down segregated schools, has precipitated a raging controversy. The country has been virtually split wide open into two major camps. One camp stands for, and the other against, the public school policy of desegregation and integration.

Though the South accepted the U. S. Supreme Court decision of Plessy v Ferguson of 1896, which handed down the notorious concept of "separate but equal",

the doctrinal foundation of the system of segregation, it not only rejects the aforementioned decisions of the Federal courts but recklessly denounces them as communist-influenced and brands them as unconstitutional and illegal. Thus, Governor Faubus of Arkansas and Governor Almond of Virginia, slapped down by decision after decision by the Supreme Court and the district and circuit federal courts, in utter frustration and desperation, have projected a massive resistance movement of state power against federal power. Schools have closed down. Demagogic and inflammatory appeals by southern state officials, press and pulpit, to the passions and prejudices of illiterate southern masses have provoked explosive outbursts of violence in the form of bombings of schools, churches and synagogues, and homes of Negro civil rights leaders. A veritable reign of terror, in the form of mob rule, shootings and killings of Negroes, is sweeping the South.

Not only Federal court decisions, but the moderate and firm injunctions of our great President Eisenhower to the South, to obey and conform to the decisions of the Federal courts as the law of the land, have been arrogantly flouted.

It has been estimated that 196 laws have been enacted by southern state legislatures since the Supreme Court decisions, for evasion, if not nullification, of the court orders for desegregation and integration.

We must remember that the Supreme Court has reversed itself on great social issues before. Why? Because of the change and pressure of public opinion. Note the strange, amazing and incredible spectacle of a governor of a state appealing through a nationwide letter-writing campaign for public sympathy and money to establish and maintain segregated private schools for white children.

Thus, it is obvious that while the court decisions for civil rights are clear and forthright, they may not be final. Southern white supremacy leaders will not readily let up in their plots and conspiracies to subvert and evade decisions of the courts favorable to the abolition of segregation.

In the light of this fact, the country needs to be alerted to the fact that not only is integration of schools at stake, but our whole democratic governmental order, which rests upon the Constitution and the principles of the Declaration of Independence. If the court decisions for integration can be discounted, ignored and repudiated by any group in the national community, then a court order concerning any other social, economic or political issue can be ignored and disregarded. So it is evident that the attitude of the South toward court decisions on civil rights may lead to inevitable chaos and confusion and, perhaps, even civil strife.

But the only way to mobilize public opinion back of the great decisions on civil rights is to dramatize the question of integrated schools. This requires action. It must be action in the form of putting people into motion. No events in human history more deeply stir and capture the imagination of men and women than the marching of men. The marching of men is the basis of the grip of war upon man. Abolish the tread of the soldier down the streets of a city or village and the romance in war will pass.

Just as marches of citizens may be utilized sometimes for anti-social purposes, they may also be employed to advance constructive ideas. The basic ideal of our March for Integrated Schools is the unity of Negro and white youth in participation in this common enterprise for a great moral issue; namely, democracy in education through integration.

PURPOSE OF THE MARCH

First of all, because of some disquiet in the nation's capital concerning the purpose of the March, by intimating its partisan character to embarrass President Eisenhower, let me state definitely and positively that this Youth March

is wholly non-partisan and is absolutely free from any form of control or influence from communists or communism. It is to our interest not to weaken but to strengthen the hands of the President since we wish him to uphold the school decisions as the law of the land. Moreover, efforts to embarrass the President would only mar the moral grandeur of our noble cause and brand us unworthy of its advocacy. Our Youth March is designed neither to help or harm Republicans or Democrats in the campaign.

As to communists, the leadership completely rejects and unequivocally condemns communists and communism and their support, organizationally and financially, since we fully realize that democracy and freedom, which communists openly set aside and denounce as bourgeois prejudices, are the only framework within which the Negro and other minorities, including labor, can achieve their rights.

What then is its purpose?

The central and dominant purposes of the Interracial Youth March for Integrated Schools in Washington, D. C., are as follows:

1. To give dramatization to the God-given right of every child, regardless of race or color, religion or national origin or ancestry, to receive an education in the public schools, free from the insult of segregation and discrimination,
2. To build and demonstrate the unity of Negro and white youth in this historic struggle for the great moral issue of democracy in education through integration.
3. To help awaken, inform, arouse and mobilize the people to the realization of the patriotic duty of every American citizen to support the Supreme Court decisions for the desegregation and integration of public schools as the law of the land.

4. To point out and highlight the American way of life through democracy and Christianity, which seek to give every boy and girl an equal chance to build character and manhood.

5. To alert public opinion to the grave danger of the poison of Little Rock Faubusism infecting the bloodstream of American life.

6. To warn the American people of the peril of a growing trend, symbolized by Virginia's massive resistance to undermining, if not destroy the confidence of the public in the role and integrity of the United States Supreme Court in our system of government.

7. To indicate that the disease germs of Little Rock Faubusism, like the disease germs of tuberculosis, know no color line. Little Rock Faubusism must be curbed and cured lest it infect the entire nation with its sinister germ of human hate, violence, anarchy and terrorism.

8. To meet the cold war of half-truths, whole lies, incitement to violence and racial hate of little Rock Faubusism, which is attempting to brainwash the American people into rejecting and nullifying the Supreme Court decisions for the desegregation and integration of public schools, with the cold war of truth, righteousness, non-violence, good-will, love and Americanism.

9. To point out and emphasize that children are not born with, nor do they inherit racial or religious hatreds - but learn and acquire them in some homes, schools, churches, and from some books, newspapers, magazines, radio and television.

10. To indicate that children can learn to unlearn to hate other children and adults, solely because of race, religion, national origin or ancestry, by contact in the schools, by sound science, education and

Christian teachings, for contact between children of different races will help children to know the truth; namely, that all human beings are created by God and are children of God and are, therefore, fundamentally alike, which will help to make them free from, and immune to, the sickness of human hate.

11. To emphasize that the so-called massive resistance movement of Virginia and Little Rock Faubusism against the Supreme Court decisions is the last stand of the dying order of the old slave-plantation Bourbon South.

The reign of terror, violence and hatred now sweeping over the South, in the form of bombings of public schools, churches and homes, police brutality against Reverend Martin Luther King and the outrageous killings of Negro civil rights leaders, is the flush of the death, not life, of the old Bourbon Confederate South of white supremacy. In the grip of death throes, it is fighting hard not to die though it is impossible to live.

These violent outbursts of savage physical attacks of the bomb and gun and poisonous racial propaganda, together with judicial and legislative illegality against Negroes and labor unions and their organizers, is but a pathological manifestation of fears, frustration and desperation of the old South before the onward march of urbanization, industrialization, widening education, labor unionization of the workers, white and black, and the conflict and contradiction between the American creed and American dream of equality of opportunity with empty rationalizations of the southern social system of segregation.

WHY D. C.

Washington has been selected as the locale for this interracial demonstration of youth, against segregation in Little Rock and the policy of closing down public schools in some southern cities for the preservation of segregation, because it is

the seat of the most sensitive system of public communication and circulation of events and happenings for the information of peoples in the U.S.A. and the world.

COMPETITION FOR PUBLIC ATTENTION

Because of the multitude of issues and events, such as wars, sputniks, revolutions, strikes, world series and political elections, clamoring for attention from the people and government leaders, any human cause, though great and imperative, must be given sharp picturization to secure attention even by those who will benefit directly from it.

No one can gainsay the fact that the world gives little attention to the run-of-the-mill event, though immensely worthy. Thus, it is historically and psychologically obvious and true that the propaganda of the deed is more powerful than the propaganda of the word. But the wisdom of the oppressed is to employ both the propaganda of the non-violent word and the propaganda of the non-violent deed against their oppressors.

Thus, the decisions of the courts for the desegregation and integration of public schools, in order to become a living force, must win allies such as youth, labor, church and schools and the broad support of public opinion. Unless this is done, the courts may even change themselves on the question; it has happened in the past. Even constitutional amendments have been added to the Constitution and then repealed.

The Wagner Labor Disputes Act, which was enacted in 1935 and upheld by the Court in 1937 was practically emasculated in 1947 by the Taft-Hartley Act. Labor never dreamed that such a change could come so soon, but it did.

What was responsible for the reverses by the Supreme Court; the amendments of the Constitution and their repeal; the emasculation of the Wagner Labor Disputes Act, called by labor its Magna Charter?

The basic cause for the Court changes was changes in public opinion, and public opinion is made and can be changed to suit various groups who know the techniques of propaganda.

Democracy in education through integration is a major challenge to the conscience of the United States and is meeting with emotional resistance. But the opposition can be overcome if the conscience of the country is kept perpetually disturbed by the conflict between the ideals and truths of Christianity and democracy and the practice of racial segregation and discrimination.

Certainly there is much that is dark and wrong in the world today and also in ourselves, such as meanness, anguish, brutality, greed, fear, frustration, despair, hate. Yet there is also order and goodness in the world and also in ourselves - love, courage, sacrifice, creativity, growth, dedication, regeneration.

Though we now pass through a long night of terror and trouble, may we ever remember that our night is not wholly dark nor is it endless. There is always a star - a star of hope, though dim. The dawn will break - the star is never far.