

COLEMAN ON NEGROES

The following are excerpts from J.P. Coleman's Inaugural Address as Governor gathered from Jackson, Mississippi's Clarion-Ledger.

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I come now to a discussion of...the continued separation of the white and Negro races in accordance with those customs which the experience of ninety years has taught us all, white and colored alike, to be for the welfare of all concerned.

My own personal and official attitude toward this question is well known to all Mississippians. In the gubernatorial campaign of 1955 I said in my official platform: 'there will be no mixing of the races in any of the state operated educational institutions. I already have a record on this subject. This is no task for the amateur or the hothead.'

I further told the people that if elected governor, with the cooperation of a good legislature, we would maintain the separation of the races WITHOUT AT THE SAME TIME KEEPING OUR STATE, ITS ECONOMY, ITS CUSTOMS, AND ITS PRACTICES, IN A DAILY UPROAR OF CONFUSION AND UNCERTAINTY. I say to this audience and to those who are listening by radio and television that I have not the slightest fear that four years hence when my successor stands on this same spot to assume his official oath, the separation of the races will be left intact and will still be in full force and effect in exacty(sic) the same manner and form as we know it today.

October 26, 1956 p.29

Coleman said recently, "I do not now favor the Negro voting in Mississippi. He is wholly unprepared to assume this responsibility."

June 21, 1957 p.1

Coleman said further that he does not favor Negroes voting in this state and that he hopes that there will never be a strong Republican Party in Mississippi. "The reasons that the Negro should not vote in that state are obvious," he said. "If they vote in numbers, they will vote as a block, and will see politicians playing up to them as in the Northern states now."

November 19, 1957 p.1

Governor Coleman also warned of the expanding Negro vote in the state and suggested constitutional revision to cope with this threat.

He declared circuit clerks who now act as registrars, not being lawyers, could be intimidated into allowing "wholesale voting of unqualified voters"-obviously Negroes- under the Civil Rights Act. He proposed three-man registrar boards, with one member a lawyer, but did not say how they would operate.

June 30, 1959 p.7

Note: The following is taken from a television speech by Coleman "I am well aware that a little handful of my political adversaries have tried to destroy my place in the affections of my fellow Mississippians by claiming that I am a "moderate." Apparently, these people cannot tell a moderate from a successful segregationist. They have made a great sham of this, and every time they can get a chance they try to stir it up. I ask you to ignore what they say and look at what the record says... I stand on a record of performance and I have delivered the goods. I am not entitled to be called a moderate, and I notice that none of my friends have called me that."

March 17, 1963 p.1

Former Governor J.P. Coleman Thursday Night promised there will be no racial integration of public schools in Mississippi during the next four years if he gets a second term in the governor's office.

Coleman on Negroes cont.

" There will be no necessity to abolish the public schools," he promised again Thursday. "Nor will there be any mixing of the races in any of the state-operated educational institutions. This is no task for the amateur or the hothead."

July 10, 1963 p.1

Former Governor J.P. Coleman said Tuesday his opponents have taken a defeatist attitude on the race issue. Speaking at Monticello, Morgantown, and McComb, Coleman said he is the only candidate "with hope of stemming widespread integration and the ability and experience to do it. My opponents say that I cannot stop it," he declared, " because they have apparently lost hope and have offered no plan or suggestion for maintaining separation of the races. "

June 29, 1955

Note: On June 28, 1955, Coleman spoke at Laurel, Mississippi. Part of his speech concerned the school integration issue.

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" We have already planned our strategy. First, we will stand on the provisions of our state constitution. When the U.S. Supreme Court strikes that down, then we will start assignments under the Gore Act, which is perfectly constitutional law. Should that fail, we can adopt a school on the local option plan, get it out of the clutches of the Federal Courts, and immediately re-establish it with a new set of trustees."

August 13, 1955

Coleman also spent considerable time reviewing his record as an opponent of racial segregation.

"Where was my distinguished opponent in 1951? Coleman asked rhetorically, "When I stood alone before a hostile U.S. Supreme Court and showed those Communist lawyers they could not fool...with the great state of Mississippi." He repeated his account of how he interrupted his campaign during the first primary to drive all night to Vicksburg and dispose of a petition by Negroes there to integrate the schools.

" I handled that situation in less than twelve hours," he declared. "It was the shortest integration attempt in the history of the South."

October 25, 1956 p.1.

Holding that Mississippi is the only Southern state that still retains 100 percent segregation, Coleman also attacked states righters for attempting to make integration a campaign issue.

"They are picking flaws in perfection," the governor declared. "We haven't had one school integrated; yet, they cry integration. Democrats in Mississippi have enacted integration laws as regards to schools that no States Righters have been able to improve upon or even suggest an improvement(sic)", Coleman declared. "What can the States Righters find wrong with the 100 percent segregation now in effect in this state?" Coleman asked.