

Mississippi Letters:
"FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION"

This letter was sent by Columbia ministers N.A. Dickson and William McAtee to a group of community leaders in the context of a refusal on the part of the city school board to submit an integration plan to the federal government. It was mailed out the very day we northerners arrived in Columbia -- a coincidence unbeknownst to both parties.

July 17, 1965

Dear _____,

We are writing you as one who we feel is concerned with the total welfare and the future of our community. From the outset we would like to make it clearly understood that this letter and its contents are totally unofficial, but is the effort of two individuals who are vitally interested in the life of the community. Since time is a vital factor and busy schedules prohibit personal contact, we have chosen this way of communicating with you and other key leaders of the community.

Fully appreciating your position of leadership, we simply ask you to consider honestly and carefully the realities presented in the enclosed sheet. The decision is completely yours as to what action you must take in light of this information. We have no proposal to make as to how best to handle the details; however, we will work with any group should our assistance be desired. It is our hope that the organizational initiative will come from the responsible business leaders working together with our elected officials.

Here again time is of utmost importance, for as the leadership goes, so goes the community. By our action or inaction we will set the future direction of life in our city. A healthy community atmosphere beneficial to all individual citizens and businesses will not just happen, it must be worked for.

Enclosed you will find, also, a list of people to whom this letter has been sent. As far as we are concerned, feel free to share the contents of the sheet, "FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION," with anyone you know who is interested in the welfare of the community. If you feel there is any merit in these suggestions, we urge you to contact our city officials immediately expressing your concern and offering them your support.

Sincerely,

N. A. Dickson

W. G. McAtee

“FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION”

Without passing judgment on the city school board for its decision regarding the submitting of a plan, the following possibilities may arise which must be seriously considered:

1. School districts not submitting a plan may be highlighted first by court action affecting no less than four grades and as high as twelve grades, even as early as this fall.
2. When implementation of a court order takes place, there may be attempted resistance on the part of some local residents.
3. General public apathy will create a vacuum in which lawlessness may thrive.
4. The publicity brought on by a court order may be an invitation to all outside extremists for action in our community.
5. In this event normal life in the community will be destroyed, longlasting and bitter feelings will arise, and the responsible leaders may be able to exert little or no control over the situation.

Therefore, to minimize the disruption of the community life should any of these possibilities become fact, a large and broad segment of the community must publicly insist on peaceful compliance so that order might be maintained and law be justly applied to all citizens.

To this effect:

1. Without attempting to create a panic or sensation, key leaders must begin now to contact EVERY INDIVIDUAL in the community who is interested in law and order, informing them of the possibilities we may have to face.
2. Also, permission should be given the leaders to use the individual's name in a public statement at the appropriate time urging peaceful compliance with the law. A healthy community atmosphere beneficial to all individual citizens and businesses will not just happen, it must be worked for.
3. Realizing that the above suggestions do not exhaust the possibilities of answers for this problem, any constructive ideas as to its solution must be explored and effected immediately.

Mr. Randy Barnes
Mr. W. R. Campbell
Mr. Robert Carter
Mr. Maurice Danton
Mr. Ernest Duff
Mr. R. W. Eisworth
Mr. George Gunn, Jr.
Mr. S. F. Griffith
Mr. G. Robert Hyatt
Mr. George Ben Lampton
Mr. Thad Lampton
Mr. Dave Martin
Mr. M. V. Morgan
Mr. Ben McCraw
Mr. Buddy McLean
Mr. H. L. Rankin
Mr. Bert Shealy
Mr. Tom Shows
Mr. H. J. Sims
Mr. Marion Stephens
Dr. Vern L. Terrell
Mr. Dick Yarborough
Mr. Bill Walker
Mr. John Watts
Mr. Tom Watts
Mr. H. H. Wolfe
Mr. J. W. Wolfe
Mr. Wiley Wolfe

*--In the personal collection of William G. McAtee and
In McLean File, Marion County Museum and Archives*