

AN EDITORIAL
A CHOICE – REALITY OR ANARCHY

WE ARE NOW seeing the violent, vehement, vociferous death throes of segregation. The die hard, bitter-enders are having their say. They speak through riot, through lead pipes, through floggings, through destruction, through ignorance, and through lawlessness in support of their narrow, senseless view of hallowed, almighty, and apparently decadent Southern custom and tradition. In Montgomery last weekend they spoke particularly loud.

And the horrifying, revolting thing about it is that the vast majority of the people of this state let them have their way. If they have not supported the hatred and bigotry and violence directly, they have winked at it and covertly supported it by their silence and refusal to act – all of them, our politicians from the governor on down, our law officers, our preachers, our educators, our newspaper editors, and our common ordinary citizens who have laughed and cursed and joked at the “smart niggers” and “nigger lovers.”

Alabama has been sowing the wind, and now she is left to reap the whirlwind.

Nor can we blame the violence on “outside interference” and “agitators” as most Alabamians wishfully try to do. To attempt this is the worst possible sophistry and insipid rationalization. Of we are to try to shift the blame to the Freedom Riders, we should logically go even deeper into the heart of the matter and blame it on Abraham Lincoln who freed the slaves in the first place. Or perhaps the framers of the Constitution who said that all men are created equal, or on the first slave trader, or perhaps even on God, who presumably created man with a capacity of bigotry, prejudice, and hate.

No, we cannot blame the Freedom Riders. They are known to be dedicated to passive resistance – they do not strike back when attacked or return curse for curse and hate for hate. Their motive is admittedly a test designed to dramatize a moral issue, just as the recent sit-ins brought out lunch counter discrimination and succeeded in ending much of it. They have law and morality on their side. The blame must lie squarely on the shoulders of the white supremacist bigots of the state of Alabama and the people who actively or tacitly help them.

“The old order changeth, and giveth place to the new.” Alabama may not like it, but the old order is changing, and it must change. Integration is coming: doggedly, persistently, and ever stronger, it is coming.

Southerners run in fear, they wail, they react with violence, but still it comes. They scream of State Rights, they organize White Citizen’s Councils, they use economic pressure to keep the Negro “in his place,” and it still comes. It is inevitable, and those who think it is not are either miserably stupid or living in self-delusion.

People who can adapt to the new order will weather the storm – they may not like it because of years of custom, but they will have the good sense and moderation to accept the inevitability of change in the social order and work to make that change one for the better. We have already seen what people who cannot adapt to the new order will do. Perhaps they will do more of it in their last ditch efforts to preserve prejudice, ignorance, and bias.

One way or another, these people must be stopped. If possible they should be stopped through the influence of newspapers, preachers, and other leaders and citizens of good will and good sense. If such leaders do not have the courage and foresight to speak out on this question, and keep the ostrich-like attitude they have exhibited in the past, then even more federal action will be necessary. We cannot continue to tolerate such flagrant instances of man's inhumanity to man as have taken place all across the state in past weeks.

Soon, integration will come to Auburn. We cannot degrade our name and the name of our school, as the name of Alabama has already been degraded, by allowing violence and hatred and stupidity to accompany this step in the onward march of integration. We hope that this will be poor spawning ground for such action.