Blind Rage Of The Defenders

The Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, a militant segregationist organization, has every right to continue its losing fight if its officers and members so desire. It is, however, treading on swampy ground when it turns to tactics which are strictly vindictive, punitive and hopelessly reactionary.

In a statement issued last Sunday under signature of R. E. Crawford of Farmville, the state president, the call was made for funds to "remove from office those who have betrayed us."

This is an unvarnished threat against those majority members of the General Assembly who enacted the Freedom of Choice program in 1959. Gov. Almond is beyond their reach unless he should at some future date aspire to a Senate seat.

The word "betray" is a strong one. It means, according to the dictionary, "to deliver to an enemy by treachery or fraud in violation of trust."

We know of no public official who has been guilty of any such offense.

Gov. Almond, who had led the fight against integration in the public schools, was forced at last to yield to overwhelming federal force. The Perrow-Almond program was evolved as a result. It sought to make the best of a bad situation.

The die-hard segregationists, however, believed that the governor and the Assembly should have defied the federal government and gone to jail rather than yield. In their hot-headed, blinded rage they refused to see that this would do no good but rather would injure Virginia and its future.

They refused and still refuse to accord to other sections of the Commonwealth the right to solve the problem as best they can and as the weight of public opinion thinks best.

Suppose that the Defenders could succeed—which is most unlikely—in defeating these legislators for re-election. What good would have been accomplished? Anyone taking their seats would be equally powerless to prevent what is coming to pass. Meanwhile the state would have lost the wisdom and experience of a majority of its Legislature.

The Freedom of Choice plan offers to Virginia the best chance of containing integration and limiting its effects.

Common sense is not betrayal.
April 4, 1960

Editor
The Roanoke World-News
Roanoke, Virginia

Dear Sir:

Your lead editorial of March 29, 1960 criticizes the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties for pledging "to remove from public office those who have betrayed us".

The traditional function of the press has been to present to the people the facts without fear or favor. Let us review the record of the incumbent State Administration in light of the facts.

1. The people were led to believe that the Administration believed in massive resistance, and only turned to acceptance after being forced to do so by the "overwhelming coercive powers" of the federal courts.

The fact is it appeared that the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor and the Attorney General all believed in and advocated the Gray assignment plan. When Governor Stanley and Senator Byrd called for resistance, these three reluctantly followed. After Senator Dalton ran for Governor on a platform that amounted to the Gray Plan, they were forced to run as "massive resisters". There has not been a single act or threatened act of Federal coercion in Virginia. No official of the State government has been cited for contempt, nor has the scope of any court order been tested by risking contempt.

2. The people were led to believe in 1958 that the State Pupil Placement Board could not act in Norfolk and Charlottesville, as the local boards would not cooperate.

The fact is that the local school boards in Norfolk and Charlottesville and their attorneys were in daily contact with the Administration, and cooperated completely, their loyalty to Virginia making them blindly follow without dissent the direction of the Administration.

3. The people were led to believe that the Administration and the Placement Board worked together to use the Placement Act as the legislature intended.

The fact is that the Administration attempted to emasculate and by-pass the Placement Board because it was a block to local assignment. Even before the original placement act became law, Judge Hoffman was asked to rule on its constitutionality. When the dedicated men who comprise the board attempted to uphold the law by bringing legal proceedings to stop local assignment in Charlottesville and Norfolk, they were advised against such action by the Administration. The Administration
concealed from the Placement Board that these localities were acting under its direction, while convincing the localities that the Placement Board did not wish to assign pupils in their localities.

4. The people were led to believe that Judge Hoffman ordered integration in Norfolk.

The fact is that Judge Hoffman ordered the Norfolk School Board to report to him its actions, if any. This order did not require any affirmative act of assignment. It was used by the Administration as the legal excuse for the assignment of seventeen negroes to the Norfolk schools, in contravention of the injunction granted by Justices Miller and Snead and the pupil placement law of Virginia.

5. The people were led to believe that nothing was offered at the three-day special session of the legislature to prevent integration.

The fact is that, even though stunned by the Administration's reversal, the General Assembly rallied sufficiently to offer bills to strengthen the Placement Act by providing criminal penalties for its violation, to place all school funds in tuition grants, to separate the races by sex in integrated schools, and to separate the races in the public schools under the police powers, any of which measures would have offered a new legal defense to those who sincerely believed that "no price is too high to pay; no burden too heavy to bear; no consequence too grave to endure in the defense of the right and duty of this Commonwealth to protect the people of Virginia in the proper enjoyment of their right and obligation to mold the character and promote the welfare of their children through the exercise of their voice and judgment in their education and development... The people of Virginia through their elected representatives and by registering their convictions in the exercise of their franchise have repeatedly made it crystal clear that they cannot and will not support a system of public education on a racially integrated basis..."

6. The people were led to believe that the Perrow Commission studied all available proposals.

The fact is that the Perrow Commission was merely the rubber stamping agency set up to add dignity to the return of the Administration to its first love—local assignment. No advice was sought from any recognized constitutional lawyer.

I could go on and on; these are but a few examples.

You label our organization "a militant segregationist organization". In truth, it is an organization dedicated to the preservation of states' rights. We believe the people of Virginia, in whom rests the final sovereignty, want and are entitled to the ultimate decision in this matter.

Your newspaper exerts great influence over a widespread area of the State. We are certain that when the facts are known to the people, they will defeat any candidate who has failed or deserted them in a moment of need.

Very truly yours,

R. B. Crawford
President
I can appreciate the concerns of those who feel deeply the abolition of the school compulsory attendance law.

In normal times we have advocated this law. We are now faced, however, with a crisis thrust upon us.

We have been advised by legal authority, supported by legislative action, that the compulsory attendance law jeopardized other legislation designed to preserve educational opportunity for the youth of this Commonwealth. Whereas outright repeal was, therefore, necessary at the recent emergency session of the General Assembly, I hasten to invite attention to the fact that the Governor listed this matter as one of the major items for study by the Commission which will begin its deliberations next week.

Let us remember that this is a time for calmness, restraint, and understanding in this and all other matters pertaining to our present school crisis.
Statement by Dr. Davis Y. Paschall,  
Superintendent of Public Instruction  
February 6, 1959 - In Response to News Inquiry  
for Reaction to Abolition of School Compulsory  
Attendance Law

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