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Guest (s): Simmons, W.J.

Title: 10th anniversary of Supreme Court decision in Brown vs. Board of education.

Note: Questions were paraphrased and/or shortened by the transcriber. For the exact question, please consult the audiotapes.

Guest: W.J. Simmons

Morphew: introduction...administrator of CCA and editor of *The Citizen*...note in history...10 years ago the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the Brown decision...the Court stated that the policy of segregation, then in effect in 17 states, was unconstitutional and could no longer be tolerated and it ordered integration of the public schools with all deliberate speed...what are your comments?

Simmons: To me, the most outstanding impression I have ten years after the decision is that so little has been accomplished in that length of time, an entire decade

Morphew: Immediately after the decision there were many predictions as to how speedily it would be complied with and you're indicating that enforcement has been much slower than it was anticipated at the time

Simmons: It has been much slower, and I think it has been much slower in the minds of people opposed to it as well as those favoring it. For example, as soon as the decision came out there were many people in the Deep South who said, well, we don't like it but there's really nothing you can do about it, the Supreme Court has spoken and that's it, in effect. Since then they have learned differently.

Morphew: Let's make it clear that you are opposed to the decision and you head the staff of an organization pledged to resist the enforcement of that decision by all legal and legitimate means, so the most significant point is that so little has been accomplished...do you mean that there hasn't been very much integration at all?

Simmons: There certainly has not. There's been a minute degree of integration and closer examination would disclose that in some of those instances claimed as 'integrated' they are really what are called 'integrated situations' and not true integration in the correct sense of the word.

Morphew: What about the areas covered in the original decision? The court ruled on a consolidated case based on a number of areas, have these areas complied?

Simmons: No, Dick, they haven't. The five cases making up the Brown decision came up from Topeka, Kansas. That school district did integrate. The second one was from a school district in Delaware which also did, however, integration, I understand, in the state of Delaware has been very disappointing to those favoring it. The third was from the District of Columbia, and of course everyone is familiar with the very unhappy consequences of that situation which has been steadily re-segregated. The last two came from the South. One of those was from the Upper South, Virginia, Prince Edward County. There the school board has simply gone out of the public school business and private segregated schools are in operation. One was from a state in the deeper South, South Carolina, where Clarendon County was ordered to integrate almost ten years ago and they have not done so to this day.

Morphew: In the D.C. case it might be noted that at the present time more than 80 percent of the pupils in the public schools are colored, so many of the white parents have moved out, presumably due to integration and perhaps some other factors regarding race relations

Simmons: Yes, that's correct.

Morphew: What about the Deep South? There's been a lot of propaganda emanating about this subject, and to people who read only what the propagandists disseminate, they might be inclined to believe that most of the south has accepted integration in its public schools, is this accurate?

Simmons: It certainly is not. The source which is regarded as authoritative and which keeps up with these things is the Southern School News. It reported that for the current school year, 1963-1964, of the approximately 8 million whites and 3 million Negroes in school in the 11 eleven states in the former Confederacy, only 30,000 coloreds were in school with whites, now that is only 1 percent, just 1 percent.

Morphew: So integration in the south is proceeding at the rate of 1/10 of 1 percent every year

Simmons: Yes. If you average it out, that would be the rate of so-called progress. Of course, I wouldn't call it progress, I'd call it retrogression, but at that rate, it's very easy to figure mathematically, it would take a thousand years to achieve a hundred percent mixing of the races.

Morphew: And these figures also have one other point that one might consider, the figures from the state of Texas...what about that?

Simmons: Yes, that's very interesting and it distorts somewhat the total impression even of these slight figures. Of the 30,000 Negroes reported as being in school with whites over half, almost 17,000 were in the state of Texas. That is 17,000 out of less than half a million. Now, it's further confused by the fact that of those, they were involved in tripartite system of white, Negro, and Mexican, and in many instances the integration was between Negroes and Mexicans and not with white children.

Morphew: So omitting Texas from these figures, we come up with a factor of integration of 6/10 of 1 percent...the total achievement of the past 10 years, 7/100 of 1 percent each year...how many years is that?

Simmons: Well, I figured it out. It's 1,428 years away to be exact. And there might be some who would say this is 'all deliberate speed.'

Morphew: Some might think we are splitting hairs by going into the statistical situation this deep, so let's put it this way, whether you think that integration is at 1 percent or at 6/10 of one percent during the past 10 years, isn't even this even a great accomplishment?

Simmons: No, I don't think it's an accomplishment at all, particularly when you consider the enormous financial cost, the enormous political repercussions in some respects which have come about, the very great displacement of the white population particularly in the cities in the border states and the grief it's caused, the upset, the turmoil, the strife, and of course, the overtones which are now coming into play of violence in the streets. I think all of this considered, it's not an accomplishment at all.

Morphew: Let me put it this way, if you were on the staff of an organization favoring integration, would you be proud to make such a report?

Simmons: If I were in that position I would be very disappointed and I would feel that I, possibly I had been taking some people's money under false pretenses.

Morphew: Do you believe integration in the south will proceed at a faster pace in the future?

Simmons: Dick, I think it will proceed at a slower pace. The reason for that is this, that as advocates of integration have admitted, the easy ground has been used up. The hard ground is ahead. The one case I mentioned of Clarendon County, South Carolina, is a good illustration of this, where in ten years of intensive effort no integration has resulted. That is what happens with hard ground.

Morphew: So the areas that were most likely to go ahead and permit some integration have already done so

Simmons: That's correct, and it might be worthwhile to point out that practically all of it has been in urban areas where the resistance to integration is a little softer. In the rural

areas, I think everyone will agree, it is far, far more difficult, and they have scarcely been touched.

Morphew: Why have so many southerners opposed integration?

Simmons: Dick, it's not just in the South and southern people are not peculiar or unusual in this respect. Even a recent Gallup poll showed that northern parents were just as opposed to seeing their children in school with large numbers of Negroes as people in the South. The event that happened in New York City in the early spring of this year when 15,000 white parents demonstrated in the snow opposing the busing of their children to put them in Negro schools illustrates the depth of this feeling.

Morphew: Where do you think we'll be on school integration ten years from now?

Simmons: Of course, crystal gazing is an interesting occupation. It's just pure conjecture, as you know. I think that judging by the events of the past ten years, there will be a greater understanding of this issue, that propaganda for integration will come up against more and more resistance as the people realize what it means and I think in ten years from now there will be less integration than there is today.