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6336R – August 28, March on Washington

Guest: Dr. Medford Evans

Morphew: Dr. Evans is a consultant to the Citizens' Councils of America, and before becoming a full-time member of the Council movement, he was, for many years, a professor at leading southern colleges. Dr. Evans received his PhD from Yale University, during World War II he served as chief of security training for the Atomic Energy Commission. Dr. Evans, today I'd like to discuss with you the August 28<sup>th</sup> March on Washington. It's been subjected to all kinds of news analysis and editorial comment already. I'd like to have your reaction to it.

Evans: I think the outstanding impression, Dick, is one of a basic absurdity in the whole thing. The idea of all of these highly privileged people getting together under favored circumstances, with the full support of the federal government and all of the District of Columbia police, the Army, Navy, the support, the complete cooperation of the, all of the networks, 15 million dollars worth of publicity at the very least, and they do all of this representing themselves as an oppressed people and chant that they want 'freedom now.' It's preposterous.

Morphew: Well, if they weren't already free, how could they have marched?

Evans: That's a point well taken. Incidentally, it's interesting to see that the various news magazines and editorial writers, including particularly those who were highly sympathetic to the march, had a hard time saying just what the thing did mean and as one magazine said, 'wherein lay the triumph of the march? Civil rights leaders, themselves, had a hard time putting it into words.' I should think they might have for it is very difficult to put a basically absurd operation like this into words.

Morphew: Ostensibly, it was to drum up support for civil rights legislation, but even the leaders of the so-called march admit that they didn't change any votes.

Evans: I think they knew in advance that they would not change any votes. How could such a demonstration change a vote?

Morphew: Then what was the real purpose of the march?

Evans: Who can say? Perhaps there was not rational purpose. On the other hand, there is a possible rational purpose that they couldn't begin yet to declare openly that might account for the apparent absurdity. Let's put it this way, these people clearly are individually free and yet, they repeatedly chanted this slogan, 'freedom now, freedom now, freedom.' Well, freedom does have another meaning from individual freedom and that is the political independence of a group. If this was a group demanding political independence for the American Negro, then of course, it did have a real meaning, but they were not prepared to come out and say so. There is, by the way, a good deal of persuasive evidence that this is what is in the back of the minds of many of these leaders: political independence for the American Negro.

Morphew: Similar to what has been happening in Africa in recent years?

Evans: It would be quite similar. The situation is altogether different for, of course, in the African situation you have areas where there is overwhelming Negro population. In some cases, the white population is statistically negligible and in this country 9/10 of the people are white, and thus, of course, we may say that a move for a Negro political independence in this country could not conceivably succeed. This does not mean, however, that someone might not undertake such a move, for in the attempt to bring about this preposterous demand, the realization of this preposterous demand, they might succeed in destroying things in the present American way of life, which for reasons best known to themselves they wish to destroy. It's this sort of potentiality that causes the communist movement to be so active within the Negro movement and in the judgment of many people, including myself, to be the most important motivating force in the whole thing.

Morphew: Even the liberal press has been commenting that it was the beginning of something though no one really knew what it was. Any idea about that?

Evans: I did have an idea, it fits in with what we've been saying so far. It could be the beginning of a whole series of revolutionary movements, not necessarily confined to Negroes. A nationally syndicated columnist has pointed out that one of the leaders of this Negro march is now suggesting that other groups, that the unemployed perhaps as a class might march in the streets and demonstrate and demand jobs. Then, this same columnist goes on to point out that this is the historic method of class revolution by both fascists and communist leaders in Europe during the past generation.

Morphew: Haven't we already seen this kind of 'bypassing' of the legal system in recent 'uprisings' and 'demonstrations' in the South and the North.

Evans: We have indeed, and the most alarming feature of them is that in many cases the very people in our society who stand to lose the most have cooperated with this thing. I have in mind the setting up of the various biracial committees throughout the South. Representatives of the federal government will go to a southern city where Negro demonstrations have been staged and in that city, instead of dealing with the established authority, the mayor, the police commissioner and other officials, or instead of dealing with state authorities, the governor and so on, they will set up a volunteer biracial committee with perhaps 18 or 20 people who simply come forward and say, yes, I'll be glad to represent the white people or I'll be glad to represent the Negr[a]s. And these groups have no legal status whatsoever, and yet the Justice Department of the United States will deal with them and will stand ready to bring in the full power of the United States armed services to support the agreements which these self-appointed biracial committees set up. It's very interesting to observe how closely this follows after the pattern of the so-called soviets in the early days of the Russian revolution.

Morphew: And then don't they take the position that those who don't agree should be 'roundly condemned'?

Evans: Indeed they do. This is an illustration of what a blatant usurpation of authority these biracial committees constitute. And of course, it is exasperating to note the tone of moral superiority which they assume when it is they who are acting illegally.

Morphew: What did the march accomplish?

Evans: I think the chief thing it accomplished was to alert many Americans to the danger of this revolutionary movement. In some ways, the march could be considered a flop. It did not accomplish for the revolution certain things which theoretically it might have done. It did not have much zip to it. I think, dramatically, it was a disappointment, and just simply shows that even before the march occurred, publicity connected with it had alerted enough people so that there began to be reservations. You'll recall that the AFL/CIO executive committee refused to endorse the march, although vice-president Walter Reuther was there and this means that the leaders of the labor movement thought, well this thing is going to backfire and we better stay out of it. Now, because of this advance backing and feeling, neither the harm nor the backfire was quite as great as might have been expected, but on the whole I think we can say that the march alerted many Americans who otherwise thought there was nothing to worry about to the dangers of this kind of revolutionary movement today.

Morphew: How have Americans responded?

Evans: Well, you find increased activity all over the country in the formation of responsible groups of citizens. See, if the revolutionary forces are going to set up all kinds of organizations, as they have done, then to counteract this it is necessary for

Americans who wish to preserve the established order to come together also in voluntary organizations to strengthen the American way of life.

Morphew: You have been involved in setting up new Citizens' Councils, haven't you?

Evans: I have attempted to do that, yes sir.

Morphew: Would you say that interest in local organizations is mounting on the part of the people?

Evans: It is mounting very rapidly. Throughout the summer, when the so-called revolution has been played up so much, the requests for us to come and help organize have greatly increased. Incidentally, let me talk about an illustration of how valuable these organizations can be. Last April, there was a revolutionary attempt in Greenwood, Mississippi, to overthrow the local laws and ways of administering those laws and not only was this attempt completely frustrated and the local society saved, but it was done in a completely peaceful and orderly manner, so peacefully and in such an orderly manner that the New York Times, which is in general hostile to the customs of Greenwood, Mississippi, said that in Greenwood order was preserved through the good offices of the Citizens' Council. This is an example of what organization can do. For, of course, Greenwood has had one of the earliest Citizens' Councils in the country.

Morphew: How is this organization taking place? Are groups forming locally and then later calling on you and other organizers for help?

Evans: Yes, that is the typical way, now the word passes in many ways. Anyone can write to this office for assistance in organizing a local council and we answer those requests just as rapidly as we can. We have more than usual now, but we can say that the American spirit is rising and people are organizing to defend states' rights and racial integrity.