

58 x 17 – Citizens' Council Survey of Jackson

Date: 4/27/58

Guest: Lewis Hollis

Morphew: Hollis a regular guest, usually talking about church work, but today he'll be talking about something different...big survey that the JCC is making in which every householder in Jackson is to be reached, you're heading it up...

Hollis: I have been since the first of the year.

Morphew: What gave the council the idea for the survey?

Hollis: Well, Mr. Morphew, our directors felt that most of the people in Jackson were with us but that they needed to know more about the councils, and therefore, our freedom of choice survey was worked up by our executive committee and has been in operation on a test out basis since the first of the year.

Morphew: How is it organized?

Hollis: We select a block to be surveyed and we find out the members of the council who live in that block and ask them, we then select a leader for that block, and ask the members of the council in the block to survey their neighbors on the freedom of choice survey.

Morphew: And the survey covers 12 questions, I notice. Those are the ones that the council was most vitally interested in.

Hollis: Right.

Morphew: Let's go down the list of the questions and see what kind of answers we're getting. I understand that this tabulation is something more than the first 1000 answers, but how many different areas do those come from?

Hollis: About 14 different areas. All economic and social levels.

Morphew: How many calls were actually completed?

Hollis: About 90%. There were 10% who, because of absence from the city or other reasons, some not being willing to answer the questions, were not completed. So, this tabulation of something over a thousand represents about 90% of the homes, or rather the individuals, in the area surveyed.

Morphew: In other words, in a home, the husband and wife count as 2 separate answers.

Hollis: That's right.

Morphew: And the 10% that could not be counted, they were disregarded.

Hollis: Disregarded in the figures I'm going to give you.

Morphew: First let me ask you the questions and you can give me the percentages.

Hollis: Alright.

Morphew: Perhaps that would be the easiest way to do it. The first question on the list: Do you have children or grandchildren in school? How many of the homes reached did have?

Hollis: 62% had children or grandchildren in school. 38% did not.

Morphew: And the second question: If you do have children or grandchildren in school, do you prefer racially separate schools for those children?

Hollis: 99% plus of those who had children or grandchildren in school, preferred racially separate schools.

Morphew: Those who did not were too negligible to even count.

Hollis: Not even enough to count.

Morphew: The third question: When attempts are made to integrate the school in your neighborhood, do you intend to keep your children or grandchildren out of school until the attempted integration fails?

Hollis: 99% of those answering said yes, 1% no.

Morphew: The fourth question is corollary to the third: Do you intend to allow your children or grandchildren to be integrated?

Hollis: As you would expect, it'd be exactly the reverse, 1% yes and 99% no.

Morphew: The fifth question is a rather interesting one because it concerns the people who are not directly concerned with the school problem: If you have no children or grandchildren in school, would you support morally and through the Citizens' Council your neighbors who are the attempted, or targets rather, of attempted integration?

Hollis: 96% of those said yes, and 4% no.

Morphew: The sixth question: If it becomes necessary would you be interested in cooperating with the organization of a private school under sound local leadership?

Hollis: 98% of those surveyed said they would be interested in cooperating and organizing a private school if necessary.

Morphew: The next question: Will you cooperate with your Citizens' Council to protect property values in your neighborhood from attempted residential integration?

Hollis: And 99% said yes, 1% no.

Morphew: In an emergency will you cooperate with local Citizens' Council leadership chosen by you and your neighbors in advance?

Hollis: 99% yes, 1% no.

Morphew: The ninth question: are you a registered voter?

Hollis: 85% of those surveyed, including husbands and wives, said that they were registered voters, 15% no.

Morphew: Then the 15% who said no were asked the following question: If you are not a registered voter, will you register now?

Hollis: 78% of those said yes, and 15% no.

Morphew: The final two questions are also in a pair, the first one: Are you a member of the Citizens' Council?

Hollis: 16% yes, 84 % no

Morphew: That was at the time the survey was made?

Hollis: At the time they were asked the question, yes.

Morphew: And then the 84% who were not were asked: Will you now accept an invitation to membership?

Hollis: And 69%, or 7 out of 10, accepted an invitation to membership.

Morphew: That's right on the spot as the surveyor asked.

Hollis: Right then.

Morphew: That is certainly an overwhelming figure, 7 out 10 people, some then who presumably didn't know that much about the council, when the surveyors called upon them, became immediate members.

Hollis: Yes. Dick, this was the result of very careful planning because before our workers went out they had to be more or less rushing volunteers because we could only use people who were members of the council to make these surveys, but they were carefully coached in their leader's home as to how to answer questions about the council and so the results are very gratifying.

Morphew: In other words they were not sent out to argue, they were merely sent to clear up any questions...

Hollis: No...right.

Morphew: You sent letters to each home before the teams called on them.

Hollis: Yes. We sent a letter reading somewhat like this: We are going to be faced with 3 very serious attacks from the NAACP and other pressure groups. These are school integration, mass voting by niggers as a bloc, residential integration. To determine how our citizens in Jackson would react to a positive program under responsible leadership to meet these threats, a house to house survey is now in progress. Neighborhood groups are being appointed to conduct this survey in your neighborhood. The survey is lead by whoever is the block leader in that area...We are sure you realize the urgency of this situation and when one of your neighbors calls, you will give the few minutes needed. The neighbor who will call on you is giving his time for the best interest of your community. Your courtesy and your cooperation will be appreciated.' And we've had nothing but courtesy and cooperation.

Morphew: Perhaps the letter was the reason...

Hollis: They were prepared when their neighbor called, yes.

Morphew: As the survey is completed then the cards come into your office.

Hollis: Right. Come into the Citizens' Council office.

Morphew: Yes. And the tabulation is made as time permits.

Hollis: Yes, well, we tabulate when we're going to have a television program or something...We don't have any regular method of tabulation yet because we want to complete the survey as quickly as we can.

Morphew: The survey work is what's important and still you're not rushing the volunteers.

Hollis: We want to take all the time that is necessary to do a thorough and careful job.

Morphew: After the survey is made, then the ward leaders for the CC call a meeting discuss follow up work. To whom is this follow up work directed?

Hollis: Directed to some of those who have, that 31% who are still not members of our council because we feel that organization is the key to victory. We're in total war in this matter and we want a hundred percent if we can get it. We're very tickled with the 70% or 69%, but we'd like to have a hundred percent.

Morphew: Would it work equally well in other cities?

Hollis: I see no reason why it wouldn't be very effective in all types of communities of all sizes.

Morphew: A similar project is being conducted in the McComb area now.

Hollis: It has been started and is proceeding very successfully.

Morphew: And if anyone is interested...

Hollis: Yes, the Jackson office is prepared to send materials and information to any council that is interested.

Morphew: Any surprises in this first tabulation of survey results?

Hollis: Well, I've had comments since the publicity broke in the local papers and in our Citizens' Council official paper this week. They are surprised that there are even one percent. I think one percent is very gratifying considering the enemies that we're fighting that they've only able to subvert say one percent of our citizenry. I think it's wonderful.

Morphew: And also Jackson is a rather larger metropolitan area and people are drawn from all over the country.

Hollis: All over the country. And many of the people surveyed have only been residents of the deep south for 2 or 3 years and they are the most aggressive in this movement.

Morphew: The CC paper commented editorially that the survey really is a tremendous vote of confidence for the councils. Do you feel that way about it?

Hollis: I certainly do. We give to each worker a little folder which we call 'the 8 ifs,' published by our Jackson Citizens' Council and it has in it an explanation of what the council stands for on its back, on its reverse, the outside of the back. It has a list of our officers and directors. And we point out to our workers that 9 past presidents of the Jackson Chamber of Commerce are officers and directors of our council so they can feel easy that they can follow that leadership without question.

Morphew: And the general public at large has registered this same vote of confidence. For example 99% of those surveyed would cooperate with the councils in an emergency.

Hollis: That's right, and the leadership, of course, is elected each year by the council members and they choose their own leaders and they have chosen well so far.

Morphew: And one other thing that can be said from the survey is that people will join once they're asked.

Hollis: That's right. Some of them are just waiting to be asked in every community.

Morphew: Concludes...two weeks from now we will have the first ward leader to complete his survey on the show.