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5812 – Current Status of Schools in Alabama

Guests: George Andrews, George Grant, and Armistead Selden

Morphew: Introductions...to Selden...what is the current status of the schools, any integration?

Selden: No, there has been no integration in Alabama to date. There have been no court orders to that effect. Of course, we have had some incidents in Alabama, as you know, which have been in the national headlines, the Autherine Lucy case in the city of Tuscaloosa which incidentally is in my congressional district, and then the unrest that has gone on with bus strike in Montgomery. But there has been no integration of the schools in our state and no incidents at all along that line as yet. Of course, as you know, our legislature has passed a placement law which gives them the authority to place students, the school board to place students, and that law has been upheld by the court of appeals, I think.

Morphew: So a federal law has upheld this law which would maintain the status quo in Alabama?

Selden: Well, we hope so, of course it has not gone to the Supreme Court as yet.

Morphew: To Grant...as a representative from Montgomery, how does the situation seem now in comparison to right before and right after the supreme court decision in 1954?

Grant: Well, Dick, I might say that things in Montgomery now are very quiet and peaceful and we think they will continue to be if outside agitators will stay out.

Morphew: AL has outlawed the NAACP and it is appealing and facing a court fine for not releasing a list of its members...

Grant: Yes, that's true and of course that's on appeal at the present time.

Morphew: And state officials are trying to show that the NAACP is working through another organization since it was outlawed from the state...will this cut down on the number of agitators coming through the state?

Grant: Well, I think so. Of course, we know that the NAACP is composed of both white and Negro members who are very much in favor of agitation, of stirring up race trouble in the South, and of course, unless they have members there we think we'll have a quieter feeling between the two races.

Morphew: To Andrews...any trouble spots in your district or have you been one of the fortunate ones?

Andrews: No, unfortunately, we've had quite a bit of trouble in Tuskegee which is located in my district. I think the trouble there, which was a boycott of white merchants by the negroes of the county, I think unquestionably it was inspired by outside agitators. It's still in effect and I don't know what the outcome will be.

Morphew: To all...what was the reason that we in the south didn't realize all of these agitators were at work among us?

Andrews: Well, my opinion is that all of this trouble started in May of 1954 when the Supreme Court rendered a decision in the school case.

Morphew: They invited the agitation...

Andrews: They invited it. That brought it to a head. Now, it might have been there, these agitators might have been inside working prior to that time, but when the Supreme Court came out with that school decision case it was the green light for the agitators to move in on the South and they knew that they had a friend in the Court. The record will show that there hadn't been a, I don't think a single Communist case lost by the Communists before the Court nor a single case advocated or supported by the NAACP lost before the Supreme Court.

Morphew: So they came out of hiding after black Monday?

Andrews: That's right. That's my opinion.

Morphew: To Grant...what do you hear from your people about centralized power, does it seem to be a matter of great concern?

Grant: Yes it does. The people are, of course, naturally concerned and this so-called civil rights measures, all type of legislation of that type, is but one further evidence of the trend of centralized government and away from the prospective states. I think sometime

there's got to be a showdown and I think the sooner this is done through the voice of the people by the representatives...the better the whole nation will be. This is not a question simply of, between segregation between the races, it goes to a vital states right issue and it has the same meaning in California, New York, Illinois, any other state, as it does in Alabama or any other southern states. It's simply a matter of states rights.

Morphew: To Selden...among your associates here in Washington, not just southern associates, are they concerned about these problems, maybe not so much from the racial point of view but in general?

Selden: They do not show the concern that I would like for them to show. I think there is some awakening among some of the members, but not enough awakening among their constituents because whenever an issue of this type comes before the congress they almost invariably vote in the other direction.

Morphew: What can we do to show them what the facts of the situation are?

Selden: I think it would be very fine if we could get out the information to the people of the United States on this important question of states rights. As George Grant pointed out, it's just not a matter of the integration of the races, it's the loss of rights of the states to the federal government. And it is a very serious thing and of course it's a trend that's been going on for some 30 years now and even during the present administration it has not been halted. And if we can just let the people throughout this great nation know what is happening, I believe we will have a great deal more sympathy for the cause of state rights.

Morphew: Is this trend a part of some overall plan?

Selden: Well, of course, none of us know, but many feel that possibly it's part of the Communist conspiracy that if they can take the rights away from the states and centralize the federal government that it will be much easier for their side to push over the things that they believe and the things that we do not believe in.

Morphew: And also it might be a diversionary tactic, that racial foment is taking our attention away from what Russia is doing scientifically...

Selden: Well, I don't think that there's any question but that if they can stir up hatred among the races in this nation that it will greatly benefit the Soviet Union and the Communist conspiracy.

Morphew: To Grant...what can southerners do?

Selden: Dick, I think the only thing that we can is through education and that is through contacts in other states. I know that if the representatives and the senators from other states receive Communications from their constituents saying that they should vote such and such a way on legislation pending in the House and in the Senate that they are going

to pay attention to it, so I think it behooves every southerner to contact their relatives, contact their friends, and contact everyone that they know in states that are out of the south and try to put across this idea of states rights and that it means constitutional government in this nation and the less we do preserve states rights, then all is going to be lost.

Morphew: To Andrews...do you agree this needs to be a grassroots drive?

Andrews: I thoroughly agree and if we can get enough pressure put on Washington we may get some help. I think one thing that won the South more sympathy than any other one thing that I can recall in recent years was the invasion by the 101<sup>st</sup> paratroop outfit into the school at Little Rock. Many, many congressmen from other sections of the country have told me that they deplored that incident.