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6223 – Civil Defense Program and Church Implications

Guests: Rep. Arthur Winstead (D-MS) and Rev. T. Robert Ingram (Rector of St. Thomas Episcopal in Houston, TX)

Morphew: Continuing a recent discussion...Ingram is author of a number of books, the most recent, *The World Under God's Law*, other works include, *Sacred Studies* and a volume of essays called, *Essays on Segregation*...we were discussing on the last program your recent sermon, *The Government Plan for Seizure of the Churches*, and it brought out the fact that the Civil Defense Department's Office of Religious Affairs plan which provides an amount of government control over churches during an emergency...can you tell us how this happened to be called to your attention?

Ingram: I first learned of it, Dick, last October at a meeting of the House of Bishops at the general convention of the Episcopal Church in Detroit. I was present as a correspondent for a church paper and sat in at a time when a Dr. Fred W. Kern, who was introduced as director of Religious Affairs, Office of Civil Defense, addressed the bishops. He told them that the purpose of his speaking to them was to encourage them to go home and encourage their clergy to register with the Office of Civil Defense, and then he explained the implications and what would happen if they did not register.

Morphew: What did he say would happen if they failed to register?

Ingram: He simply said they will not be permitted to function in time of an emergency. They would not be admitted into a disaster area, could not take care of the sick and the dying and whatever other needs had to be attended to.

Morphew: We should make clear that we're not talking about just one kind of an emergency...Mr. Winstead, you are on the Armed Services Committee and you have quite a bit to do with the Civil Defense Program...isn't it true that it's aimed not only at

providing help during enemy attack, but also in time of natural disaster such as fire or flood?

Winstead: Of course. One of the greatest strengths we had in trying to create any interest much whatsoever in civil defense in some of our smaller towns and cities would be for the useful purpose of a civilian defense agency to help cooperate with any emergencies or disaster. Now, it's hard for me to get on this subject without getting on other subjects also, but as you know, our subcommittee, the Herbert Subcommittee, has been going through a terrific fight with the defense department on maintaining our national guard at certain level of drill strength and reserve organization, and in case of emergency. You take now, the National Guard serves a dual purpose, as well as a civilian defense program that has come in being, irrespective of an all-out nuclear war, and as I said, we'll start hearings as soon as this committee is through on the civil defense program to some extent, and that's why it's such a pleasure for me to at least have read just a short part of your information you brought along and have an opportunity to hear you talk more about it before we start the hearings in a few weeks on this very important subject. If I understand you correctly, and that astounds me almost, even with all the things that's going on this day and time, that's it's their proposition to set up a civilian agency by the government of the United States and require that the church leaders in any faith or religious activity must become a member of the civilian defense group and work solely under the orders of the federal government, in case of emergency, in case of an executive order? Do I understand you, that your information is that they plan to go that far with this thing?

Ingram: Yes, sir, that's exactly the way that the program's laid out as I can understand it.

Winstead: Well, certainly, I don't think any of us want the federal bureaucracy or federal government with all the centralized powers we're having in every other agency of government to take over the church activities of this country. If we do that, that's about the last lap (?).

Ingram: Well, I would think that that's the rock bottom point for Americans to really assert our Christian principles.

Winstead: But you certainly have no objections, I wouldn't think so, to the church leaders and the Christian people and church people in every community cooperating, on an individual basis, with any agency of government or otherwise so long as you operate as a free and independent agent within your own setup.

Ingram: Well, I cannot imagine how a Christian would be able to refrain from helping.

Winstead: And being available and doing as you have done in the past in other disasters and emergencies, contributing everything possible to do anyway.

Ingram: Notoriously, in a time of disaster, the church is the last agency to break down. The government agencies break down long before the church communities.

Winstead: Well, I'm delighted to have an opportunity to have some of the literature you are leaving with me, to read your sermon, and to discuss this important issue with you. I don't believe the United States is ready yet to turn the church activity and church life over to some bureaucratic agency out of Washington to further centralize. If we are going to set up, as some folks want, just a chief of the services, one man can dominate the whole life of all the services of this country, they've been trying to federalize the National Guard because it serves a dual purpose and some of the National Guard is under the hands of the governor until such time as an emergency arise and you have activated or federalized your National Guard and we write a lot of people who are continuously, year in and year out, tried to federalize that Guard. They try to centralize all the power they can in Washington on every agency of government and this certainly should be the last foothold we'd let bureaucracy take over the important life of our country.

Ingram: I agree, I think I should point out, too, that the reaction of those people who have learned about this matter has been so strong that the Defense Department announced, has not announced but has revealed through letters, that it is reorganizing the civil defense.

Winstead: Well I would certainly hope so.

Ingram: However, I am not sure that that means the plans in regards to the churches are being changed.

Winstead: Well, with an organization like this you would, not only, you could be indoctrinated on any governmental philosophy from that agency. It appears to me that if you had to by law become a member else be totally turned out at the whims of those who are running the Civilian Defense Program, if you didn't act according to their instruction.

Ingram: Yes, and that's been the greatest temptation of government for 2,000 years, to used the churches for their own purposes.

Morphew: To Ingram... I know that in excess of 100,000 copies of this sermon of yours have been distributed and I know you've had quite a response from all over the country...have clergymen expressed their response?

Ingram: Yes, they certainly have, Dick. They've been, men who have identified themselves often as Lutherans or Roman Catholics, Baptists, Presbyterians, or people who don't even identify what particular denomination they might adhere to.

Morphew: What brought about this attempt to register the clergy in the country...do you think it was a sincere but erroneous effort on the part of someone in Washington to try and do good on an organized basis or do you see it as something more sinister?

Ingram: Well, Dick, I don't think we need to separate the two. I think that people quite often sincerely think they're doing the right thing, but that in no way changes the fact that it is sinister in the extreme. And I think that this particular plan of government control of

the churches is inherent in any plan for reducing the world to subordination to the conscience will of man. If we are going to have a world government under man, then the church must be under man as well as everything else, you see, and I don't think that it should be any surprise that this movement is coming forward at this time. It's simply a part of the whole philosophy lying behind socialism.

Morphew: Do you believe once the people are informed...are most people opposed to it or think it might be a good idea for the ministers to register?

Ingram: I think we'll have both reactions but I will express here just a personal opinion. I believe that what we call really converted born-again Christians will be alarmed and will make this a matter of conscience to the very end. I think here is drawing the line that makes martyrs.

Morphew: And when an agent of government tells a minister that he will not be able to perform his functions, you believe that government has gone too far?

Ingram: Well, I don't see how I as a Christian could refrain from saying a prayer because a government official told me not to.

Morphew: Tell me Mr. Winstead, what can be done about such examples of the growth of government and the seeking after more power by our federal government.

Winstead: I think if we continue to do what a lot of people say, enlighten the public and just confuse the public with the wrong kind of propaganda and information, going out to young people and older people who are willing to let the government do everything that they think will improve the situation within a given area, that until our people are awoken all over this country to the fact that the mighty government is not yet strong enough to take over every function of life, in civilian or any other field, except in these rare emergencies and certainly you have to have federal power then, but I think that if we have an awakening of our people to the fact that you cannot centralize everything even though what you know doesn't work just as you would like to see it work, to just say we'll centralize that power and put some bird in Washington to dictate the whole policies of this organization and wrap our people up where they're willing to go ahead, and what frightens me, that if these government agencies are going to have so much life and death on the American people we'll finally get to the point that lots of people in our cities and towns will feel like I've got to vote for this fella for mayor to survive, I've got to vote for this man for Congress to survive, I've got to vote for this senator, I've got to vote for this governor, or I've got to vote for some particular presidential candidate. If we get this thing centralized much further and centralize every group in America into these various groups, it can be dictated to...with their thinking and propaganda out of Washington. I can see in the years to come that it's a dangerous, dangerous step that we're taking pretty fast and I'd like to see us slow down some. And this sounds like another agency to me, to put the brainpower for political purpose and indoctrination as well as civilian defense, if it should go into being. I don't believe it will, not to that extent.