

Mississippi State University Libraries
Special Collections Department, Manuscripts Division

Citizen's Council Radio Forums
Acc. No. 597
Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition

Audiotape ID number:

Date:

Guest (s):

Title:

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

6429R – Incidents with Civil Rights Workers in Mississippi

Guest: M.G. Lowman

Morphew: You been on a speaking tour about the summer...why have you come back?

Lowman: Well, first I want to tell which kind of towns we visited in June. We went to the towns where we knew that for a period of years, liberal left-wingers and identified communists had been creating a climate in which you could have a sustained agitation or sustained rioting incidents and told what was going to happen, there was going to be trouble. Then I came back in July to see what had been done, by whom, to see the people and where they're living and with whom. And I wanted to do this before there had been any chance for a change in the program, in other words, just to let it go on for enough weeks till I could see an unadulterated accurate sampling of what was going on.

Morphew: What did you see? Did you visit the so-called trouble areas in Mississippi?

Lowman: I visited them, I saw students and others who were alleged to be students living on an integrated basis in squalor, filth, under conditions my dog wouldn't have stayed all night with them in some of these places. I noticed in Greenwood, Mississippi, for example, that persons were living together in squalor, in Negro homes, Negro buildings rather, in a section of town not frequented by the doctors and the dentists and the bricklayers and the carpenters and other, many others of the Negro community in Greenwood. And I found according to authorities and town persons and officials that none of these so-called invaders were living in the good, clean, respectable section among doctors, dentists, tradesmen, semi-skilled and skilled tradesmen.

Morphew: In other words, the elements of the substantial Negro community in Greenwood and some of these other Mississippi cities is having very little to do with these outsiders.

Lowman: Insofar as I was able to learn, the only thing they had to do with them in some instances was to call the authorities and identify who came from out of town, was living with whom, where and on what street.

Morphew: What are they trying to accomplish and how are they going about it?

Lowman: Well, more than any other thing that I could observe, they were trying to get uninterested persons to go to vote registration places to register. For example, I saw in Greenwood, Mississippi, teams of 2, calling upon houses, from house to house on a spot call basis, I think mostly on Monday, July 14, 1964. The handbills and circulars were calling upon Negroes to go to the courthouse in Greenwood for a Thursday, July 16, 1964, demonstration at the courthouse. Now I want to call this a fraud, insofar as I was able to learn from private citizens, from city officials and from county officials on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday during normal hours, a Negro or a white can go that courthouse and register to vote without any interference or assistance. If in any town or city in the North, East or West there was peaceable registration and 75 or 50 or a hundred persons came from buses from out of town and got rounded up from some of the unsavory neighborhoods in the town and went to the polling place and called for demonstration and did demonstrate and interfere with the normal activity of the community the police of the community in the North, East or West would have ordered them to disband and if they didn't they would have arrested them and that is precisely what should be done. Why should 3 or 4 busloads of out of town persons come to Greenwood on Thursday, July 16, for a demonstration where there is already free registration?

Morphew: People for the most part who by reason of age or residence and from that standpoint alone would not be eligible for voter registration at that particular courthouse.

Lowman: Well a lot of the workers are of that category, but if I knew and thousands of Greenwood persons knew there was going to be a demonstration incitation at the courthouse on Thursday, July 16, 1964, why didn't the national news media say there was going to be such a situation? This I don't understand. I believe it is the duty of the newsmen to give unslanted news, unslanted for, unslanted against any situation. News should be as true in words as a photograph, an untouched photograph and I don't think much of the news media is giving news. I don't think they're giving information, I think they're giving an indoctrination. I think that if some group in the news media field would like to have a feature story of great interest, they should go and look for the seamy side of who's doing what to whom in these troubled towns.

Morphew: These 'self-appointed summer workers' ...did they have knowledge that the deadline for November elections had already passed in July?

Lowman: A guided missile normally does not ask or inquire or show an interest in destination, motive, power or what's going on. I want to go into this into just a little more depth. Presbyterian Life, the official magazine of the Presbyterian, the northern

Presbyterians, July 15, 1964, in a feature story said that most, M-O-S-T, most of the so-called students who were trained at Oxford, Ohio, at Western College for Women, showed on their questionnaire regarding their religion, most of them said themselves they did not have any religion. Now what kind of a situation is this when the National Council of Churches and the major Protestant denominations through the National Council of Churches finance self-avowed non-believers, agnostics, atheists or other kinds of persons with no religion. This is a century of opposites. If the National Council of Churches did not know that they had no religion, then the National Council of Churches should not be trusted with the money and the destiny of the Methodist, the Presbyterian, the Episcopalian, the American Lutheran and a couple dozen other denominations, money and the destiny of their children.

Morphew: What about all of these incidents? Why the big headlines?

Lowman: Substance to all of them? Well any person who stops to think for even a minute would know that if you wanted to burn down a church or burn a house or you wanted to dynamite and destroy, there wouldn't be so many failures. It's no problem to burn a church when nobody is there. I mean, this thing of finding a milk bottle or a pop bottle, a soft drink bottle, with a little bit of inflammable fluid and a rag for a wick, well this is an insult to our intelligence. I know enough about persons who want to commit arson, now when I start a fire and want a successful fire, there is a successful fire. The fire company isn't there and back to their station house in 6, 8, 10 minutes and have an \$11 fire.

Morphew: Are you implying these fires may have been staged for their publicity value?

Lowman: No sir, I'm not implying, I'm making a flat statement that there are so many fluky fires that I would say that coincidence when it becomes a pattern is evidence. If these fires are serious attempts to burn a building, why aren't there some burned buildings?

Morphew: Why is the national press giving this so much attention?

Lowman: I wouldn't know why, all I want to say is, beyond the arson situation which I think is phony in 90% of the cases around here, I would like to say that I am honestly of the belief that if 750 or 800 white students were taken to New York and distributed within one week throughout Harlem and trained persons went back a month later, they would have difficulty finding several hundred of them.