

The Citizens' Council, aware of what was at stake, began a campaign to "save the churches from integration." One Saturday in September, wide radio and newspaper publicity was given to their campaign. The next day, the police were gone from in front of the churches. In their place were men in shirt sleeves who had obviously not come to worship. They just stood around the edges of the church property, sat armed in parked cars, or cruised the area. This Sunday, churches which had welcomed visitors before were firmly closed. The Council Campaign was underway.

Physical intimidation is not the only technique of the Council, nor even the most important. Leading laymen, who are also Jackson businessmen, were informed by the banks (Note: a member of the board of each Jackson bank is on the board of the Citizens' Council) that if their churches did not adopt a closed door policy their businesses would receive no more loans. During the summer, Council members had been transferring their membership from one church to another to gain control of all the leading churches. Thus, when the churches re-voted their policy, the vote changed to favor segregation.

The first arrests came on World-wide Communion Sunday (October 6). Three college co-eds--one white and two Negro--were returning to their car after being turned away from Capitol Street Methodist Church when they were placed under arrest. A policeman later said the police force was just tired of being "harrassed." The next day they were tried without a lawyer present on 15 minutes notice, and sentenced to a year in jail and \$1000 fine for disturbing divine worship and trespassing.

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Arrests did not stop the church visits. They have continued ever Sunday, not only at Methodist churches but at Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Catholic, Lutheran, and Baptist as well. People no longer invariably turn away when rejected. Sometimes they stand in silent witness until taken away by police. Methodist ministers and laymen have come every week to go to church with the students. Nearly all of them have been jailed.

To date, no church has officially pressed charges. The circumstances surrounding the arrests are often confusing. Ministers have been arrested while standing on the public sidewalks for trespassing on church property. People have been arrested for disturbing divine worship when no services were in progress. Church members have been arrested inside their own churches. Ministers of two of the churches involved have stated in Federal Court that they did not want people arrested at their churches and wanted all people to freely attend their services. Still, the arrests continue--10 last Sunday.

A petition has been filed to remove the cases from local jurisdiction to the Federal Courts. Another has been filed for damages against officials from the Governor on down. An injunction to stop state interference with worship by arrests has been sought. Judge Cox has consistently sided with the State. He said in court, "I think these people came down here looking for trouble--and they found it." It was only under order of Judge Tuttle that he agreed to hear the petition for removal and to set bond for those involved. He has since denied the petition, and it is now on appeal to the Fifth Circuit.

The church visits have proved meaningful on two counts: they have provided a way (the only way to date) of reaching white Jackson, and they have awakened the Protestant North to the plight of the church in the South. On the steps of a church, a Negro can communicate with the "backbone" of the white community as he cannot hope to do at a lunch counter. People come to church with entirely different attitudes and motives than the ones which make them join a mob behind a Woolworth sit-in. They must face the issue, and discuss it, for there is no place for them to hide.

The Methodist Church--the most representative of the Protestant denominations--has been shaken by the events in Jackson. Over 60 liberal, seminary-trained, Methodist ministers have left the state since 1954--many of them involuntarily. The bishop has refused to take a stand for an open-door policy or to take communion to jailed ministers. Small groups of church members have started "home churches" because they can no longer worship on Sunday. Methodist ministers have been forced to sign statements before entering a church saying that they will not interrupt the services. The Methodist Church could no longer compromise itself with its Southern members and has produced one of the strongest statements in its history on racial discrimination.

The emphasis to date has been on the Methodist Church. This is so for several reasons. For one, the first arrests took place at a Methodist church. Before then, the different denominations had enjoyed an approximately equal number of visits. Since then, the Methodist church has involved itself in Jackson to a greater extent than the other denominations.

Strategically, for change in the state, the Methodist church is important. If it is not the biggest church in Mississippi, it is second only to the Baptist. Nationally, it is the most "typical" and broadly based of the Protestant denominations. It is worth noting that city officials and police officers in Jackson are disproportionately Methodist--a pattern which is repeated throughout the state. When the Methodists move, the state and nation will have no alternative but to follow.