9-21-1962

Annotated article by James Clayton sent to World Desk, Washington Post, 21 September 1962

James Clayton

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/west_union_med

Part of the Journalism Studies Commons, and the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation

https://egrove.olemiss.edu/west_union_med/11

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Western Union Telegram Collection at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Telegrams to Media Outlets by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.
The campus of the University in Oxford was quiet and peaceful today. Students began the normal fall routine of classes and then began deserting the small town late in day.

Ole Miss opens its football season Saturday night in Memphis against Memphis State. Many of the schools 5000 or so students will be there.

There was considerable concern among students about what would happen to their chancellor and to the other two university officials cited for contempt. And many students said they expected Meredith to be back, and enrolled, sometime in the future.

One girl commented that she thought Meredith would not stand alone on the campus if he is enrolled. "There are a lot of people here who are ready to befriend him," she said.

Other students insisted that much of the booing and hissing of Meredith Thursday was done by freshmen and by outsiders who came onto the campus.

To desk: what follows is bio on the three university officials.

Williams, 60, is a native of Newport, Kentucky, and a graduate of its university and Columbia University. He was president of Marshall college, Huntington, West Virginia, for four years before coming here as chancellor in 1946.

Williams is president of the national association of state universities and vice president of the Southern Regional Education Board.
He is married and has one daughter and two grandsons.

Robert B. Ellis, the university's registrar, is a graduate of Ole Miss and a native of Memphis. He had a distinguished record in the Air Force during World War II, winning the Air Medal and Bronze Star on combat missions in the Southwest Pacific.

Arthur B. Lewis, dean of the college of liberal arts, is a native of Forrest, Miss., and a graduate of Ole Miss and John Hopkins. He was employed by the Bureau of Standards in Washington for 10 years prior to his return to the faculty here in 1936.

For the last 10 years, Lewis has been a consultant to the Oak Ridge Laboratory in the field of atomic radiation. He spent two months in 1959 in Chile under federal government auspices, helping to reorganize the physics department of the University of Concepcion (correct), 200 miles south of Santiago.

James Clayton
sunday op edit.

Oxford, Miss., Sept. 22---The crisis arising over efforts to desegregate the University of Mississippi is rapidly producing the greatest struggle between a state and the federal government since the end of the civil war.

In the balance now rests far more than the admission of one Negro to one university. What is involved is the power of the federal government to compel state officials to obey orders of federal courts and the future of desegregation in all the south.

Also involved in a way largely overlooked is the life of James Meredith, the 29-year-old Negro whose desire to study at Ole Miss has brought on this crisis. There are few persons in this town today who believe that Meredith will live to graduate from this University even if he is able to enroll. The betting, if there is any, is on how soon he will die.

In this tense situation, no except Gov. Ross Barnett and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and their closest advisers knows from one minute to the next what will happen. And it is clear that both federal and state authorities are playing this one close to their chests.
The situation here is unlike Little Rock, where federal and state troops faced either other briefly, because Gov. Orval Faubus never put himself squarely in position to be sent to jail for contempt of court. Faubus gave way when specifically directed by a court to act. Gov. Ross Barnett has yet to budge an inch, here.

The situation is also unlike that at New Orleans where the governor never made the show of force that Faubus put on and never went as far as Barnett has now gone.

In many respects, it seems as if the situation here has reached the point where an outcome is disastrous to someone.

If the federal government or Meredith backs down, the fires of opposition to desegregation will start to burn again all across the South. If one state can withstand federal authority, other states will be tempted to try. Much of the efforts of the last eight years will be undone.

If Mississippi backs down, Governor Barnett will be violating a solemn pledge he made to his citizens. He said he and other state officials would go to jail before any school is desegregated. There has been no evidence this week that his stand is weakening. Perhaps there is a compromise, but if so, it is buried from view in the moves and counter-moves now being made.
The move by the Justice Department to seek contempt citations against three university officials and the members of the board of trustees is a clear example of maneuvering that is going on. The university officials are clearly pawns in a struggle between far stronger men and the trustees have been caught in the middle between the governor and the federal courts.

But by moving against these men, the Justice Department is attempting to achieve two results. One is to force Meredith's enrollment at the University. The other is to keep the political gain that Gov. Barnett is making from this situation to a minimum.

Barnett, in turn, is actually defying federal power by daring the federal government to put him in jail. It is obvious that he seeks political gain as well as segregation of the university by the course he has chosen.

Observers here report that the Governor's stock has already risen high in many parts of the state. To many, he is the man who is trying to save their way of life. If he goes to jail for their cause, he will be a martyr in their eyes. Since governors here cannot succeed themselves in office, he might then turn his eyes on the Senate seat occupied by John B. Stennis. (check initial).
By not asking the federal courts to cite Barnett for contempt when he got himself appointed registrar of the university and personally turned Meredith away, the Justice Department is taking a calculated risk.

A good many people here are already saying that the action was not taken against the Governor because the Justice Department is afraid of him.

And there are people who believe that the federal government is powerless to move against Barnett. One said to a reporter in Jackson the other night, "They can't arrest the Governor."

When asked why, the man explained, "Why, he's a governor of a sovereign state. It would be unconstitutional to arrest him."

But if the federal government loses in the eyes of some by not immediately challenging Barnett, it apparently hopes to gain by forcing Meredith's enrollment. If it accomplishes that goal, and keeps Barnett's political gain to a minimum, Robert F. Kennedy can take credit for a remarkable bit of strategy.

It does not look from here, however, that those two goals can be fulfilled. Barnett has power to close the University and, if he wishes to carry his defiance to the ultimate, will almost certainly the end result may well be the end of the University of Mississippi and the jailing of a governor.
In the interim, however, it seems quite possible that the University of Mississippi will either be closed or its status as an educational institution badly damaged.

Barnett has said that there will be no desegregation while he is governor and all his actions point toward his intention to fulfill that pledge. And he does possess power to close the university unless the federal courts refuse to let him exercise it.

As to the university itself, Chancellor J. D. Williams has made strenuous efforts in recent years to recruit able faculty members from the North. Many came only after being assured that the governor had promised never to close the university. Some are already talking about leaving.

In all of this, what happens to James Meredith, a determined man who told his wife six years that he must go to Ole Miss?

The late William Faulkner, Oxford's greatest native son, once said that if violence occurred during desegregation of Ole Miss, it would come from the boys on beat two. He was referring to the area of the county where the poor whites live.

But for a moment here Thursday, there was a trace of violence in the air and it was not from the boys on beat two. It was from normally mild-mannered students carried away from the excitement. Only a spark was needed to turn a gay crown into an angry mob.
It is well worth remembering that the Jackson (Miss.) Daily News said on the day after the Supreme Court's school desegregation decision in 1954: "...there will be blood on the white marble steps of the Supreme Court building before a single school in this state is desegregated."

Many Mississippians regard Negroes as they regard mules. When a mule gets uppity or tries to go to college, you get rid of him. That is why the betting here is that Meredith may be enrolled but will never graduate.

SIGNED

james clayton