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'Closed Society' Blocks Mississippi Integration

A University of Mississippi history professor, who has made recent history of sorts in critical talks on Mississippi's and the South's handling of the racial situation, made his stand in Little Rock last night.

Dr. James W. Silver, blasting what he calls Mississippi's "closed society" and the way the press handles integration matters, spoke before the Arkansas Council on Human Relations at the Arkansas Education Association building. About 200 persons, including several Negroes, attended the meeting.

Silver's opinion of the racial situation, the rioting at Ole Miss when Negro James Meredith enrolled in that college, is one of disgust.

He said Mississippi, in coping with integration, is "going downhill and will for another five years." He added, "We must be near the bottom, but I don't see any hope of recovery for some years yet."

Silver stated that Arkansas "has crossed over the line" in the racial issue, but he said there is still the problem of "cleaning up the mess."

He said the racial uprising at Oxford brought nothing but "lies, lies, lies" from all levels of local officials. He said one Texas firm put out a film called "Oxford, U.S.A.," which attempted to convey that the whole United States Army had descended on the city when federal troops were called in to quell rioting.

The Ole Miss professor has been thoroughly criticized for his remarks reported in a talk at Asheville, N.C., last Nov. 8. He said then that Mississippi was a "closed society" where a person did not dare speak out and

where a search for the truth "has become a casualty."

Dr. Silver said the racial arguments today "make no sense." The issue has eroded more than the talks that ended slavery, he declared.

He continued, "It may be that Mississippi people are an inferior breed . . . after all, they have moved out of the age of slavery in the past 100 years."

The professor, a native of Mississippi, stated that racial events have indicated to him that Mississippi "is not ready for progress."

Silver also was critical of Gov. Ross Barnett and other Mississippi solons, and the whole South's attitude of white supremacy.

He commented that he hopes Gov. Barnett gets elected to the U.S. Senate, "Where he can do no more harm." Gov. Barnett's term ends this year.

Silver's talk was frequently interrupted by the audience's applause and laughter.

Dr. Silver praised Meredith and his overbearing task of desegregating the University of Mississippi.

He said he knows Meredith "as well as any white man can," and he said there was nothing but inaccuracies in the accusations involving their relationship.

Silver said he talked with Meredith on many occasions, had meals with him at the college and played golf with

him, but he stated that many tried to make an issue of their acquaintance.

He was especially critical of the press, saying that "newsmen did not have good judgment" in reporting the racial crisis and "many of them pick out just one statement and blow it out of proportion."

Silver, quoting from another source, said the integration problem "is not a question of white against black or black against white, but rather will be the white remain free."

He stated that the nation will just watch as Mississippi and other Southern states "ruin themselves over the Negro question."

He asked the audience to back President Johnson in his efforts to carry on the civil rights platform of the assassinated John F. Kennedy.

The Arkansas Council on Human Relations is a non-profit organization that "would have Arkansas end racism, our most serious domestic evil, by opening the same opportunities for individual colored citizens as