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Recommended Citation

Clarion-Ledger (Jackson, Miss.), "Big Smear Campaign Won't Halt Barnett's Drive For Re-Election" (1967). *Clippings*. 271.

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The Clarion-Ledger

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T. M. HEDERMAN, Editor 1921-1948

T. M. HEDERMAN, JR., Editor
PURSER HEWITT, Executive-Editor

Page 16-A

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI, FRIDAY, JULY 28, 1967

Big Smear Campaign Won't Halt Barnett's Drive For Re-Election

We had hoped this campaign would be conducted on a high plane, without resorting to mud-slinging and smear tactics. But a series of well-timed events leaves no doubt of an elaborate, master-minded campaign being conducted in a frantic attempt to destroy the only candidate with experience and with a workable program.

This smear campaign, planned by masters of confusion and public conditioning, is showing unmistakable signs of Washington overtones.

Senator Bobby Kennedy opened the campaign for governor in April when he met with political friends here in Mississippi. He was here as a member of a Senate committee, conducting a hearing on poverty and "deliberate starvation of Negroes" in Mississippi. He managed to bring Oxford into his conversations.

Since then liberal national magazines have, one by one, published articles designed to smear Ross Barnett and belittle Mississippi and her citizens. The latest was in McCall's. All have managed an attempt to influence the governor's race in Mississippi. Again they have sought to use Oxford.

Now James Meredith announces his endorsement of Barnett, Paul Johnson and Attorney General Joe Patterson.

If these masters of inference, deceit and destruction insist upon reviewing Oxford — then here are the facts.

Ross Barnett simply upheld his oath of office when he made his stand.

A vast majority of the people were behind Ross Barnett then, and we believe they are behind him today, for the principle of rights for the states has not changed. And a view of the battle grounds that are erupting throughout the United States, as many as 20 cities in one night, experiencing violent disorders, would strengthen Barnett's stand.

The state Junior Chamber of Commerce distributed material on "Oxford" through the state at the time of the incident.

The voters of Mississippi endorsed this position paper in electing Paul Johnson by an overwhelming vote. He was Lt. Governor then, and made his stand with Ross Barnett.

The vote for Barry Goldwater in this state reflected approval of the Barnett position in support of constitutional government and states' rights.

Any present change in public opinion, therefore must reflect the success of the liberals' power-play, smear campaign to keep Ross Barnett out of the governor's office at all costs.

This group tried the same type campaign against the Wallaces in Alabama where they tried to accuse George Wallace of making a deal at the University of Alabama.

The voters of Alabama didn't buy that smear nonsense and neither will the voters of Mississippi.

Earlier in the present campaign, all of the candidates were asked to tell how they would have handled the Oxford matter. After four years of hindsight and after weeks to come up with a plan, none of them could improve upon what was done.

Several passed it off by saying "I would not have let it happen," which is easy to say, but that is what Governor George Romney of Michigan said when he and Walter Reuther led a civil rights demonstration on the streets of Detroit. Today his state is a battle ground of civil rights strife with riots in Detroit, Grand Rapids, Flint and Pontiac.

A special legislative investigating committee's report on Oxford stressed two important observations after the members had interviewed more than 90 witnesses and read hundreds of pages of documentary evidence, which were:

The first dealt with the Allen Scott report of October 1962 which said: "President Kennedy replied (to a question asked by a U. S. Senator) "it was a tragic chain of events and errors, the U. S. marshals were inexperienced and blundered in their use of tear gas. It was a very sad day."

The second: "So long as the governor of Mississippi (Barnett) was permitted to be responsible for the enforcement of law and maintenance of peace, there was no violence or injury of any kind."

The real issue is who can do more for the continued development of Mississippi. Governor Barnett has already demonstrated his interest and ability to get new industries. He has already demonstrated his interest and dedication to research and development, and to education. These are the things on which he already has a fine record. No other candidate can make that claim.

Vote for Ross Barnett and you cast a vote for continued progress.