

# THE CLASS SCHISM AMONG THE SEGREGATIONISTS

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Historians have produced millions of words about the revolutionaries' role in the civil rights revolution, but they have written very little about those who resisted that revolution. Almost alone among historians, David L. Chappell has directed his attention to the resistance, the segregationists, although he has no sympathy for them. One of Chappell's papers, "Schism among the Segregationists: Education, Respectability, and the Question of Class," is particularly noteworthy because it points to a major reason why the segregationists' resistance failed.

To quote from the abstract to Chappell's unpublished paper, "The division was between segregationists who emphasized constitutional arguments and those who believed that constitutional arguments were insufficient. The second group stressed a more emotional appeal, with explicit, often crudely racist jokes and cartoons, and occasional sexual innuendo. The constitutionalists shunned such language and tactics, saying they were beyond the pale of respectability. The openly racist segregationists thought the constitutionalists were too genteel, too restrained to generate the alarm that was needed to rouse the white South from its complacency. Both factions agreed that strong propaganda was necessary to convert the vast majority of white southerners to militant support of the cause."

Chappell believes that "the extent to which the factional division among segregationists was determined by class is a question that needs to be explored." He does find clear evidence that "those who produced the constitutional propaganda had a condescending dismissive attitude towards those who were openly racist in their appeals – which sounds an awful lot like upper-class snobbery. It is also clear that those who produced the constitutional propaganda tended to have high income and education levels – they were generally more socially prominent, hence upper class, than crude racists."

Although further research may be needed to demonstrate convincingly that the division had its basis in social class, Chappell concludes that "the split in segregationist ranks was the most important weakness on that side of the struggle. Segregationist weakness is just as important as the strength and determination of the African American protesters (on whose organization most scholars have understandably focused) in explaining the ultimate defeat of segregation."

Obviously, there were exceptions to this pattern. Carleton Putnam's *Race and Reason* (1961) was at least as widely circulated as the constitutionalist James Jackson Kilpatrick's *The Sovereign States* (1957). The major resistance organization, the Citizens' Councils of America, maintained a balance between constitutional and racial approaches. Nonetheless, the constitutionalist resistance held the upper ranks of power. The racist resistance elected no one to public office after 1954. The last prominent Southern elected official to take the racist approach to resistance was Theodore Bilbo, now remembered only as the author of the bluntly titled *Take Your Choice: Separation or Mongrelization* (1947). In 1948, a year after Bilbo died, the center of Southern resistance became the constitutionalist states rights campaign led by Strom Thurmond. The "Southern Manifesto," which was signed by most of the South's senators in reaction to the Brown decision of 1954, was a wholly constitutionalist document.

### CLASS AND THE KLAN

The theory that there was a schism among the segregationists along lines of social class finds additional support when one considers the composition of the post-World War II Ku Klux Klan. George Thayer, writing in 1967, describes them as coming

from the working classes of white society, where the technological rejects, the insecure, the unassimilated, the despairing and the frightened congregate. The average Klansman...is usually a day laborer, a mechanic, or an industrial worker who works where job security is virtually nonexistent...He lives in an urban society but his heart is in the country. He sees himself as a poor white and knows that he is unwelcome in the city; but he also realizes that he cannot return to the simple rural life he prefers" (p. 87).

Although the Klan during the 1960s attained a maximum membership of 100,000 (Thayer, p. 85), this was but a third of the membership of the Citizens' Councils of America (Thayer, p. 114). While the latter had a solidly upper-middle class leadership, the Klan had not only a lower class rank and file but also a lower class leadership. Robert Shelton, leader of the largest postwar Klan, was a former factory worker (Thayer, p. 100). Thus, according to Thayer, the Klan presented the unusual profile of being an ostensibly rightist organization with a membership almost entirely composed of industrial wage laborers, proletarians in the Marxist sense of the term. Indeed, many of the Klansmen during this period belonged to what a Marxist would call the "Lumpenproletariat" or the "surplus population" (Russell, pp. 68, 113).

James Vander Zanden, a sociologist writing in 1960 on "The Klan Revival," notes that "as contrasted with the citizens' councils, its strength did not reside in the rural Black Belt areas of the South; on the contrary, it has been an urban phenomenon, with the preponderance of its strength located in the Piedmont of the Southeast" (pp. 456-57). He also concludes that while the Councils'

membership rose and fell with the imminence of integration, Klan activity was independent of this factor (p. 457).

Vander Zanden found that Klansmen

fall into four occupational groups: (1) skilled workers (e.g., garage mechanics, machinists, carpenters, and stonemasons); (2) marginal, small businessmen (e.g., small building-trade contractors and proprietors of food markets, grills, and gasoline stations); (3) marginal white collar workers (e.g., grocery-store clerks, service-station attendants, policemen, and salesmen); and (4) transportation workers (primarily truck drivers) and unskilled and semiskilled workers in the textile, construction, automotive, aircraft, coal, and steel industries (p. 458).

Of a sample of 153 Klansmen, "98 were in the first three occupational categories: skilled workers, 51; marginal businessmen, 11; and marginal white-collar workers, 36" (p. 458).

Vander Zanden positions the Klansmen in a socioeconomic stratum slightly above where Thayer places them. This distinction is significant because Vander Zanden argues that Klansmen are strongly motivated by a sense of status discrepancy. The first three occupational categories "are commonly ranked in the upper rungs of the working class and the lower rungs of the middle class, that is, in an intermediate position between clear-cut 'blue-collar' manual jobs and white-collar jobs; their status is insecure and they are anxious. At the same time, they generally lack the resources, skills or education necessary to improve their life chances" (p. 458).

Vander Zanden explains Klan activity as a kind of overcompensation: "By conforming to the dominant white group, he [the Klansman] gets some sense of identification and security. Nevertheless, insecurity and uncertainty lead to his compensating for his lacks through an exaggerated overconformity with the white-caste value system and exaggerated 100 per cent Americanism" (p. 459). A spurious sense of status is derived from the many ranks and grandiose titles within the Klan (p. 460). The Klansman feels that "The success which was not forthcoming through normal channels promises to come through the organization and cause to which he has dedicated himself" (p. 461).

### **"REDNECK RACISM": FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS OR STATUS ANXIETY?**

Julian Roebuck and Mark Hickson, sociologists writing on Southern poor whites in 1980, do not see the origin of their racialism in a sense of status anxiety. Rather, they revive the Marxian theory, without explicitly invoking Marx, to explain that

The middle and upper classes have, at times, encouraged racism among the rednecks. The motive for this was, and is, the preservation of a cheap, docile labor supply, which would be threatened should working-class whites and blacks realize their common interests, unite, and demand

economic and political rights by way of organization (Roebuck and Hickson, p. 179).

Elsewhere, they write that “the upper-class Southerner has attempted with great success to indoctrinate the working-class Southerner with the fixed idea that any fraternization on his part with blacks would lead to social equality, miscegenation, and intermarriage” (Roebuck and Hickson, p. 179).

Roebuck and Hickson’s suggestion that racialism among poor whites is consciously promoted by the bourgeoisie is echoed throughout the literature on that topic, but the more commonly held position would seem to be that of J. Wayne Flynt, the prominent historian of the South’s poor whites. Flynt sees as the motivating factor behind the racism of poor whites not so much status discrepancy as a threat to status. Flynt finds that “the hard-core resisters” to racial integration differed from other whites in the following ways:

[T]hey were more concentrated in rural areas, their earning power was significantly less, few were white-collar professionals, and they were less educated. Because they possessed few of the tools necessary to improve their lives – education, income, and prestige occupations – they rested at the bottom of the white social structure and were most threatened by upward black mobility” (Flynt, p. 117).

The theory that the South’s upper class encouraged racialism among the region’s working class is often cited with little evidence being adduced in its support, but it is certain that the upper class vigorously disapproved of racialism as manifested in the Ku Klux Klan, even the pre-World War II version of the Klan. (For examples of the view of the Southern upper class regarding the Klan, see Cash, pp. 343–50, and Percy, pp. 225–41.) In 1946, when a successor group to the Klan, Columbians Inc., was chartered in Georgia, state officials immediately sought to revoke its charter on the grounds that the Columbians were a “subversive” organization (Hinton). From the beginning, the power elite in Atlanta sought suppression of the Columbians, not its support (Weisenburger). If the Marxian theory is to be considered credible, it must be explained why representatives of the upper class were eager to suppress organizations which had been effective instruments for promoting racialism among working-class Southern whites.

The less-radical theory of status discrepancy as an explanation for right-wing extremism was quite popular during the 1950s and was given an effective presentation in 1962 by the sociologist Daniel Bell in his essay “The Dispossessed” (Bell 1–46). Sociological studies undertaken during the 1960s of members of the John Birch Society and of Fred Schwarz’s Christian Anti-Communism Crusade suggested, however, that status anxieties were not that evident among non-racially oriented extreme rightists. (See Alan C. Elms, “Psychological Factors in Right-Wing Extremism”; Mark Chesler and Richard Schmuck, “Social Psychological Characteristics of Super-Patriots”; Ira S. Rohter, “Social and Psychological Determinants of Radical Rightism” in Schoenberger, pp. 143–237.) It may be reasonable to assume, regardless of

the lack of studies of the socioeconomic profile of members of the Citizens' Councils, that it more closely approached that of the Birch Society members and followers of Schwarz than that of the post-World War II Klan.

### THE CITIZENS' COUNCILS: CAUTIOUSLY CONSERVATIVE

The leaders of the Citizens' Councils movement came almost entirely from the upper-middle class and the upper class and, as such, were conservatives as well as segregationists. They wisely, however, generally addressed only the issue of governmentally mandated racial integration, perhaps recognizing that the rank and file membership would not follow them into areas not related to their primary interest. According to Neil McMillen, who has written the only comprehensive history of the Councils, "However much this segregationist movement abhorred the equalitarian slogans of the national labor organizations, it did not officially endorse such conservative favorites as national right-to-work legislation or laws forbidding industry-wide collective bargaining" (p. 203).

Much the same may be said for other conservative themes. At one time or another, upper-echelon Council spokesmen aligned themselves against a veritable cornucopia of liberal objectives, including minimum wage legislation, open housing laws, Social Security, Medicare, graduated income taxes, repeal of the Walter-McCarran Immigration Act, public housing, and foreign aid. But these were sentiments of the conservative men who happened to lead the Citizens' Council. They were not attitudes upon which this essentially segregationist movement was founded, nor were they ever more than issues of tangential interest to the average Councilor" (McMillen, p. 204).

The Councils generally maintained some distance from the John Birch Society. McMillen believes that "A sizable faction within the Council, including some of the most articulate professionals on the CCA staff, insisted that the movement must be anti-Negro first and foremost, and only incidentally anti-Communist" (p. 199). McMillen notes that

beginning with the age of McCarthy, the racial theme began to disappear from right-wing ideology. If nothing else, the McCarthy era demonstrated that there need be no direct correlation between conservatism and racism. Thus from his study of opinion polls Seymour Lipset concluded that rank-and-file McCarthy supporters were less likely to be anti-Semitic, and no more likely to be anti-Negro, than were those who were critical of the Wisconsin senator. Likewise,...Robert Welch's organization officially declared its opposition to racial intolerance, whether anti-Jew or anti-Negro"

McMillen admits that

there were elements within the Council which could agree fully with the Bircher maxim that the United States was a republic and not a democracy. Some, such as R. Carter Pittman, president of the statewide

association in Georgia, would even equate democracy with Communism. For “a democracy,” he believed “is a government in which the will of the people is translated into action without regard to the constitution of laws.” ...But Pittman’s distrust of the democratic process did not reflect the attitudes of rank-and-file Councilors – many of whom had probably never given the question serious consideration. Indeed, the segregationist movement took genuine pride in its “local grass roots organization”; its spokesmen frequently boasted that it was “the modern version of the old-time town meeting called to meet any crisis by expressing the will of the people” (p. 202).

### SCHISM AMONG THE CITIZENS

Nonetheless, the schism appeared even among the Councils. The Mississippi Council seemed to be the most successful in containing it, but it appeared vividly, according to McMillen’s account, in other states. In South Carolina, a wealthy planter controlled the state organization and actually discouraged the development of a mass membership: “It was not essential that the Council have a large membership, for, as he believed, ‘it’s often not worth the price.’ Not remarkably, the Citizens’ Council in the Palmetto State was never again a thriving concern” (McMillen, p. 80). In Georgia, the Citizens’ Council affiliate, the States’ Rights Council, had “virtually no membership” outside a few hundred “prominent Georgians active in public affairs” (p. 82). These included former governors, lieutenant governors, senators, and presidents of the state bar association (p. 82). In Virginia, the Council’s affiliate, the Defenders of State Sovereignty, was a similar effort to recruit from among only the upper class (p. 106). In these states, the schism appeared from above as a conscious effort to exclude a mass membership.

The schism appeared differently in the adjacent states of Arkansas and Louisiana. In the former state’s capital, Little Rock, the Council did not “enjoy the support of the city’s substantial middle class” and had a membership which was only a fraction of that in Mississippi (McMillen, p. 96). In Louisiana, unlike Arkansas, the more strident faction of the Council maintained a following, but detached itself from the association of Citizens’ Councils headquartered in Jackson, Mississippi. The remnant Louisiana council published a tabloid with anti-Semitic content, *The Councilor*, which attained a readership of more than 200,000 (McMillen, p. 72).

The history of the Alabama Council is most revealing of the schism. There the split was even between the north Alabama council, centered in Birmingham, and the councils centered in the middle and south of the state. The north Alabama council, was led by Asa Carter, a man of lower middle class origins, a self-avowed “redneck,” whose following “was comprised almost entirely of laborers, many of whom were union men” (McMillen 47–52). The state organization was controlled by a wealthy planter-legislator, Samuel Engelhardt, whose family had owned almost seven thousand acres for four

generations (p. 47). Engelhardt expelled the Carter faction and denounced Carter as a “fascist” and an “anti-Semite” (p. 56). Engelhardt averred that the Council’s “good name” had been besmirched by Carter’s faction, that the state’s “respectable element” lost interest in organized resistance because of him (p. 56). McMillen describes Engelhardt’s triumph as “pyrrhic at best. No sooner was Carter’s threat quashed than the organization’s popular appeal began to wane” (p. 56).

John Bartlow Martin describes Carter as being unlike most Council leaders: “While they were pointing with pride to their conservative business leadership and were appealing to the upper and middle class whites, Carter tried to identify his ‘people’s movement’ with workingmen and women, with red necks and crackers and hillbillies” (Martin, p. 119). (Martin’s journalistic account of the Southern resistance is replete with examples of the class schism.) Asa Carter went on to write some of the most famous speeches of Governor George Wallace including those delivered during his campaign for the presidency as a third party candidate (Carter [1996], 2–3). Dan T. Carter, a political scientist unrelated to Asa Carter, has given a full account of Asa Carter’s role in the Wallace campaign (Carter [1995], pp. 295–98).

#### CONSERVATIVES AGAINST WALLACE

The schism or split became most manifest in the election of 1968. Although George Wallace often spoke in constitutionalist terms, everyone knew that most of his followers were humble folk who were really motivated by the racial issue. Furthermore, many of the planks of Wallace’s American Independent Party were, in the words of Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab,

not those of a conservative laissez-faire party. Most of them were clearly to the left of Barry Goldwater and the *National Review*. And during the campaign, Goldwater, William Buckley, and other writers in the *National Review* and *Human Events* attacked Wallace as a New Deal populist who was closer in his welfare and trade-union planks to liberal Democrats than to themselves” (Lipset and Raab, pp. 348).

John Ashbrook, the leader of the Republican delegation in the House of Representatives, writing in *National Review*, called Wallace a “populist” and warned that “American conservatives should make no mistake about it. The only thing Wallace has against Washington is its racial policy. In all of his other attitudes he is one of the biggest centralizers of them all” (Ashbrook 1048). Elsewhere, as quoted by Lipset and Raab, Ashbrook warned that Wallace “is a Populist with strong tendencies in the direction of the collectivist welfare state. . . We find George Wallace’s candidacy repugnant to ideals of American conservatism” (Lipset and Raab, p. 348). “A poll taken by *Human Events* of over a hundred leading American conservatives reported that the overwhelming majority of them were opposed to Wallace because they felt he was not a conservative and that he knowingly appealed to ‘racial prejudices’” (Lipset and Raab, p. 348).

Significantly, Wallace was also opposed by the constitutionalist Strom Thurmond and his aide Harry Dent, the primary artificer of the Republican party's "Southern strategy" (Carter [1995], pp. 33-5). Wallace's failure to win Thurmond's state, South Carolina, diminished his impact. By 1968, the constitutionalists, led by Thurmond, had shifted to the Republican Party. Dent from the beginning insisted that the new Republican strategy had no racial content, that Nixon appealed only to those who sought the "preservation of individual freedom" (Carter [1995], p. 28). Wallace emerged from the Democratic Party and returned to it when his nascent movement had ebbed after he was almost murdered and was left permanently disabled.

Thurmond was central to the Republican campaign against Wallace. Jack Bass, writing in 2005, relates how in September 1968, the Republicans launched " 'Thurmond Speaks' [which] saturated the South with television and radio commercials – with the radio aimed at country music stations – in which Thurmond delivered" the message that "a vote for Wallace was a vote for Humphrey because Wallace couldn't win" (Bass, p. 218). "Tom Turnipseed remembered Thurmond's spots as 'very effective' and that Wallace's poll numbers began falling almost immediately. Textile magnate Roger Milliken of Spartanburg, widely believed to be the wealthiest person in South Carolina, led the fund-raising operation that paid for most of the radio and TV spots" (Bass, p. 219). According to Bass, Thurmond's anti-Wallace campaign saved Nixon from defeat:

Initially, Wallace had led in the border states of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Florida, as well as South Carolina – states that Nixon ultimately won, with a collective forty-five electoral votes that exceeded his margin of victory. Nixon squeaked by Wallace in North Carolina and Tennessee, where Thurmond's role clearly made the difference, and won more decisively in Florida (Bass, p. 219). (On Thurmond's role, see also Carter [1995], pp. 328-32.)

A comparison of the platform of Wallace's American Independent Party with the platform on which Thurmond ran for the presidency in 1948 is also revealing of the schism. The A.I.P. supported Social Security and Medicare, federally funded "job training" and "public works programs" to assure full employment: "For those unemployable by reasons of age, infirmity, disability or otherwise, provision will be made for their adequate care through programs of social services based on the requirements and needs of these persons. We hold that all Americans are deserving of and will have the care, compassion and benefits of the fullness of life" (Johnson, p. 704). Nothing like this is to be found in Thurmond's platform, which is limited to issues of states' rights (Johnson, pp. 466-68).

### TRIBUNE OF THE PEOPLE?

That the anxiety which Wallace aroused among conservatives was not without some basis is suggested by the observations of independent commen-

tators. Lipset and Raab quote Samuel Lubell, the pioneer of political opinion surveys, as reporting in October 1968, that

Pro-Wallace supporters in the northern cities...voice strong working-class views which prevent them from voting Republican...Most of these Wallace followers maintain, 'Wallace is for the workingman. He couldn't be for anyone else.' Some even talk of the Wallace movement as 'the start of a new labor party'" (Lipset and Raab, p. 364). Ward Just believed that "if you strip him of the Southern accent and some of the surrounding rhetoric you might mistake him for a New Left advocate of the poverty program, urging the maximum feasible participation of the poor and return of local government to the people, 'participatory democracy'" (Lipset and Raab, p. 349).

One spokesman for the New Left, Clark Kissinger, concluded that, in his words, Wallace was able "to mobilize the very real force of class consciousness in America" (Lipset and Raab, p. 364). In this, Wallace was unlike Eugene McCarthy, who directed his campaign to what Kissinger called "the white upper middle class" (p. 364). In contrast to this, in Kissinger's words,

Wallace loves to point out how the capitalist press is prejudiced against him...He recently remarked, 'Some of these liberal newspaper editors are saying one reason the Wallace philosophy is so popular is he says what the people want to hear. And they're saying it in such a manner that it sounds like what the people want is bad" (p. 364).

Marshall Frady quotes Wallace as saying, "There is one thing more powerful than the Constitution...than any constitution. That's the will of the people. What is a Constitution anyway? They're the products of the people, the people are the first source of power, and the people can abolish a constitution if they want to" (Frady, p. 227). Wallace's populist sentiment, as expressed here, is diametrically opposed to R. Carter Pittman's warnings against democracy. While Wallace implicitly sees in the will of the people the greatest good of the political order, Pittman sees in it only its ruination.

Wallace is most probably referring to "the people" cited in the first two paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence. American conservatives throughout the twentieth century generally preferred to see the American nation as beginning with the Constitution of the United States, not the Declaration. Wallace's reference to the will of the people is also too suggestive of Rousseau's general will to be accepted by conservatives. Irving Babbitt, forerunner to Russell Kirk in reviving interest in Edmund Burke, especially stressed the danger of the general will (Babbitt, pp. 110-15).

Lipset and Raab found that support for Wallace among white voters in 1968 was inversely related to socioeconomic status:

The relationship between occupational status and attitude toward Wallace did not change when controlled for party affiliation or 1964 election choice. Farmers (mainly southerners) in both political camps were the most pro-Wallace group. Among the urban strata, manual

workers were much more likely than those in the nonmanual middle class to be pro-Wallace. Even among Goldwater supporters, a majority of those in white-collar occupations found Wallace objectionable" (Lipset and Raab, p. 361).

Robert Botsch, in his study of white workers in North Carolina furniture factories, concludes that support for Wallace was related to "Wallace's thinly veiled racist appeals" and "regional identification with a southerner," but that "[m]ore important are some of the issues of populism" (p. 156). As evidence that Wallace was moving more towards populism, Botsch quotes a statement he made in 1970:

The affluent super-rich in this country are more dangerous than the militants...Citizens' power will right the wrongs perpetrated against the middle class and lower class in the United States...No government is administered according to the objective and intent of the Founding Fathers...unless it is administered for the weak, the poor, and the humble as well as the powerful" (p. 154).

Lipset and Raab frequently refer to the "antielitism" of Wallace (pp. 349-50), but Thomas Dye and L. Harmon Zeigler, writing in 1972 in *The Irony of Democracy*, their widely disseminated political science textbook, see in him a "counter-elite," "a clear threat to the values of the established elite" (p. 148). Wallace acted as a counter-elite by ending, if only temporarily, "the normal apathy of the masses," upon which the "survival of a democratic system" depends (p. 148). Dye and Zeigler believe that while counter-elites can arise from either the right or the left, "'right' counter-elites have been more indigenous to American life" (p. 151). Dye and Zeigler, assessing the political situation in 1972, believe that "Any genuine 'people's' revolution in America would undoubtedly take the form of a right-wing nationalist, patriotic, religious-fundamentalist, anti-black, anti-intellectual, anti-student, 'law and order' movement" (p. 151).

"Counter-elite movements may seem from their rhetoric to be equalitarian but (like all political activity) are well within the control of the articulate few" (Dye and Zeigler, p. 151). (Dye and Zeigler's concept of the counter-elite seems to be similar to Vilfredo Pareto's concept of the out-elite, but they do not cite Pareto.) Counter-elites "rarely" achieve a following strong enough "to put any portion of their values into practice" (p. 151), but they can influence the strategy of the elite. Thus, Richard Nixon's "Southern Strategy" arose in response to the Wallace movement (p. 152). Dye and Zeigler call the fact that, despite the counteraction of Nixon and Thurmond, Wallace won 14 percent of the presidential vote in 1968 "truly astounding" (p. 152).

The demographic correlates of electoral support for Wallace in the 1968 election correspond rather closely to the demographic correlates for white separatism uncovered in an Opinion Research Center survey of 551 white Americans undertaken in 1968. In this survey, 26 percent of whites called "Separate States in the U.S." for blacks a "Good idea," while 36 percent of the

same sample called a "Separate Country Outside U.S." for blacks a "Good idea" (Feagin, p. 170). The majority of white Southerners surveyed favored a separate country for blacks, while 40 percent favored separate states for them (Feagin, p. 173). Among whites, support for both separate states and a separate country was higher among lower socioeconomic groupings. Occupational groupings and the corresponding percentages of same that supported separate states were as follows: unskilled, semi-skilled blue collar, 36 percent; skilled blue-collar, 28 percent; clerical, sales, 17 percent; professional, managerial, 8 percent. Corresponding figures for a separate country were: unskilled, semi-skilled blue collar, 45 percent; skilled blue collar, 41 percent; clerical, sales, 31 percent; professional, managerial, 18 percent (Feagin, p. 174).

The principle of parsimony of scientific explanation suggests one rather simple hypothesis to explain the heightened support for racial separatism among whites of lower socio-economic status. This is that their greater proximity to blacks in daily life and in their living space in itself suffices to explain their greater support for separatism. The explanations offered by Marxian theory, that the bourgeoisie more or less generates such attitudes within the proletariat, or the theory of liberal sociology, that such proximity arouses anxieties regarding status, are more complex by at least one factor than the hypothesis that simple proximity to a visibly different population grouping generates support for separatism from that grouping.

The varying degrees of proximity of white populations to black populations, usually inversely related to the socioeconomic status of whites, probably contributed to the collapse of what resistance there was to school integration. The "hard-core resisters" among whites were those for whom the threat of integration in the public schools was most imminent. The upper class had always sent its progeny to private preparatory schools. The upper-middle class in the South soon followed their example. So-called "segregation academies" in many areas enrolled most white children from families above middle income levels. White parents on lower income levels were forced to send their children to the newly integrated public schools.

### LITTLE ROCK: CLASS OVER COLOR

The class schism was apparent in the first great encounter over school integration, the Little Rock Central High School crisis of 1957. C. Fred Williams, an Arkansas historian, writing in 1997, calls class "the central issue" in the crisis (Williams, p. 341). Virgil Blossom, the superintendent of the Little Rock school system, had drawn up a plan for a new high school to be located on the affluent western edge of the city. The school chosen to be integrated was the one to which the less affluent majority of whites would be sending their children. "Blossom only talked to the business and professional class" (Williams, p. 342) about his plans for a new high school and for integration.

As a result,

working-class white citizens felt betrayed by their upper-class counterparts. Rather than resist the court order, as was being done in a number of southern states, Little Rock's leaders chose to retreat to the secluded comfort of their neighborhood school and leave implementation of court-ordered integration in the lap of the city's oldest high school...For working-class Little Rockians, the Blossom Plan was unfair, a favor to the privileged class, who already had more than enough. Living miles from the nearest black community, ...the upper class could afford to take a magnanimous, even paternalistic attitude toward the whole matter. The same was not true for Little Rock's white working class. Forced by economic constraints to live and work in close proximity with black citizens, the white workers traditionally found refuge from the race issue in their neighborhood churches and schools. The court ruling...took a significant part of that refuge away...for Little Rock, working-class reaction to the *Brown* decision was comparable to the Boston crowd's response to the East India Company's monopoly on the tea trade during colonial times. The Crisis at Central High was a form of social protest in the mold of the Boston Tea Party. Race may have been the triggering mechanism, but this rise of massive resistance in the capital city was fundamentally an expression of class conflict...But in the longer term, white workers expressed their anger toward the upper class and the class they considered lower than themselves, by going to the ballot box. The ultimate beneficiary of the working class protest was Governor Orval Faubus" (Williams, pp. 343-4).

Karen Anderson, writing in 2004 on the Little Rock crisis, confirms much of Williams's analysis. She finds that "effective political power in Little Rock rested with a small number of businessmen who took for granted their right to decide the city's fate," but "generally tried to exercise power from behind the scenes" (p. 604). Although "[t]hese men were socially conservative and sought to avoid public association with controversial issues..., the school desegregation crisis made it virtually impossible for them to act effectively while remaining behind the scenes" (p. 604). Furthermore, they

were divided over the importance of segregation and over how to safeguard their economic and political interests: their uncertainty left them virtually paralyzed during the first two years of the crisis. Most supported segregation but were unhappy about the high cost of retaining it. When violence erupted in 1957, they were willing to condemn it but were not willing to engage in public discussion of the issue that had occasioned the unrest. Unable to act, they faced various challenges to their local monopoly on power, ranging from segregationists in the Capital Citizens' Council and the Mothers' League of Central High to the middle-class white women who organized the moderate Women's Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools...African Americans' access to the courts also undermined local white leaders' ability to make uncontested decisions (pp. 604-5).

The business leaders sought to position themselves as "the reasonable middle ground," to

keep control of local politics and advance the policy of token integration first devised by the city's school board in 1955...Although engaged in an intense conflict with the segregationists, including Faubus, for the political support of working-class and other voters barred from the city's circle of power, establishment leaders hoped to manipulate and conciliate those groups while maintaining a monopoly on public authority (p. 607).

Their particular concern was "placating the arch-segregationists" (p. 607).

Graeme Cope studied membership records to determine the occupational and residential characteristics of more than five hundred members of the Capital City Citizens' Council. He found them to be "somewhat removed from Little Rock's elite."

[T]hey were certainly not to be found among the one thousand or so men and women Elizabeth Jacoway has identified as the dominant force in Little Rock society, let alone among the thirty-two who, on the basis of cross-membership in such bodies as the Good Government Committee, the Community Chest, the Country Club, and the Chamber of Commerce, formed the city's real elite" (p. 58).

Cope agrees with McMillen's characterization of the leaders and rank and file of the Citizens' Council as "honest white people of the middle and lower classes" (p. 58).

Anderson believes that class antagonisms were present, but that the Council members and others in the resistance might not have been fully conscious of them. This would not be entirely due to obtuseness on their part because, as Anderson observes,

the lack of a vocabulary for class antagonisms in the political culture of the 1950s made race an appealing default category for the expression of class enmity by working-class whites. Indeed, one segregationist woman wrote Thomas [a leader of the Little Rock businessmen] that "I personally am sick of so-called "successful businessmen" integrating white people against their will and against our United States Constitution; white people from whom your so-called success has been drawn"" (p. 634).

Although the business leaders might have seemed to be at the mercy of external forces, most notably the Eisenhower administration, they did succeed in vanquishing a challenge by local counter-elites. In Anderson's words, "Despite serious threats to its control of local politics, the business elite succeeded in forcing members of other social groups to operate from the margins of the political community while the businessmen made fundamental policy and electoral decisions" (p. 635).

Vander Zanden, writing in 1962 on "The Impact of Little Rock," concludes that it was

in fact the turning-point, the decisive battle. When the Little Rock battle unfolded, school desegregation appeared rigidly stalemated. The position of the respective states had been more or less stabilized...Deep South states had entrenched themselves behind more than one hundred *new* segregationist laws" (p. 381).

The Little Rock crisis was a turning-point because it called forth the "direct intervention of the President" (p. 382). Consequently, "Little Rock probably strengthened the hand of the 'law and order' forces within the South... 'Law and order' has found especially powerful support among the Southern urban middle classes" (p. 383). "Little Rock and the developments following in its wake marked the turning of the tide. In September, 1957, desegregation was stalemated" (p. 384), but not thereafter.

### CAPITAL BEFORE BLOOD

While the stance of the Southern upper class following the Little Rock crisis became all too apparently a relative indifference to that which was not seen as a threat, that of the upper class outside the South was slightly different. James Weinstein, a political scientist writing from a leftist perspective, defines the position of the non-Southern upper class in rather different terms, concluding that,

far from being threatened by the demand for civil rights, liberal capitalists saw them as part of the logical development of our society. Civil rights were a necessary part of integrating a mostly rural, semi-feudal workforce into the highly industrialized, consumer-oriented marketplace. After all, 15 million blacks represented a large potential market for the new consumer-based economy, and unlike the other U.S. colonial markets, these potential consumers had little choice but to buy American...from the point of view of American foreign policy makers, overt racial oppression was a liability. In the Cold War contest with the Soviet Union, the semi-colonial treatment of American blacks was more than an embarrassment. It threatened to throw the emerging nations in Africa and Asia into the Soviet camp (Weinstein, p. 181).

Herbert R. Sass, Carleton Putnam, Wesley C. George, and others had warned that "mixed schools" would lead to "mixed blood." By the end of the century, it had become evident that their alarm had been justified. The "mongrelization" against which Bilbo had warned was developing as rapidly as he feared it might. The national ruling class, the upper one percent of the country which owns most of the means of production, had arrived at a consensus that the United States would follow the example of Brazil. Indeed, an ironic denouement came to the whole story of the segregationist movement when, soon after the death of Strom Thurmond, who had led the constitutionalists for more than half of a century, widespread publicity was given to the fact that he himself had been a covert "mongrelizer."

The second great post-World War II racist movement has been the resistance to the mass immigration from the Third World which followed enactment of the Immigration Act of 1965. Although most participants in this movement may not be subjectively (i.e., consciously) racist, they, in their quest to preserve the majority white racial composition of the U.S., are held by the left to be objectively racists. Not all liberals would agree with this judgment. David Bennett, the primary historian of nativism, writing in 1988,

finds that “advocates of immigration reform” “do not represent a return to the nativist traditions of the past” (p. 373). Otis Graham, who, writing in 2004, has sympathetically chronicled the history of the movement for immigration restriction, mainly presents an account of an ineffective effort launched and guided in all its stages by upper-middle class lobbyists. Indeed, he finds “a key to the successful stifling of immigration reform” in “elite disconnect”; i.e., a withdrawal of all concern about the question on the part of the socioeconomic “top fifth” of the population (p. 191). It is not coincidental, therefore, that Betty Dobratz and Stephanie Shanks-Meile, in their study of “white separatists,” find that the separatists’ concerns about mass immigration from the Third World are a product of their own sense of downward mobility (pp. 256–94). The schism in this second movement is even more glaringly evident than that in the first.

### FAREWELL TO JEFFERSONIAN DEMOCRACY

Most participants in the segregationist movement probably knew of the schism in their ranks, but it is less likely that most of them saw its origin in class differences. Rightists generally resist any serious consideration of social class, often denying that it exists because only individuals exist. The denial of class on the ground that only individuals exist is an ironic stance for rightists to take because, as one of the foremost traditionalist conservative thinkers, Richard Weaver, argued, “Western man made an evil decision” when, during the medieval period, he denied the existence of universals, espoused nominalism and denied “logical realism” (Weaver, pp. 2–3). (This nominalism is also present in the leftists’ assertion that race is only a social construct.)

The sociologist P. Saunders notes that “In the USA there is a long tradition of measuring class differences on a continuous scale rather than a categorical system of classification” (Saunders 3: p. 1937). This contributes to the perception of class as being only a matter of status differences. Furthermore, the blurring of class lines implicit in such an approach suggests that classes do not exist in any pure state. (A similar phenomenon of intergradation of physical anthropological characteristics is, of course, cited by leftists who deny the existence of race.)

The studies cited above all employ the scheme of classes developed by Max Weber in which “Social classes...are mapped positionally in a hierarchy according to their market capacity” (Saunders 3: p. 1935). This scheme results in seeing social reality in terms of the interaction of a number of classes. Although helpful in analyzing the actions of particular socioeconomic groupings, a multi-class approach can easily overlook one factor that almost certainly contributed to the schism among the segregationists. This factor becomes evident when the situation is approached with a two-class model.

The most notorious two-class model is that of Karl Marx, in which “The crucial determinant of class is ownership (or nonownership of productive property” (Saunders 3: p. 1934). In other terms, this is the polarity between

the bourgeoisie and the proletariat or working class (Bottomore, pp. 54–5, 526–8). Marx believed that the proletariat never developed his full productive capacities, and, worse yet, was estranged from his fellow humans and from the larger society, a condition he called “alienation” (Ollman). Some trace this concept back to G. W. F. Hegel (Bottomore, pp. 10–11).

Without using Marx’s terminology, Adam Smith recognized the alienation of human powers involved in closely supervised work. The employee “whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations...has no occasion to exert his understanding or to exercise his invention.” The resulting “torpor of his mind renders him...incapable...of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment...Of the great and extensive interests of his country he is altogether incapable of judging ...” (Smith, 2: p. 782). In “barbarous societies,” where each man is self-employed,

the varied occupations of every man oblige every man to exert his capacity and to invent expedients for removing difficulties which are continually occurring. Invention is kept alive, and the mind is not suffered to fall into that drowsy stupidity which, in a civilized society, seems to benumb the understanding of almost all the inferior ranks of people (2: pp., 782–3).

Obviously, in 1860 the upper and upper-middle classes of the South were willing to engage an enemy who threatened to take that which they considered to be their property. Even the non-slaveholding whites of the South were, with few exceptions, self-employed, freeholders not too distant from Thomas Jefferson’s concept of the yeomanry. In 1954, in the South and elsewhere, the overwhelming majority of the economically active citizenry were employees working for a relatively small number of employers. In this society of two classes, employers and employees, the effects that Smith and Jefferson had feared had become apparent. Added to the class schism among the segregationists was the factor of “alienation” or “torpor” or diminished social capital. This may well have been as great a factor as differences in socioeconomic status in explaining why the Southern resistance was not more fully mobilized.

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