

Ross Barnett, “No School in our State will be Integrated,” Sept. 13, 1962 (2 pp.)

"The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution nor prohibited by it to the States are reserved to the States respectively or to the people." These are not my words. This is the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

Ladies and gentlemen, my friends and fellow Mississippians: I speak to you as your Governor in a solemn hour in the history of our great state and in our nation's history. I speak to you now in the moment of our greatest crisis since the War Between the States.

In the absence of constitutional authority and without legislative action, an ambitious federal government, employing naked and arbitrary power, has decided to deny us the right of self-determination in the conduct of the affairs of our sovereign state. Having long since failed in their efforts to conquer the indomitable spirit of the people of Mississippi and their unshakable will to preserve the sovereignty and majesty of our commonwealth, they now seek to break us physically with the power of force.

Even now as I speak to you tonight, professional agitators and the unfriendly liberal press and other trouble makers are pouring across our borders intent upon instigating strife among our people. Paid propagandists are continually hammering away at us in the hope that they can succeed in bringing about a division among us. Every effort is being made to intimidate us into submission to the tyranny of judicial oppression. The Kennedy Administration is lending the power of the federal government to the ruthless demands of these agitators. Thus we see our own federal government teamed up with a motley array of un-American pressure groups against us. This is the crisis we face today.

Principle is a little word. It is easy to speak and to spell and in print is easily overlooked, but it is a word that is tremendous in its import and meaning denoting respect and obedience to those fundamental and eternal truths that should be respected and form the way of life of all honest and right-thinking people. Expediency is for the hour; principles are for the ages. Principles are a passion for truth and right and justice, and as long as the rains descend and the winds blow, it is but folly to build upon the shifting sands of political expediency. It is better for one's blood to be poisoned than for him to be poisoned in his principles. So deep and compelling were the convictions and principles of our forefathers that they risked even death to establish this now desecrated Constitution as the American way of life and handed it to us in trust as our sacred heritage and for our preservation.

The day of expediency is past. We must either submit to the unlawful dictates of the federal government or stand up like men and tell them no. The day of reckoning has been delayed as long as possible. It is now upon us. This is the day, and this is the hour. Knowing you as I do, there is no doubt in my mind what the overwhelming majority of loyal Mississippians will do. They will never submit to the moral degradation, to the shame and the ruin which have faced all others who have lacked the courage to defend their beliefs.

I have made my position in this matter crystal clear. I have said in every county in Mississippi that no school in our state will be integrated while I am your Governor. I shall do everything in my

power to prevent integration in our schools. I assure you that the schools will not be closed if this can possibly be avoided, but they will not be integrated if I can prevent it. As your Governor and Chief Executive of the sovereign State of Mississippi, I now call on every public official and every private citizen of our great state to join me...

Source: "Integrating Ole Miss: The Controversy." John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, <http://www.jfklibrary.org/meredith/controfr.html>.