J. O. EMMERICH: STUDY IN COMMUNITY JOURNALISM

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

The University of Missouri

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Journalism

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by

Carl Lester Willis

August 1967

The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate Faculty, have examined a thesis entitled

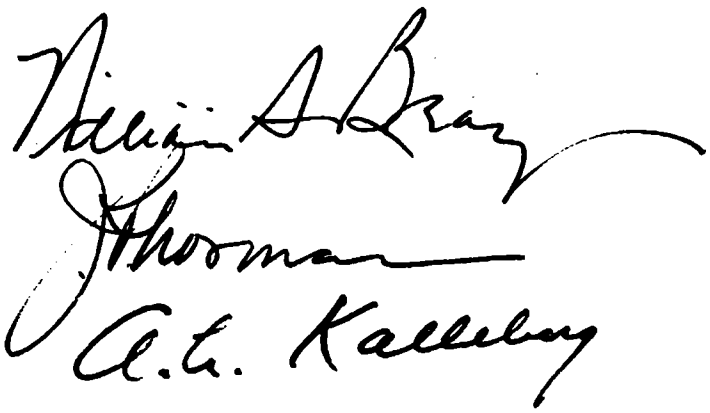
J. O. EMMERICH: STUDY IN COMMUNITY JOURNALISM

presented by

Carl Lester Willis

a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism

and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.



University of Missouri
COLUMBIA
65201

GRADUATE SCHOOL
Office of the Dean

July 18, 1967

205 Jesse Hall
Phone (449-9236 Area 314

Professor Arthur Kalleberg
Department of Political Science

Dear Professor Kalleberg:

It is customary to refer a dissertation submitted by a candidate for an advanced degree to someone who is not a member of the department in which the candidate has done his work.

Since your own research interests are somewhat similar to those of Mr. Carl L. Willis who wrote the enclosed thesis, I hope you will be willing to read it for the Graduate School. If, in your opinion, it is a respectable piece of research, will you please sign the enclosed form and return it along with the thesis to the Graduate Office not later than July 25, 1967. When the thesis has been returned, the Committee chairman will call you to schedule this student's final oral examination.

Very truly yours,

William M. Jones
Associate Dean

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> During his newspaper career at McComb no man has contributed more to the growth and upbuilding of Pike County and South Mississippi in general than has J.O. Emmerich. He is endowed with a constructive and progressive mind, ceaseless energy, and a clear vision on all matters pertaining to the public welfare. What he has contributed to the progress of Mississippi is of inestimable value.[1]

Oliver Emmerich, editor and publisher of the McComb (Miss.) Enterprise-Journal, is recognized today as one of Mississippi's most distinguished journalists. For more than forty years, he has labored patiently, but diligently, towards building his community into the social and economic showplace of Mississippi.

Bill Dorr, former editor of Publishers' Auxiliary, once wrote of Emmerich:

> Oliver Emmerich is not the type of newspaper editor Milt Canniff would choose as the subject of a comic strip.
>
> Nor is he the type of newsman that dons a trench coat and sets out in search of a Pulitzer Prize. For that reason, prizes and fame have come slowly. . . .[2]

Emmerich is certainly not a flamboyant editor. His particular success story might not be possible if he was.

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[1]Editorial in the Jackson Daily News, March 28, 1956

[2]Bill Dorr, "A Reluctant Prizewinner," Publishers' Auxiliary, April 24, 1965, p. 6.

But any lack of fame Emmerich suffers at the national level is more than offset by the respect and tribute he is paid by his community.

Emmerich was in agriculture before becoming a journalist. He received degrees in agriculture from Mississippi Agricultural College (Mississippi State University) and the University of Missouri, and began his career as a farm agent in Southwest Mississippi. He became a journalist in 1923 largely because he wanted to help the farmers of his area and recognized the press as the most expedient means for reaching the total area more quickly with his farm programs and practices.

> . . . he heard about the 51-year-old Enterprise being for sale. . . . He bought it and thus began a career which any aspiring country newspaper editor might emulate.
>
> Mr. Emmerich soon made the weekly into a daily, and later bought the McComb Journal and combined the two papers. Community service was the cornerstone of his business from the time his first edition rolled off the press.[3]

In his debut as a journalist, Emmerich emphasized his desire for a total community effort directed at improving the area's social and economic conditions. He wrote:

> A newspaper is an institution. It can render a far reaching influence. By nature of its position as chronicler of events and ideals it can join hands with

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[3]News story in the Christian Science Monitor, March 30, 1950.

Emmerich's achievements in handling local problems early in his career helped him to gain recognition and respect throughout Mississippi, the South, and, to a lesser degree, the Nation. That respect and recognition led to greater involvement in state regional problems. His activities ranged from serving as a director of the New Orleans branch of the Federal Reserve Bank in Atlanta to years of service on the Board of Trustees of the Institutions for Higher Learning in Mississippi. He advised numerous governors and was instrumental in developing part of the state's present programs in agriculture. His national recognition has been primarily in winning awards for his local efforts. Sigma Delta Chi, national journalism society for men, has recognized him more than once. Freedom's Foundation at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and the Sidney Hillman Foundation at Columbia University have paid tribute to his work. The National Editorial Association and numerous agricultural organizations have also honored him. He was one of three finalists for the Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing in 1965.

Despite the awards and honors he has received, Emmerich still finds his most cherished prize in his community; a community at long last busy at work trying to catch up with the more progressive areas of the country. The community had long been dormant, but Emmerich never quit

prodding the people to action through his editorial pages, and now he has finally begun to see the long range results of his efforts. His story is a continuing story as the resources of Southwest Mississippi are only beginning to be fully explored by the people who live there.

Emmerich, like many American journalists, has maintained a deep concern throughout his career for the practical exercise of community service journalism. Whether it is the recognition of the need for a charity program at Christmas or the improvement of pasture lands to provide grazing for better beef cattle, Emmerich has worked persistently to serve his community.

Scholars and practitioners alike have spent many hours discussing the instrinsic value in performing community service. Although they may use a different means for defining the term, they have continued to recognize the value in practically applying its theory.

Walter Williams, first dean of the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri, reflected the concern with the practical application of community service in his famed "The Journalist's Creed." He wrote,"The supreme test of good journalism is the measure of its community service."

Likewise, James S. Copley, Chairman of Copley Newspapers has written:

A good newspaper serves as the conscience of the

> public. It reflects the image of its community through. . . wise editorial counseling on community projects and problems.
>
> My kind of newspaper devotes its most immediate interest, news and comment to the local community.[5]

Copley noted that the good newspaper had to maintain a steadfast loyalty to its community while exercising patience and tolerance of the community's actions and attitudes in the hope of improving those actions and attitudes whenever and wherever possible. But his most vociferous point concerned the responsibility of the newspaper to serve as ". . . a bulwark against regimented thinking."[6]

Emmerich faced varying forms of this regimented thinking in his community with each form most often manifesting itself in some form of community depression. To offset this negative spirit of thinking in his community, Emmerich often resorted to the editorial campaign, providing a basis for discussing and explaining existing problems and carefully measuring the possible results of proposed solutions. Sometimes he would feel compelled to chastise his readers when they became a little zealous in their dogmatism. He once told them that "wisdom is accompanied by humility, not dogmatism."

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[5]James S. Copley, "The Responsibility of the Community Newspaper," Seminar, December, 1966, p. 5.

[6]Ibid., p. 6.

> Socrates said he was the smartest man in Athens because he was the one person in Athens who realized how little he knew.
>
> Today, many people are so confident of their opinions, that they can tolerate no differences of view point.
>
> We lay no claim to editorial wisdom. But we do seek to preserve a sense of editorial humility.
>
> In an attempt to gain insight into the problems of the hour, all of us should try to maintain an open mind. . . .[7]

But whatever the situation, Emmerich sought to maintain cordial relations with his community in the hope that by staying on communicative terms, he could still provide an open forum through his newspaper for the free expression of ideas. Should the community lose its respect for him, he felt the paper could not be as effective a tool.

Emmerich recognized that being a newspaperman was not always an easy task. He once told a reporter that in order to be a good country editor,

> You have to possess the hide of a rhinoceros and the memory of an ostrich. Let no one get under your skin and carry no grudges. I believe in receiving hostile ideas with hospitality.[8]

The reporter was also impressed with the newspaper's motto: "The one newspaper in the world most interested in this community."

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[7]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, May 2, 1963.

[8]Christian Science Monitor, loc. cit.

I. PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

This study is concerned with an examination of Emmerich's approach to the social and economic problems of his community with a detailed look at a major editorial campaign in each of the two areas. It reflects the concern Emmerich holds for the practical application of community service journalism and how he has labored to see his community's needs fulfilled.

The method of research involved collecting and abstracting pertinent material primarily from the files of, and oral discourse with, Oliver Emmerich. Other sources include personal correspondence with men who have worked closely with Emmerich in the two areas of this study, personal correspondence with the Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, Hodding Carter II, who is a close friend of Emmerich's, and an examination of numerous magazine and newspaper articles concerning Emmerich.

Selection, classification, and rejection of all material was performed on a basis of providing as deep an insight as possible into the problems Emmerich faced in his community and how he handled them.

In a study of this nature, it is understood that there are certain limitations to be considered. Chief of these limitations is the problem of defining and measuring

the degree of success Emmerich has had with community service journalism. In a study devoted to finding a practical meaning of community service journalism, Fred W. Troutman defined the term as follows:

> Community service is the planned effort of a newspaper to meet an economic, civic, political, social, cultural, spiritual, or moral need of its community. Action to meet such needs may be originated by the newspaper, or it may be newspaper support of action originating from other sources. Whatever the origin, action on the part of the newspaper must be sustained, and must be based upon true and unselfish evaluation by the editor and his staff of the real need and the best answer to that need. Action on the part of the newspaper in the name of public or community service can only be such if it is done in the interest of the community and not the newspaper or its staff.[9]

Yet it remains a human judgment as to whether a particular action is in the "interest" of the community. While the action may appear justifiable or even enthusiastically endorsed by the community at its conception, its long range effects could be disastrous.

Emmerich's own definition of the term reflects the same problem. "It means a newspaper's full commitment to making its community a cleaner, better and happier place for the people who reside in it."

It shall be another objective of this study to reflect the practical application of Troutman's definition of community service through examples of Emmerich's efforts to

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[9]Fred W. Troutman, Criteria of Newspaper Community Service Evaluation, (Unpublished Master's Thesis, The University of Missouri, Columbia, 1960), pp. 48-49.

reach and help his community and what the results of those efforts were.

It should be pointed out that Emmerich does not limit his geographical community to his immediate town of McComb or even strictly to his county of Pike, although major emphasis is placed on the town and county. Instead, his community extends throughout the rolling hill country of Southwest Mississippi overlapping into Louisiana. It is Emmerich's belief that if the immediate vicinity is to be prosperous, then the entire area's potentialities and needs must be considered. For that reason, Emmerich directs his ideas and appeals to the entire section in the hope of developing the area into a socially and economically prosperous "community".

II. IMPORTANCE OF THIS STUDY

There are a few editors and publishers in the South today who have championed locally unpopular causes and have gained recognition and sympathy outside their community for their efforts. But these journalists have pushed their causes so strenuously that they have estranged themselves from their communities, sacrificing their potential leadership roles toward fostering a positive and cooperative spirit, and have actually done a disservice to their communities through community negligence in favor of personal

principles.

The most important aspect of this study is to show how Emmerich recognized this potentially disastrous situation in the face of local crises, and how he recognized his need to be responsible, and yet effective, in meeting the crises. Emmerich certainly has never made an effort to sacrifice his personal principles, but he has had to be realistic in his position in favor of the community interest from time to time in the hope that his original position might be reached eventually, or at least an acceptable alternative considered. He has never demanded that his position is the only one that could be accepted by the community. Instead, he has offered his ideas while listening to the ideas of others in the hope that a common ground for finding a solution to the community's problems might be found. It seems important and useful to journalism that a study involving this type of approach to community service be made.

From a study of this nature, the following values may be derived:

(1) It may enhance a better understanding of one of Mississippi's most distinguished journalists.

(2) It may reflect the deep concern that Oliver Emmerich holds for the practical application of community service journalism, providing insight into the problems

faced by the small town newspaper editor and how community service may be implemented in the face of those problems.

(3) It may show how the editorial campaign may be implemented with extended success in the vital economic life of a community by providing a guide to, and account of, a beneficial economic program.

(4) It may contribute to the small collection of recorded material on journalism in Mississippi.

Emmerich has made great use of the editorial campaign to thwart potential or growing conflicts in his community from time to time. He has also used it to help foster new ideas and practices for the improvement of the community. It is therefore to his methodology, and to the practical application of that methodology, that this study is devoted.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THIS STUDY

This study is divided essentially into two major parts plus the introductory and summary chapters.

This first chapter provides a general introduction to the man being considered in the study, defines the purpose and importance of the study, and examines the definition and practical application of community service journalism.

Chapter VII, a summary chapter, reiterates Emmerich's achievements within the framework of this study and suggests areas for possible further study.

The first major part of the study includes Chapters II, III, and IV and deals with an explosive problem in the area of race relations. It reflects how human emotions, when unleashed into violent action, created a situation almost impossible for Emmerich to act rationally upon, but how he did so with the confidence that he could bring his community back to responsible thinking eventually. The latter major part involves Chapters V and VI and examines a different kind of problem--a problem of economics--and shows how Emmerich met that problem with a program that left even the United States Department of Agriculture amazed and the United Nations an interested observer.

Chapter II is devoted to an examination of Emmerich's social philosophy as reflected in his editorials throughout his career. It is important in the overall approach to the study in that it reflects certain changes in his own social thinking over the years; changes that have an influence on his methodology of achieving practical solutions to the local problems in regard to race. Those changes Emmerich attributes to a prolonged education in day-to-day living in his community.

Chapters III and IV are concerned with the practical application of his thinking and position as an editor at the height of a racial crisis. Chapter III explains how he learned of the potential crisis and then set out to lessen,

if not stop, its potential destruction. Chapter IV shows what happened when the troubled summer of 1964 arrived, proceeded, and ended with Emmerich seeking solutions to the struggle. Once peace had been restored, it shows how he pushed a strong editorial campaign to rebuild the community spirit of progress from the ruins of momentary despair and violence.

Chapter V reflects the magnitude of the economic deficiency of Southwest Mississippi agriculture from the time Emmerich became an editor in 1923. The chapter is important in that it reflects Emmerich's struggle over the years for implementing a diversified agricultural program as a means of helping to overcome the existing economic situation of stagnation prevalent in the area. Chapter VI is a study of the culmination of those efforts in the diversified farm program that Emmerich introduced to his readers in 1947 which gained national recognition almost immediately, and has continued as a model for agricultural development in underdeveloped areas in this country and abroad.

No previous studies of any depth have been prepared on Emmerich or his work, although numerous magazines at the state, regional, and national levels have examined and reflected his efforts in the two major areas considered within this study.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This writer wishes to express a special indebtedness to Oliver Emmerich for his gracious cooperation in helping to make this study possible, and for providing so keen an insight into the intriguing practical application of community service journalism when it is most needed, and yet seemingly unwanted, by a community slow in understanding.

A special debt of thanks must also be given to this writer's adviser, William Bray, Executive Secretary of the Missouri Press Association, who indirectly prompted this study through his efforts to inspire this type of journalism in his students; to Dr. William Howard Taft of the School of Journalism who suggested this specific study; and to Emmerich's personal secretary, Mrs. Helen Adams, for help in locating source material.

CHAPTER II

THE OBJECTIVE IS SANITY

> In the United States today, as in every age of history, we have men of fear and men of faith. Men of faith are usually on the side of history. Men of fear usually, because of their frustrations, are on the side of failure.[1]

This chapter will be concerned primarily with a study of J. Oliver Emmerich's social philosophy and how he has applied it to the problems of his community for the past 45 years. It will be devoted to a digression on how he has sought to be a stabilizing factor in his community's unsteady social problems. It will note how he has always been bitterly opposed to mob violence. It will emphasize how the use of reason and logical adjustment to conflicts have been the doctrines most often preached from his editorial columns with special emphasis on the need for greater and better education.

I. BRAHMA, LOOK UNTO THYSELF

Oliver Emmerich has stated that "the big bottleneck of progress is man's inability to accept change rapidly enough."[2] And this rejection instead of acceptance

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[1] Oliver Emmerich, "The Changing South," Mississippi Library News, December, 1965, p. 173.

[2] Ibid.

of change is most often based on a person's inability or unwillingness to comprehend those changes that are constantly occurring around him. The net result often becomes one of fear and frustration for the beholder.[3] To offset those fears and frustrations, it takes action on the part of responsible men who are willing to approach the problems and show the fearful that there is really little that cannot be overcome through faith and reason.[4]

He has written that many underlying fears exist between the Negro and the white resident in Mississippi because the two parties will not, or at least have not previously, get together and discuss their problems. One of those fears was reflected in an interview by Emmerich with Dr. E. Stanley Jones, a man who Emmerich noted as having broad international experience in the area of race relations over the past quarter of a century. Emmerich asked, "Dr. Jones, when the time arrives that the Negro achieves the right to vote in Mississippi, will he vote as a Negro or as a citizen?" Dr. Jones replied, "That depends upon whether you treat him as a Negro or a citizen."[5]

Oliver Emmerich would prefer the latter. While he

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 175.

has not always agreed with the rapidity with which social changes are demanded by some,[6] he does believe that the Negro has a place in society as a respected citizen. He once wrote that, "Everyone wants to feel that they are somebody, and that includes the Negro."[7]

But there has been more to Oliver Emmerich's desire to be a responsible editor in his community than to simply recognize the Negro as a citizen. It has involved a study of human behavior and what can be accomplished through the varying degrees of that behavior. It has included a vivid memory of how a lynching mob "threw justice to the wind" and mutilated, lacerated, and hanged a Negro man after he allegedly committed an "unmentionable crime" in the community. His reference to this kind of action from time to time when violence was threatening his community supported his reasoning that violence could do no good.[8]

Emmerich has spent many years carefully studying the racial problems in Mississippi, the South, and the United States in the hope of finding some clue as to how some of the misunderstandings and fears between the races might be

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[6]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, May 24, 1954.

[7]"Mississippi's 'Mr. Multi-Crop'," Pathfinder, January 9, 1952, p. 20.

[8]Editorial in the City Enterprise, June 17, 1927.

settled peacefully.

Emmerich views the racial problem historically. He once said, ". . . the causes of our problems were created before this generation was born. We certainly cannot blame each other for problems that were created before we were born."[9]

However, today's citizens should make an honest attempt at solving the problems. "The root of the problems is really in the fears and frustrations of those who cannot comprehend how two races can live side by side in the same society."[10] Emmerich has constantly emphasized that before anybody can sit down and discuss the problems with the intention of solving them, he must first learn to trust and respect his fellow man--black or white--and really believe there are solutions to the problems. He is convinced there are solutions to the problems and that they lie somewhere in this mutual respect. He points to man himself and says, "There is the answer, if only men would look."[11] He once discussed man's plight in solving his problems by using an old Hindu legend, whereby all men were gods, to illustrate.

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[9]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, October 31, 1961.

[10]Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal interview.

[11]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, March 18, 1933.

He said that after awhile some of the gods became wicked, and those who remained faithful sought a way to take the divine power away from the wicked permanently. During the ensuing conferences, it was suggested that the power be buried deep in the soil, that it be buried deep in the sea, or that it be placed on the highest mountain peak. All three suggestions were rejected because men would look for it in such obvious places. The chief god then suggested that the power be placed in man because man would never think to search himself for it.[12]

This legend was interwoven into Emmerich's philosophy that life is basically a matter of confliot and adjustment, with the successful man being the one who could best meet each conflict with a proper adjustment.

> We cannot exist without conflicts. We cannot live successfully without making adjustments. We make a serious mistake when we permit ourselves to become frustrated because of conflicts that are normal to life itself.[13]

Emmerich felt that if the individual would make an honest effort to understand and solve these conflicts, rather than allowing his anxiety frustrate him, then he could be of much more value to society.[14]

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, October 31, 1961.

[14] Ibid.

His approach to overcoming these conflicts was based on meeting them straightforwardly. His editorials constantly reminded the community's individuals of the need to be positive.

> A major fear which pervades the deep South is the fear of change. Change from a master-servant relationship to the concept of individual dignity. The deep South has gone through a long period of negative thinking. In facing the epochal change we have gone from one negative failure to another because we have been dominated by fear.[15]

But he also defended those who would go slow in accepting change. Emmerich said that while individuals should think constructively, they should also weigh their evidence and calculate the risks involved before proceeding.[16] It has been noted that, "Over the years he has found that most responsible people support his program of 'elevating' if not 'integrating' Negroes in his area."[17] But it is those who refuse to listen to reason that pose the most serious threats to his community.[18]

> As a citizen and an editor, he places a high value on fair play for Negroes as well as for whites in his state. He would like to have logic replace emotion in dealing with racial tensions and thinks that he is making some progress.[19]

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[15] "The Changing South," loc. cit.

[16] "Man in the News," New York Times, December 1, 1961.

[17] Ibid. [18] Ibid. [19] Ibid.

II. UP FROM '54

Although the problem of race relations for Mississippians is historic, the strife, unrest, and deep frustration that is dominant today came into its most critical phase following the United States Supreme Court decision in 1954, Brown v. Board of Education, wherein the Court ruled that "in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place," and in 1955 ordered the states to make "a prompt and reasonable start toward full compliance."[20]

Many white Southerners preferred things as they previously existed and could see little reason for changing a tradition just because a court said they must. Citizens' Councils were hastily formed to try to prevent the enforcement of the ruling. The Ku Klux Klan was revitalized to "protect the local people from the federal bureaucracy."[21] But the movements could only serve as delaying actions as there was no hope for reversing the Supreme Court decision, which placed increasing emphasis on total integration.[22]

However, the decision did not halt or prevent the

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[20]Rocco J. Tresolini, American Constitutional Law, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), p. 512.

[21]Ibid., p. 513.

[22]Ibid.

use of scare tactics in keeping the Negro submissive and responsive to the white Southerner's superior feeling. It also kept many progressive-minded white Southerners quiet.[23]

Emmerich's prediction of, and reaction to, the court's decision reflected dissent, but a desire for logic and reason on the part of all Mississippians in accepting the inevitable. In an editorial entitled "A Time To Be Cool, Calm and Dispassionate," he wrote at length.

> This is written on the morning of publication. It appears that the United States Supreme Court may rule today on the matter of segregation in the schools of this nation.
>
> The Mississippi Legislature recently enacted a law providing for equal but separate school facilities. Most of the Negro leaders in Mississippi favor the 'equal but separate' plan. . . .
>
> What will the legislature do if the Supreme Court rules out segregation today--or next week? Many schemes will be advanced. One thing is certain. There will be some segregated schools in Mississippi. They may be private schools. They may be public schools. The one thought advanced at this stage of the situation is the suggestion that everyone keep cool. There is no need of blaming local people, white or colored.
>
> The proposition will create a crisis which will require the cooperation of all of our people to solve. The big idea should be to think without prejudice or passion--to approach the problem calmly and with logic.[24]

Emmerich called for patience on the part of

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[23]Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal interview.

[24]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, May 17, 1954

Mississippians so that state leaders could have time to devise an alternative to their recently adopted "separate but equal" program in case the court disallowed the state law.[25]

He did predict, however, that the outlawing of segregation could be disastrous. He emphasized the importance of time in the adjustment to such a conflict.

> It would be a serious mistake to plunge our two races together in our schools at this hour. The Negro children would suffer most from such a situation. Again the time element is overlooked by reformers. Time is essential to apply any reform. There is need of many adjustments and the outlawing of segregation would bring disastrous conditions.[26]

Shortly before the court decision Emmerich had told his readers that "Mississippi's biggest problem today is the necessity of educating our Negroes to the requirements of good citizenship."[27]

Later, when the Negro began to demand more under the auspices of the Supreme Court decision, Emmerich provided a word of advice and caution to the Negro people. He pointed out to them that before they could be good citizens they would have to improve themselves in a number of ways.

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, May 3, 1954.

> To those Negro people who are impatient and who do not want to wait on time and understanding we must say--not brutally but with kindness--that the basis of our racial strife is the cultural lag of the Negro race. This should be cause for reflection. Mind you, we can blame no race and no individual for handicaps that are historic.[28]

He felt that the "separate but equal" school system would be the answer to the problem, or at least would be a beginning in the right direction. He believed there could be an equal opportunity for the Negro if he was given a school with facilities equal to the white students.[29] He cited the economic and cultural liability of the Negro to society as the basic reasons for the need to educate the Negroes in good citizenship.[30]

> The biggest dollar and cent problem in Mississippi is to develop the Negro as an economic asset. Changing the Negro from an economic liability to an economic asset is the one means of attaining the greatest abundance of progress in Mississippi during the immediate years ahead.
>
> The equal-but-separate school plan will help much in this field. The ultimate in the test of education is the citizen. We believe that a better type of citizenship is created through enlightenment.[31]

It was a matter of disagreement with the Supreme Court as to how that educational enlightenment could best be administered.

On May 24, 1954, Emmerich presented to the public

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[28]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, October 13, 1961.

[29]Ibid. [30]Ibid. [31]Ibid.

his own approach to "maintaining non-integrated schools in Mississippi." He first recognized the decision as a major crisis in American education and criticized those at all political levels, especially at the state level, for not thinking constructively in solving the dilemma. His plan "for the immediate years ahead" follows:

> (1) Cultivate the spirit that can develop consent for approval of the equal-but-separate schools in Mississippi.
>
> (2) Remember that a Supreme Court decision is a cold but dynamic force that cannot be set aside short of war unless conflicting views are solved through common consent.
>
> (3) Provide the spirit by which Negroes will vote as citizens and not as a Negro bloc. If Negroes vote as a racial bloc we will inevitably surrender our state into the hands of the demagogues.
>
> (4) Recognize that the preliminary discussions purposed to find a solution of our problem can, if mishandled, be the means of destroying the will for 'common consent'.
>
> (5) Remember, too, that Mississippi's own leaders are competing with an out-of-state, out-of-south leadership that is seeking to direct our Negro people into a channel contrary to the will of the majority of white people in Mississippi--and that if radical leadership succeeds we fail. We must not contribute to the success of this hostile influence by failing to recognize the forceful events confronting us at this moment.[31]

Emmerich's main concern was with the need for more cooperation among the state leaders. The omission of Negro

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[31]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, May 24, 1954.

leaders from the discussions at state level conferences was a major problem as Emmerich saw it. He placed much confidence in the Negro educators in Mississippi and felt that no solution would be forthcoming if the Negro leaders were excluded from such meetings.

> We feel that the problem will not be a severe problem for many years to come if both races are consulted. In a recent meeting of educators. . . were two Negro educators, Dr. Patterson, the Negro who for many years was president of Tuskegee Institute and Dr. Reed, dean of instruction of Fisk University, a Negro institution in Nashville, Tenn. In this meeting were the presidents of a number of southern white colleges and universities. This meeting dealt with higher education and was purposed to find the ways and means of expediting educational facilities in the university and colleges of Mississippi. The opinions of these Negro educators were sought and respected and were the result of a type of thinking that invited respect. This leads us to think that more emphasis should be made upon the proposition of race cooperation in the field of elementary and high school education in Mississippi.[32]

Emmerich's basic position was rooted in the belief that separate-but-equal facilities based on common consent of both races was the best way to solve the racial dilemma created by the court decision. He predicted this with the firm belief that Negroes must be allowed to have an "elevated" position in society whereby they might be an asset to the society as opposed to a liability.[33]

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

III. EDUCATION IN A CRISIS

To add to the anxiety of the Mississippians, Congress began to take a second look at civil rights following the 1954 de-segregation ruling by the Supreme Court. Any action on legislation, however, was usually thwarted by a Southern filibuster.[34]

But the increased interest and concern with civil rights did emphasize the need to understand the coming changes in the South. The period for practical social changes had arrived and had caught most Mississippians harboring fears and resentment at the idea of such changes. Emmerich, perhaps, recognized the severity of the crisis when some northern newspapers predicted editorially that "blood baths" were imminent once the civil rights workers reached Mississippi for the summer.[35]

Supposedly responsible politicians from the local government to Washington did little to prepare the people for the invasion. Many public statements were critical of

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[34] "Major Issues in the 1960 Civil Rights Debate," Congressional Quarterly Almanac, (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1960), p. 193.

[35] The McComb, Mississippi Story, Brochure No. 2, Prepared by the staff of the Enterprise-Journal, (McComb, Mississippi), Foreward.

the workers and did little to explain their efforts or goals.[36]

Dr. James Silver, a long-time historian at the University of Mississippi, said one of the major causes of general tension among the races in Mississippi was that the citizenry had never really been taught to think differently. He placed much of the blame on newspapermen and clergymen, both of whom occupy positions of community leadership, to inform their audiences of the need for better racial understanding.[37] He was concerned that the newspapers provided no leadership of measurable significance,[38] and, in fact, that they made a bitter denouncement of the "invaders" who had no "permanent interest" in the state.[39] It was within this framework of general misgivings and uncertainty that unprepared people replaced logic with irrational thought.[40]

At the same time, there were some journalists whose previous actions and current efforts to upgrade the Negro's social existence were viewed as a total endorsement of the

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[36] Ibid.

[37] James Silver, Mississippi: The Closed Society, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1963), pp. 53-59.

[38] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, September 21, 1964.

so-called "civil rights movement" and gained national attention with their mostly futile efforts. The motives of these papers are not being questioned here, but their net gain in helping or serving their community is.[41]

Oliver Emmerich sought desperately for a position in his community that would be responsible, and yet be effective. The staff of the Enterprise-Journal, in a forward to a brochure that would cover in detail a severe racial crisis in the community in 1964, pinpointed his dilemma.

> The difficulty of a newspaper in times of emotional conflict is to find the way to be both responsible and effective. It is easy to be irresponsible and effective. This was proved by the irresponsibility and the effectiveness of leadership during the murderous Ole Miss fiasco.
>
> Editorial responsibility can be maintained through responsible writing even if there is a void of effectiveness. But a community loss is sustained if in the

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[41] "The Eleven Year Siege," Look, November 16, 1965. p. 122; Newsweek, December 13, 1965, p. 70; and P.D. East, The Magnolia Jungle, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), foreward. Probably the most significant thing that effects Mrs. Hazel Brannon Smith, a Pulitzer Prize winner, is the fact that she has lost nearly all her white advertisers, something that can spell financial disaster for publishers in small, southern towns. ". . . when she attacked violence against Negroes, she became the target for expensive litigation. Racists laid siege to her, organized boycotts of her paper, spread rumors and hatesheets. . . . Over her head in red ink, she has kept her press alive by mortgaging the property she owns. . . . Now more than $100,000 in debt, she does not know whether she can hold out long enough to benefit from the new climate she helped create." Mr. East left a job in Hattiesburg, Miss., moved across the Leaf River to Petal, and during the late 1950's was forced out of business partially because of his outspoken position in regard to the question of racial equality.

effort the usefulness of an editor is nullified or destroyed.[42]

In a 1961 editorial that presented a positive program for Mississippi's racial dilemma, Emmerich re-emphasized a point he had made regarding Negro voting following the Supreme Court's 1954 de-segregation decision. He noted how Mississippi's white population was growing increasingly leary of the civil rights movement and the change that registration of Negro voters would make in the state's political spectrum. This, the area of voting, he felt was the best area on which to start building the Negro's future, but there were certain problems that had to be recognized and solved first.

> The sword of Damocles that dangles over Mississippi is the threat of what can happen as a result of the mass voting of illiterate and untutored individuals. Our people are as apprehensive over this threat as were the citizens of Galveston on the eve of hurricane Carla. This fear stems from earlier Mississippi history when Negroes, untutored in the responsibilities of citizenship, voted en masse and became easy prey of unscrupulous white men--politicians who used them for selfish designs and bankrupted our government.[43]

This fear of voting abuse could be offset by constructive work on the part of all Mississippians.

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[42] The McComb, Mississippi Story, Brochure No. 2, loc. cit.

[43] Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, November 3, 1961.

Instead of stimulating a feeling of disfranchisement for the Negro, the white citizenry should take a more positive and constructive attitude. The Negro should earn his citizenship through the practices of good citizenship and this could be facilitated through the efforts of white citizens who were responsible in their attitudes.

> Anti-franchise efforts founded essentially in race serve only to stimulate bloc voting. The positive step is to remove the impediments to qualified Negroes who want to vote. Qualified voters, regardless of race, recognize the handicap to good government through the unrestricted voting of the unqualified. By removing the impediments to qualified Negroes we reduce the danger of mass voting of the unqualified.[44]

As a starting point for recognizing qualified Negro voters, Emmerich suggested that the local school board of trustees, with sanctions from the State Department of Education, make it clear to all teachers, regardless of color, that they ". . . are freed from impediments to franchise." He said that if a person was qualified to teach, then he was certainly qualified to vote.[45]

Emmerich also suggested that inroads be made in offering greater employment opportunities for both Negroes and whites, that court justice be improved for the Negro, and that communications between white and Negro leaders in Mississippi be improved.[46]

Realizing that "time and understanding are the basic

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[44] Ibid. [45] Ibid. [46] Ibid.

ingredients essential to the adjustment of racial conflicts" and recognizing that ". . . our problem is not of short duration," Emmerich emphasized the need for better communications among the races. He said the only way the problem can ever be solved is for the local people to recognize the existence of the problem and then sit down together and solve it. He criticized those who believed that the answer could be fully legislated and then more-or-less forced "down their throats." His statements showed that he was firmly convinced that the answer could not come quickly, but "interracial understanding and cooperation at the local level is the only way a successful adjustment can be made to the racial conflict."[47] This point re-emphasized his belief that it is important for the editor to be both responsible and effective in his community as he must serve as a major pillar in the efforts toward constructing this better society. If the local people have lost their respect for the editor, then his lot is of little or no value in the overall spectrum of events.

This understanding and involvement is achieved largely through educational processes. It is the duty of the editor to instruct his community in the issues at hand and to instruct it as to how patience and mutual respect

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[47] Ibid.

might be the domineering force. But his educational factors are not concerned with degrees from academic institutions necessarily. Emmerich once called education "the avenue to correct conceptions" and not "just books and buildings and school teachers."[48] He has always been more concerned with the education that teaches individual responsibility and community development while simultaneously teaching how to put the two together. A person can "spend his life performing skills he has learned," but he "will seldom improve on those skills" or "be of greater value to his community" if he does not think they can be improved.[49]

Emmerich wrote that all community problems eventually resolve themselves into problems of education. "We decry war. . .(but) until the world is educated to think and is guided toward tolerance, we will continue with war, in our communities as well as on global planes."[50]

> After all, the index to civilization is the extent to which the world has changed the laborer who uses his body into the workman who uses his head.[51]

Racial cooperation and respect can be gained through education, if the education is properly administered. If members of the community are educated to the

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[48] Editorial in the McComb Enterprise, March 18, 1933.

[49] Ibid. [50] Ibid. [51] Ibid.

problems of any society and if they are taught the value of tolerance and patience, then logic can replace emotion and critical social problems can be solved.[52]

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Oliver Emmerich has always believed that before an editor can be of service to his community, he must have the respect of that community.

Unlike other examples cited in this chapter whereby individuals have been responsible without being effective or effective without being responsible, Emmerich has always felt the two must be combined as best as possible. This, he has felt, is best achieved through gradual education of the community to the problems that confront them and how they can best be solved; a reflection on much of his feelings towards the duty of the editor in his community.

Emmerich's social philosophy is simple. His basic weapons are logic and reason. His basic problem is teaching adjustment to a given conflict. He has never felt that social changes could be legislated, but that those changes would have to come about through gradual tolerance and acceptance on the part of both races. Cultural traditions have had their influence in hindering the social changes

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[52] Ibid.

as the white Southerner has sought to slow or stop the decaying of the master-servant relationship.

The Negro has contributed to the problem by being slow to grasp, and take advantage of, the freedom granted him during the Civil War. Therefore, Emmerich has reasoned logically, members of both races must now work together to make sure that proper adjustments are made to the changing social trends in America today. Otherwise, the conflict continues with emotion and hate playing the key roles.

His first step toward solving the problem was to recognize the Negro as a citizen and help to educate him in the duties of that citizenship. Emmerich's editorials have reflected a desire to see better educational opportunities for both races in Mississippi; especially since the two must work together for future progress.

Emmerich has not tried to build an ideal society. Instead, he has worked quietly with members of both the Negro and white races in his community with the hope that a better community can be developed. His social philosophy has gradually changed over the years into a moderate degree of tolerance for both races. Much of this change has been attributed to education; an attributive change that he would like to see occur in the rest of his community.

CHAPTER III

FIVE MONTH SUMMER IN DIXIE

> Oliver Emmerich is a remarkable man. His own brand of public service has been difficult to perform because he publishes a newspaper in the most morally and spiritually bankrupt area of Mississippi.[1]

Chapter III consists of a close examination of a crucial period in the history of McComb. It presents Emmerich's plan to cope with visiting civil rights workers, reaction to the plan, and the violence that followed. It indirectly raises the question of how much community service is rendered when an editor makes an effort to prevent violence, only to see that effort rejected. Is it to no avail when that effort is rejected and violence prevails?

I. A PLACE AND A TIME

One of the most difficult situations in which a newspaper editor ever finds himself is when there is tremendous emotional conflict in his community. He realizes he must be responsible to his readers by reporting and explaining the prevailing situation as best as possible if he plans to be of service to his readers. He also realizes that any effort on his part may be misinterpreted in the excitement of the moment.

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[1]Statement by Hodding Carter, personal correspondence, October 29, 1966.

This was precisely the situation in which Emmerich found himself in the spring of 1964. Congress was in the process of passing an emotionally-contested civil rights bill, and Mississippians were already feeling the sting from the pending legislation.

Of more importance to the citizens of McComb and Pike County, however, were the widespread reports that a planned invasion of Mississippi by civil rights workers was imminent. Many of the reports were charged with tension and predicted violence during the forthcoming summer in the Magnolia State. Such statements had a tendency to create fear and frustration in the minds of many local citizens.[2]

It soon became common knowledge that the Congress of Racial Equality, The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People would cooperate in various phases of "The Mississippi Project." The "project" was supposed to aid Mississippi Negroes in learning about their rights as United States citizens. Many local residents would see the "project" as something else; an invasion of their sovereignty by outsiders.[3]

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[2]Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal interview.

[3]Ibid.

The preparation by the national and regional organizations for the civil rights invasion was met by counter preparation by Mississippians. In a publication produced by the staff of the Enterprise-Journal, it was noted:

> . . . both state and local governments joined in the plans of resistance. The legislature was called into special session. New laws were enacted. The strength of the State Highway Patrol was doubled. Auxiliary police organizations were developed at the local level. Sheriffs' offices employed extra deputies.
>
> There were no visible indications of an effort to encourage restraint. Political leadership said little about the need of exercising moderation at a time when the community powder keg was readied for an explosion.
>
> Governor Paul Johnson was asked to make his policy for the summer known to the people. He replied, 'The more you talk about the mountain, the harder the mountain is to climb.'[4]

Adding more confusion to the already existing uncertainties was the increased activities of underground movements such as the Ku Klux Klan, citizens' committees, resistance movements, and even so-called block committees such as Help, Inc.; an organization created to protect the neighborhood in one area of McComb.[5]

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[4]The McComb, Mississippi Story, Brochure No. 2, loc. cit.

[5]Hodding Carter, So The Heffners Left McComb, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1965), p. 67.

The citizens of McComb would probably have been content to have left well enough alone that summer, but a small percentage would bring shame to the community.

Hodding Carter, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist from Greenville, Mississippi, and a noted author on subjects related to the Lower Mississippi River country, provided a view and opinion of the McComb and Pike County area that offered, perhaps indirectly, some reasons why he felt the forthcoming violence was inevitable. McComb was a railroad town and Pike County was sawmill and dairy country. It was not the plantation country that was often associated with Mississippi's tradition. McComb was the southern city for the shop and roundhouse of the Illinois Central Railroad.[6]

Carter said he recognized McComb as a more industrialized town than most of the other principal Mississippi communities, but:

> McComb lacks the antiquity and the aristocratic antecedents of a Natchez, the midwestern industrial enlightenment of a Tupelo, the cultural eminence and cosmopolitan tolerance of Greenville, the political sights and sounds and odors of Jackson, and the relaxed amorality of Biloxi; the stamp of the roundhouse and the small farm's cotton patch bite too deep for any close identification with the older communities. Pike County, in which McComb lies, is as violent in its past and its present as any in Southwest Mississippi, the state's most turbulent region.

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[6] Ibid., pp. 52-53.

> Usually the Pike County frontiersmen preferred from the beginning to settle their differences with rifle or pistol or knife and sometimes with all of these. They did not fight by a code duello, demonstrating instead for 150 years a talent for night riding and ambush, for the sudden lunge of a knife to the throat or the back, and a fondness for odds of ten to one in the aggressor's favor.
>
> But most Pike Countians are good people, churchgoing, friendly, save when they become suspicious of the stranger.[7]

It was this suspicion of the stranger that brought on agony and frustration for the responsible leaders of McComb in 1964. They realized immediately upon learning of the planned civil rights invasion to register voters that McComb was not ready and violence was highly probable.[8]

II. COME SEPTEMBER

Emmerich's hope was to prevent violence by explaining what the invasion involved. He sought the position of state and local officials as to what official policy would be. He was assured that law and order would prevail. He sought the least tangible bit of advice from responsible local citizens that might help to offset the fears of the rest of the community.[9]

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[7] Ibid., p. 57.

[8] Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal interview.

[9] The McComb, Mississippi Story, Brochure No. 1, Prepared by the staff of the Enterprise-Journal, Spring, 1965, Foreward.

In his first editorial of the campaign on May 25, 1964, Emmerich presented a general idea of what could be expected from the "invaders" and stated his purpose of writing the editorials.

> The first editorial in this Enterprise-Journal series has two purposes: (1) To call to the attention of all of our people the possibility of a summer invasion into Mississippi, and (2) to suggest that all of us think in terms of what is the best procedure for our people to take when and if the invasion happens.[10]

He quoted the New York Times as saying that on the basis of reports, the student campaigners were "seriously motivated, emotionally stable individuals, intent on participating in social change."[11] Emmerich emphasized the demands made on the individuals who would be coming to Mississippi to be responsible citizens in the hope that his community would not label them as beatniks. He realized the need for mutual respect between the outsiders and members of his community to maintain order.

Emmerich's desire for reason and logic was reflected in his projection of the pending crisis from the present to the end of the summer. If only the local citizens would look ahead also, they might realize the need for reason.

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[10] Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, May 25, 1964.

[11] Ibid.

> There are three summer months--June, July, and August. Then September 1.
>
> When September 1 arrives the summer will be gone--and if the predicted invasion should have developed, it will by then be over.
>
> At this stage of the development we should all be thinking of September 1. When the day arrives we will look back on 'the long hot summer' and say one of two things--'We were smart,' or we will say in retrospect, 'We were outsmarted.'
>
> We will say with satisfaction on September 1, 'We are proud that we acted with restraint and helped our state' or we will say with regret, 'The things we did were unsound and unfruitful.'[12]

The main thing at the moment was to be calm and avoid doing anything that might spark violence. What should the local citizens do? How should they proceed? Emmerich said the first thing they should do was to know what Mississippi's official policy would be to govern the situation. If the state had a responsible and effective program, local citizens should have little about which to worry.[13] Emmerich included a 10-point policy statement from Governor Paul B. Johnson's office along with his editorial on state law enforcement. The policy said essentially that whatever emergency might arise, it would be handled by law enforcement officers. It called for the

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, May 26, 1964.

avoidance of emotionalism during such an emotional time.[14]

One specific point in the policy was written so ambiguously, however, that it deserves mention here. It said, "Individuals who impede the normal operations of society will be whisked off to jail."[15] It became obvious to Emmerich that as soon as the civil rights workers arrived, their mere presence and purpose would impede "normal operations." But the policy was generally acceptable and did give the residents of McComb and Pike County, as well as the rest of the state, something in which they could place their confidence. Without the policy, Emmerich said, only chaos could prevail. He suggested that the people study the policy carefully ". . . now--today, before tempers are aroused and resentment becomes deep-seated."[16]

In the third editorial of the series, Emmerich focused attention on the local law enforcement plan and what the people could expect to reinforce their confidence in reasonable action.

Again the theme was set: "The people must realize that the enforcement of the law must be trusted in the hands of experienced and trained law enforcement officers, irregardless of personal feelings."[17]

Emmerich placed confidence in Sheriff R. R. Warren

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[14] Ibid. [15] Ibid. [16] Ibid. [17] Ibid.

and called him an "experienced, well-trained law enforcement officer."[18] He felt the rest of Pike County's citizens could do the same.

Sheriff Warren's statement of policy pleaded with the people to remain calm and leave the matters of law to those who know them best. He emphasized that if people should come to the courthouse to register to vote, a special area would be set aside for this purpose and that every effort would be made to ". . . expedite such procedures with order and decorum."[19]

The sheriff's firmness and confidence convinced Emmerich that he would at least be tactful in his approach to any problems that might arise. Emmerich felt the people had been given adequate assurance that any crisis could be handled efficiently, and yet tactfully.[20]

City officials emphasized a new angle when they stated: "In enforcing the law we will see to it that we ourselves observe the law."[21] Emphasis was also placed on maintaining orderly demonstrations.

Emmerich was impressed that all three levels of law enforcement agencies were emphasizing that people should leave the enforcement of laws up to the proper authorities.

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[18] Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, May 27, 1964.

[19] Ibid. [20] Ibid. [21] Ibid.

He was more impressed that the local officials were willing to allow the potential demonstrations and registration of voters as long as both were done in an orderly manner.[22]

In the last editorial of the series, Emmerich turned to the people of McComb and Pike County and pleaded with them to follow the suggestions made by the law enforcement officials. He said, "Our choice is quite simple: We can be smart or be outsmarted."[23] As a last precautionary measure, Emmerich emphasized that federal troops could be brought into McComb should violence erupt as it did at the University of Mississippi two years before. Nothing good could come from such a situation and only harm and disrespect would be brought upon the community should chaos gain the upper hand.[24]

> With the assurance of elected officials that they are prepared to meet any situation which may arise, the cue for the rest of us is to relax. . . .
>
> Let the law enforcement officers handle the situation for us. They are willing. They stand commited. They insist that they are prepared. What more could we ask?
>
> May we on September 1 look back on the summer of 1964 and be able to truthfully say, 'We met a crisis with maturity. We did not panic. We exercised restraint. We upheld the dignity of the law. We met a challenge intelligently.

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[22]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, May 28, 1964.

[23]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, May 29, 1964.

[24]Ibid.

> If we can say this on September 1 then we will know that we successfully stood the test; that we proved ourselves to be smart, and that we were not outsmarted.[25]

Emmerich's plea for calm and non-involvement in handling the crisis went out to his readers, but the degree of its effectiveness can be only speculation. One can only examine what followed that plea on the part of Emmerich and his community. Once the crisis was upon the community for real, there was tension and an immediate "strained atmosphere."[26] One of the more depressing aspects of the crisis for Emmerich was the fact that the "responsible citizens" who had spoken out earlier had become lost somewhere in the ensuing turmoil. For Emmerich, the next three months would allow him little more than to work quietly with a few other community leaders, and to print an occasional editorial calling for patience, for little could have been achieved other than to provoke a vicious wrath upon himself had he fought the community doggedly in their violent reaction.[27]

Hodding Carter said the situation in McComb deteriorated quickly upon the arrival of civil rights workers.

> The barbershop of the county NAACP leader already had been bombed, three nosy Northern journalists had been dragged from their cars and beaten. . . .

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal interview.

[27] Ibid.

> Pike County had also shown up well in a state-wide cross-burning competition.[28]

Carter added that while Emmerich's editorials served a most useful purpose and were based on good logic and reasoning, the fears and apprehensions building inside many of the local residents were more than Emmerich could overcome.

> At the beginning of the summer of 1964, McComb was a community hag-ridden by fear; fear of a skirmish line of Northern students coming to spread foolish notions about civil rights and to plant seeds of insurrection in the heads of the good darkies (sic) of the city and Pike County and Southwest Mississippi; fear of what might happen next anywhere; fear of the Ku Klux Klan; fear of economic disaster for the individual and the town.
>
> Through the long days and longer nights most of the people of McComb mourned, but not openly, over the bombings and the burnings and the beatings which destroyed the once attractive image of their town. The perpetrators were but a handful. But those who did nothing about it would make up, until the leaves of autumn began to fall, all but a tiny fraction of the citizenry.[29]

III. VIOLENCE BY NIGHT

On July 2, 1964, the Civil Rights bill before Congress became law. The reaction in Mississippi was swift in coming. Governor Paul B. Johnson openly challenged the law and urged Mississippians against compliance until the

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[28]Carter, So The Heffners Left McComb, op. cit., p. 62.

[29]Ibid., pp. 66-67.

law could be tested in court, providing another delaying tactic.[30]

Emmerich took a more philosophical approach to the new law.

> Every generation of Americans has been confronted with problems, tragic and frustrating problems. But it can be said of the American nation that it has been able to develop the kind of leadership which could rise up and meet its crises. This generation will be no exception. Leadership may be slow in coming, but it will rise up. And whatever our problems may be, they will be overcome. This is the American tradition.[31]

However, his optimism did not totally exclude his deep-rooted concern over possible violence resulting from the passage of the new law. He remembered that during the 1962 integration crisis at the University of Mississippi resentment and hostility soon became violence at its worst. During that crisis he wrote:

> . . . responsible journalism requires the endorsement of legal procedure. . . .
>
> Politics is the science of group living. Governments are the fruits of the successful application of this science. Without law and order governments cannot exist. And without government men return to the fang and the claw of the jungle.
>
> Violence is compellingly dramatic. It begets dramatic discussion. And dramatic discussion in turn

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[30]Associated Press dispatch in Enterprise-Journal, July 3, 1964.

[31]Oliver Emmerich, "Highlights in the Headlines," Enterprise-Journal, July 3, 1964, p. 1.

> begets added violence. At this critical moment we need to temper our appraisals and our discussions.
>
> The tragic fact stands that violence on the campus has in no way altered the legal aspects of Mississippi's situation. Inescapable and persistent is the truth--that Mississippi can achieve nothing outside the realm of legality. To ignore this fact is but to incite further violence and defeat.[32]

Mississippi was again faced with possible violence regarding their racial traditions. By explaining part of the new civil rights program, Emmerich hoped that violence could be avoided. Some sporadic violence had already been recognized in Pike County in regard to the arrival of the civil rights workers, but nothing serious had developed yet. In his analysis of the new civil rights law, he recognized that it was the law and that it must be obeyed until legal means could be taken to have it changed.

> The civil rights bill has become the civil rights law. This implies an agonizing decision for many people.
>
> Mississippians opposed the legislation. They still oppose the idea. They reserve the right to try to change it. . . .
>
> This places the full impact of responsible citizenship upon the conscience of every citizen. The decision becomes personal and individual.[33]

Emmerich also raised a number of pertinent questions in regard to the new program, and offered what

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[32]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, October 4, 1962.

[33]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, July 6, 1964.

seemed to be the only logical answer.

> Agonizing questions arise. . . . Can we refuse to comply with the law without rejecting the basic American concept of majority rule? Can we ignore the rules of law and order upon which our government of a free people is established. . . ?
>
> Does the individual citizen have a choice--an option between compliance and non-compliance to the law? The penalties are severe.
>
> A newspaper could say defiantly in protest to the law, 'Let us rise up in arms against it.' But could this be said responsibly?
>
> Good men could say, 'Let us fight this thing to the bitter end.' But inevitably the question would arise, 'What end'?
>
> Some phases of the law, we believe, will be held by the courts to be invalid. Other phases of it doubtlessly will be held constitutional. In the interim we must hope for the maximum in patience and common sense.[34]

Again, Emmerich displayed his optimism that violence could be avoided. Although the questions involved were grave, he sincerely believed that they could be overcome with patient efforts. He wrote that American history was filled with conflicts and crises, but that those crises had been overcome by resourcefulness and acumen. Emmerich was hoping the same resourcefulness would get his community through the summer of 1964 without total disaster striking and anarchy ensuing.[35]

While the tension continued to mount in Pike County, the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO),

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[34] Ibid. [35] Ibid.

directing the civil rights work in the area, had set up headquarters in Burgland, the Negro section of town.

The July 8 issue of the Enterprise-Journal carried a page one story written by Charles B. Gordon that signaled the arrival of the long summer Emmerich had dreaded. The COFO headquarters had been blasted the night before by a "mysterious explosion." Gordon reported:

> A strong, mysterious explosion wrecked a room at a Negro's house in which a mixed group of 10 civil rights workers slept in McComb early today. . . .
>
> The blast was the fifth of somewhat similar nature in the McComb area in recent weeks.[36]

Emmerich felt that the number of persons actually involved in the violence must be small, but were reflecting their ignorance on the rest of the community. Thus, if the community rallied, it could make the violators look bad and perhaps they would quit before someone got hurt.[37]

On July 14, Mayor Gordon Burt issued a statement on behalf of his office and the city's board of selectmen in regard to the presence of civil rights workers and their statement that a "freedom school" would be established in McComb. The "freedom school" was not explained or described, but Mayor Burt's statement said essentially that law and order would be maintained. He asked that citizens

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[36]News story in the Enterprise-Journal, July 8, 1964.

[37]Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal interview.

recognize this and place their confidence in the proper authorities.[38]

The statement was adopted immediately by the McComb Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary club, and the Pike County Board of Supervisors. Emmerich was hopeful following their action, but the general situation in the community grew steadily worse. Churches became targets for night riders with their bombs and fire.[39]

Emmerich's hope faded quickly, and he brought up the subject of martial law. He noted that President Lyndon B. Johnson would not hesitate to place the area under martial law if the violence continued.[40] He recalled how McComb had lived under martial law once before when the Illinois Central Railroad had been struck in 1911 and rioting followed. Emmerich described in vivid detail how machine guns were placed strategically around the city, soldiers patroled the streets, and rigid curfews were enforced.[41] He assured his readers that it was a situation they would not enjoy seeing or experiencing.

But the violence continued. One only had to look

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[38]News story in Enterprise-Journal, July 14, 1964.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Oliver Emmerich, "Highlights in the Headlines," McComb Enterprise-Journal, July 20, 1964, p. 1.

[41]Ibid.

at the front page of the Enterprise-Journal on almost any given day during July and August to see what kind of bomb had exploded where during the previous night. For example, on July 22 a front page story told how fire had destroyed a Negro church. Two days later, a similar story reported how an attempt had been made to destroy another Negro church.

When September arrived, there was little sign that the violence had reached its peak. If anything, the tempo was being increased. The lead headline on September 8 told of four more places that had been bombed the previous night.

Despite the lack of arrests, local law enforcement officials told Emmerich that serious efforts were being made to bring the violators to justice.[42] They said money was needed to raise a reward for the arrest and conviction of any and all of the violators. Here was Emmerich's first real chance to appeal directly to the public for a specific and practical action. A full page advertisement ran on September 28 requesting donations to the reward fund. The response was overwhelming. In less than three days, $5,000 had been raised. Why the reward money had not been requested long before late September was never made clear.

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[42]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, September 25, 1964.

[43]News story in the Enterprise-Journal, October 1, 1964.

By October 5, the arrests had risen to 10 and a couple of convictions had been asserted. The community was slowly returning to somewhat more normal conditions. People were beginning to breath more easily again. But the summer had taken its toll. Loss of property was high, and, although there had been no deaths, numerous insults and a few personal injuries did occur. The image of McComb had probably suffered most, however, at the hands of a few persons who knew better, but could not act better.[44]

The violent action in Pike County reflected, even if in a slight way, what Dr. James Silver had written about many people throughout the state following the University of Mississippi racial crisis in 1962.

> The Insurrection against the armed forces of the United States at the University of Mississippi on September 30-October 1, 1962, was the inevitable response of the closed society of Mississippi to a law outside itself.[45]

Although the closed society was not a universal phenomenon, it did show what harm a few closed minds could do. It was largely to this minority group that Emmerich made his greatest appeal while addressing his entire community--a person has the right to disagree with a law if he chooses, but he should do it within the framework of laws.

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[44]Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal interview.

[45]Silver, op. cit., p. 3.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Emmerich sought to sooth the conscience and temper of his community in May, 1964, prior to the influx of civil rights workers. Any alternate effort might well have spelled total disaster for his community.

If he had belabored the point about the civil rights workers coming to McComb, the people could have easily become more confused over so much talk. Yet, if he had failed to try and prepare the citizenry for the invasion, panic might well have prevailed and more violence would have hit the community than actually did.

Emmerich went to the proper authorities--from state to local officials--and asked how they planned to handle the pending invasion. With the officials' assurance that they would maintain law and order while respecting individual rights, he went to the people with his plea for calm and patience.

He certainly could not have prevented a few from their violent acts if they were bent on doing such things. Words seldom prevent such actions. All he could do was to appeal to the general citizenry and ask that they remain as dispassionate as possible. He sought to familiarize local citizens with the problem at hand, suggested how it could be met best, and hoped that when the crisis had passed, damage would not be excessive. The area's reputation would be at

stake as would be the lives of many local residents.

The number of churches bombed or burned during the summer could certainly do no credit to the community. But the rapidity with which the reward money was raised did reflect how quickly the community wanted to see order restored once they were given the chance to express themselves.

Whether or not Emmerich had a choice at the beginning of the summer was doubtful. If he wanted to be responsible, he realized he had to go to the people with the problem as well as a logical solution and hope that they would accept it. Most of the residents did buy it. Others did not. The result was a community caught in the violence of the moment, trying desperately to be patient and hoping for a quick end to the crisis.

Even a colonel sometimes has problems instilling confidence into his disciplined soldiers at the height of a battle, but he knows he must try. This is what Emmerich recognized and did.

Most of the community did wait patiently for the right moment, and when it finally did come, however belatedly, the community reacted quickly and successfully. Perhaps this was an indication in itself as to how well most of Emmerich's community had listened.

CHAPTER IV

ALL FOR SOCIETY AND MEN

> Oliver is a doer and an optimist who can weigh the potential good against the present evil and find the scales tilted in favor of the good.[1]

The summer of 1964 was long and trying for the residents of McComb and Pike County. There must have been numerous times when they would have spoken out against the violence, but because of the terror that prevailed they had to consider their personal safety first.[2] The summer would be long gone before the impact of its violent days and nights would be ended and law and order be restored.

This chapter examines Emmerich's role in trying to restore that order to a community caught in disorder and his faith that order would be quick in coming. He presented a series of editorials that sought to halt terrorism and help rebuild the community's spirit of progress.

I. SHACKLES OF HATE

The long summer of violence began to subside around October 1, but it was two weeks later before Emmerich felt he could possibly rationalize again with his community.

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[1]Carter, personal correspondence, loc. cit.

[2]Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal interview.

On October 14, Emmerich began his series of editorials directed at restoring the community's health. In the first editorial, he chastised the community for its irresponsibility during the crisis. But he promised to help rebuild the community if any interested individuals were willing to cooperate.

> Because of human frailty in a time of crisis the McComb area can be characterized by a vast void; a void where responsible action should prevail.
>
> Negro churches have been burned. Negro homes have been bombed--and the homes of some white people as well. A Negro store has been dynamited. And with a sense of irresponsibility we have blamed the Negroes for the burnings, the bombings and the dynamiting.[3]

Rather than allow such thinking and action to continue, Emmerich began with a call for individual self-examination of attitudes toward "law and order, hate and goodwill, and the basic concepts of American justice." With point-blank certainty, he wrote, "Inescapably McComb problems are the problems of McComb people. And McComb people must solve them!"[4]

Emmerich's editorials carried an urgency that keyed on the crucial need for the community to regain its health immediately. His motivation was compound: He was afraid

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[3] Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, October 14, 1964.

[4] Ibid.

the community, known as one of Mississippi's more industrialized areas, would suffer greatly at the bargaining table for more industry; and he was concerned about the individual dogmatism that had created the decadent situation in which the community found itself.

Emmerich had campaigned for more industry from the time he became an editor in 1923, for it was a major part of his diversified economy theme. His statistics constantly emphasized the attributes of the community, but now he used them to remind the community of its need to maintain an attractive image. Viewing the problem in terms of history, he noted that before the Civil War, New Orleans "had 50 per cent more banking resources than did New York," the per capita income of the South was "25 per cent greater than that of other United States areas," and "the South possessed 49 per cent of the nation's total wealth."

> The story of this fabulous wealth becomes more poignant when we consider why we lost it, how fast, and the terribly long years required for the South to return to economic stability.[5]

Emmerich noted that seventy-five years after the recording of such impressive figures, the South's wealth "had dropped to 10 per cent" and banking resources "dropped to a poverty-despairing 15 per cent."[6]

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[5]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, October 15, 1964.

[6]Ibid.

Something that concerned Emmerich even more was the ". . . never-ending exodus of talented young men and women of the South. . . ."

> No region in the world has a more astounding historical richness in institutions, industries and enterprise--had our honored forebearers just matched their courage with restraint, their sacrifice with the inhibitions of wisdom and their fortitude with moral persuasion.[7]

Emmerich turned to the other major problem, intolerance on the part of many individuals, and said such dogmatism was imbedded in what was commonly called sacred cows. He said Mississippi's sacred cows were first, such unrealistic ideas as "nullification and interposition."[8] Once these ideas had been excluded from the legal boundaries of good government, the state's people came up with a hypothetical belief ". . . that the United States Constitution does not uphold the right of franchise to Negro citizens."[9]

Mississippians would speak out adamantly in defense of the United States Constitution, but would refuse to include the Negro in that defense. Emmerich found this defense to be inconsistent and "of irresponsible thinking."[10]

> To be responsible we must recognize that the unrealistic sacred cow is in conflict with the reality of constitutional law.[11]

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, October 16, 1964.

[9] Ibid. [10] Ibid. [11] Ibid.

He quoted the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution to show the absolute inconsistency in the Mississippians' defense of their sacred cow. Emmerich was more practical, however, and faced the realities written into the Constitution.

> Whether or not what is written into the Constitution pleases us one of two decisions is inescapable--inescapable if we choose to meet the problem responsibly.
>
> This choice is between the sacred cow and the Constitution of the United States. We must hold to our often-mentioned concept of constitutional government or admit that we are not as loyal to it as we at first thought.
>
> The idea of making a choice aroused fears which disturbed us.[12]

But Emmerich did not cast aside the fears that enveloped the local residents. Instead, he compared them to the fears and frustrations of the editor who had to face up to such a serious crisis. As long as he wrote editorials without getting a sound and reasonable reaction, he could not be convinced that his efforts were paying off. He summarized the vexation when he commented on combining responsibility and effectiveness.

> It is easy to take a responsible stand and be completely ineffective. It is even easier to be irresponsible and effective. Gov. Ross Barnett proved this to be true in the Ole Miss crisis.[13]

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, October 19, 1964.

This was not what Emmerich was trying to attempt. He was looking for a more practical approach to the crisis as a responsible journalist. Emmerich wrote that many people actually believed that ". . . editorial courage is the exclusive answer to a newspaper's responsibility in moments of tumultuous frustration and bewilderment."[14] While he recognized courage as "a factor in editorial statesmanship," Emmerich felt there were other factors to consider.

He compared his plight to a quote by General Omar Bradley, who said, "'We must chart our course by the stars and not by the lights of every passing ship.'" Emmerich added that sometimes, however, ". . . the nights are dark and the stars are hidden behind the angry clouds of emotional reaction." When this happens, even the stars are shaken from their absolute moorings.

> The weapons of the leaders in any field, the newspaper included, are the potential appeals to reason, truth and principle. This is the needed approach in the long, hard run to influence people and to help guide them to safety in moments of emotional strain.[15]

But Emmerich was quick to add that while newspapers must be responsible to themselves and to the public, ". . . so must readers be responsible readers."[16]

> The Enterprise-Journal requests that you as readers work with us as a newspaper and that together we strive to think through our problems in an effort to restore community confidence.

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[14] Ibid. [15] Ibid. [16] Ibid.

> The recognition of the need is inescapable. We must encourage community tranquility, quicken the pace of progress and remove from the face of our national image the ugly scars that mar it.[17]

II. THE THEME IS RESPONSIBILITY

After challenging individuals to consider their personal attitudes toward the crisis and asking for the removal of certain sacred cows, Emmerich began to construct a basic program around which logic could revolve. His first effort was the pose a question: "Are we in conflict with law?" He said that while this was a single question, a great lesson was to be learned from the answer. The lesson was that "Violence is inevitable when people are in conflict with the laws of society."[18]

> Tranquility cannot exist in a community where the thoughts and the acts of the people are in conflict with the laws of their country. . . .
>
> Accordingly we must ask ourselves: Are we in the McComb area in conflict with the laws enacted by the Congress of the United States?
>
> The question of the law is not debatable. Southern senators debated the bill for three months, the longest United States Senate filibuster in history, because they knew that once a majority of the Senate approved the bill that it would become the law of the land.
>
> The choice then is between the violence of

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, October 21, 1964.

> conflict with law or a recognition of the need of adjustment to a situation created by the constitutional processes of our country.[19]

Emmerich commended those leaders in the state who encouraged citizens to uphold the laws of the land, namely, the Board of Directors of the Jackson Chamber of Commerce. But he criticized the Legislature and Governor Paul Johnson for advising the people ". . . to ignore the law of the land, refusing to comprehend that such action would arouse violence and create the potential climate for martial law." Emmerich admitted that he did not necessarily agree with all parts of the new law, but he felt that it was the law and should be upheld until it could be changed, if the people wanted it changed. He said he could see how some individuals, untutored in self-restraint, could resort to fear and violence. But the thought of public officials making such comments that confused and frustrated the untutored individual was appalling.[20]

Emmerich said that the ultimate question to be considered was most simple:

> Shall we uphold government by law or government by men? This is the nagging question which repeatedly has presented itself whenever free men in history have been torn apart by emotional conflict. Where men today are free it is because this question was answered as free men must.[21]

Emmerich proceeded to break down the problem even

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[19] Ibid. [20] Ibid. [21] Ibid.

further by examining some of the more specific causes within or outside the law. He said the lack of communication between the races and within the separate races contributed greatly to the immediate failure of the community. As a token solution at that late date, communication had to be restored.

> Communications can be restored between white and Negro citizens through the mutual recognition that everyone loses when relationships are hostile. But all of us must understand that effective communications cannot be achieved on the basis of the master-servant relationship.[22]

Emmerich based the restoration of communications on two factors: The importance and recognition of human dignity of all men and the extension of common courtesy to all concerned. He blamed political leaders for having failed in emphasizing such factors before. He accused them of having made "political capital" at the expense of responsible leadership and of leading the citizens from one defeat to another through negation.[23]

He added that while McComb and Pike County residents had suffered greatly during the past summer, things would get worse if responsible leadership did not appear soon. He cited the fact that another part of the new civil rights legislation--equal employment--would go into effect

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[22]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, October 22, 1964.

[23]Ibid.

shortly. Once the two races began working together closely in factories and retail stores, there would be a demand for a definitive communication between them in order that personal grievances did not catapult into a tense racial problem. It was apparent that the restoration of communication between the community leaders of both races was mandatory if future problems and tensions were to be checked.[24]

Emmerich became more persistent with each editorial and actually questioned the existence of adequate leadership in the community. He asked, "Who in our community can make a positive program a reality?"[25]

Although he did not expect specific answers, he did show his optimism by saying that there were many leaders in the community, if they would only be recognized at that critical moment. Beginning with bankers and continuing through a list that also included lawyers, industrial workers, teachers, insurance people, railroad men, ministers, farmers, doctors, and housewives, he pleaded for evidence from these areas that would show visible leadership.[26]

Emmerich noted the "ugly national image" of the McComb area and asked what the people were going to do

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, October 26, 1964.

[26] Ibid.

about it; continue with the deterioration of the community or be willing to help find a solution? Emmerich maintained his quizzing indefinitely and sporadically in an effort to provoke some responsible thinking on the part of the community leadership. He would hint at the possibility of an economic boycott of the city by Negroes, and question the desire of the people to see violence continue; providing suggestive ideas and potential hazards that community leadership would have to eventually recognize and counter.[27]

Emmerich provided a 12-point checklist of "reasons for fear or distrust" which McComb residents could read and decide for themselves what was causing the community tension and how it could best be eased. He based it largely on his main theme of reason and what happens when that effective tool has been rendered ineffective by a few irrational persons bent on all or nothing in a compromise situation.[28]

III. A TIME FOR DECISIONS

The first significant breakthrough to positive action came on November 1 when the city board of mayor and select-

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[27]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, October 27, 1964.

[28]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, October 28, 1964.

men agreed to "check into what had been described as 'harassment arrests.'" The case in point involved the arrest of 13 persons on charges of "violation of public health regulations."

> Harassment arrests have been known to occur in Mississippi. They usually are founded upon technical violations of law but which are made not primarily because of the law violations but because of public antagonism to the individuals arrested.[29]

While no blame was assessed for previous instances, including the example above, the Board decided that ". . . no arrests of the kind which could be described as 'harassment arrests' will be made in the future without the unanimous approval of the police committee of the City Board."[30]

If Emmerich thought this action was a step toward improved relations in the community, he must have reacted quite differently when his probing questions got a response from someone who fired a rifle shot through one of the front plate glass windows of the Enterprise-Journal. Obviously, there was at least one person who still did not believe in Emmerich's approach to the problems. Emmerich defended his position and pleaded for a reasonable hearing. He reiterated that "responsible journalism is not something to try to be curbed with intimidation."

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[29]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, October 28, 1964.

[30]Ibid.

> The world's unfortunate people are not the Americans who have the freedom to read editorial comment. Our people are free because our problems are subjected to editorial analysis. It is because the American people have freedom of information. The world's unfortunate people are the crushed, enslaved citizens living in countries where editors cannot articulate. . . . These people are enslaved because ideas cannot be debated. Their enslavement is the result of applied terrorism.[31]

But more encouraging signs began to show. Not only had the local Rotary president offered some valuable advice in a letter to Emmerich for publication, but the Pike County Board of Supervisors issued a statement shortly thereafter calling for a return to law and order in the community.[32]

> The action of the County Board becomes even more meritorious and more praiseworthy when we consider the fact that the Board is a political body![33]

More statements followed from individuals, merchants, and community leaders that made it obvious a brighter future was just ahead. The statements continued until on November 18 a Statement of Principles, to be found in the Appendix of this study, and signed by 650 McComb residents, was issued for publication. After publication "many others" contacted the newspaper to add their names to the list.[34]

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[31]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, November 9, 1964.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, November 10, 1964.

[34]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, November 18, 1964.

The Statement of Principles basically called for a return to law and order, a desire to adhere to federal, as well as state and local, laws, and a desire to see more harmonious cooperation between the races. Its most important asset was that it had been issued and signed by so many residents.[35]

The return to community action had been long in coming, but now there was a feeling that the community had finally made it. Emmerich was exuberant. There was finally real action on the part of his community. They had decided that if their problems were to be solved, then they must do it by themselves.[36]

The McComb image was experiencing some rapid improvements as journalists, politicians, and citizens from throughout the United States were writing and calling Emmerich's office to congratulate the people for having signed the Statement of Principles. National television networks were reporting the McComb area in a favorable light and syndicated columnists such as Drew Pearson were commending McComb for its "forward-looking efforts."

> Calls have been received from news agencies from across America. Consistently the spirit of the con-

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, November 19, 1964.

[37] Ibid.

> versation has been one of commendation to McComb for what has been done lately. . . .
>
> Things are looking upward in McComb. . . . But still more, it will give the nation the opportunity of learning what a good community McComb actually is.[37]

For Emmerich, it was the satisfaction that he had weathered the storm. He felt his approach to the crisis had been the proper one, and that any alternative might have rendered him totally ineffective. Still, he wondered how much more he could have done with even greater effort.[38]

Bill Dorr, writing in Publishers' Auxiliary, approached the question differently. He wrote, "How great a part Oliver Emmerich's editorials played in this (restoration of confidence) is difficult to measure. But the odds are great that they were of enormous importance.[39]

National and state organizations and institutions were gracious in their recognition and praise of Emmerich. The Sigma Delta Chi judges, upon awarding him the top editorial writing award and his newspaper the distinguished service award for 1964, described his editorials as display- ". . . a calm logic that was so desperately needed, a fierce dedication to principle and balanced with a thoughtful and well-informed sympathy" with community racial problems.[40]

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Dorr, loc. cit.

[39] Ibid. [40] Ibid.

Dorr described Emmerich's effort and ability to write as Pulitzer Prize quality. He characterized Emmerich as an editor who apparently had had little time to think about awards because of his involvement in the community's recent crisis, but who would settle for a calm, rationalizing community that would prefer to settle its problems at the conference table rather than in violent disturbances.

> Perhaps a Pulitzer will come, perhaps not. But newspapermen from all over the nation who covered the McComb racial story have placed Emmerich in a special niche of popularity with journalists that few newsmen fit into.
>
> However, the greatest prize won by Emmerich may be found in his community; a progressive and harmonious city that reflects its editor.[41]

That was the way Emmerich seemed to prefer it, although he was informed by his colleague and friend, Hodding Carter, that he had been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, and had actually become one of three finalists.[42]

When Emmerich reviewed the critical summer of 1964 on January 1, 1965, he saw the violence giving away to the progressive spirit he had helped cultivate some fifteen years earlier in another kind of program. His faith was tarnished during the crisis, but it was sustained in the belief that it was only a matter of time and then there would be better days for a better people.

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal interview.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The service that Emmerich rendered during the 1964 crisis cannot be fully measured, but it can be appreciated. He knew he could not sit idly by, but he knew whatever he did would probably bring criticism from some residents.

He was criticized for not speaking out earlier and with more firmness. But Emmerich refused to do so knowing full well that he should not "preach" at his community. Instead, he had to help find a practical solution to existing problems. Emmerich based his position on the theory that an editor must act with responsibility, but also with effectiveness. He certainly could not have achieved this objective if he had made demands instead of suggestions.

He spoke calmly, but firmly, in his editorials after the first arrests in early October, seeking possible answers to the problems at hand. He continued until finally a Statement of Principles was drawn up and signed by hundreds of citizens. But Emmerich kept suggesting things the community had to do before it could consider the crisis past. The economy had to be considered, personal safety had to be guaranteed, and a bad national image had to be erased.

By the end of the year, most of these critical points had been solved appreciably. It was now a matter of

continuing progress.

Emmerich's approach to the problem was practical. He knew he had to get the attention of the people before he could talk with them. This he did with a majority of the community. But there were some that even laws could not contain. Most of the community was afraid during the crisis and therefore did nothing until solid leadership stepped forward.

Emmerich tried privately to cultivate that leadership, but was not entirely successful. While the leadership was sympathetic, it reminded Emmerich that individual families could easily become targets of violent attacks. Therefore, Emmerich had to wait until the more violent days had past before he could hope to get the organized leadership so essential to the restoration of community health.

When he saw his first opportunities in the fall, he quickly took advantage of them and pushed for immediate results. Under the circumstances and the principles that guided him, there was little else Emmerich could have done and still have been of service to his community.

CHAPTER V

DIVERSIFICATION:

LESSONS IN PRACTICAL ECONOMICS

> Mr. Emmerich, a former county agent, has always been interested in agriculture and has not only given column space but his pen in the promotion of a prosperous industry and all the facets related thereto.[1]

Chapter V examined Emmerich's attempt to help educate area farmers to the improved methods of farming and how essential those methods are to the successful farmer. It points out how he had to overcome economic dogmatism and sometimes petty politics to convince the farmers that their methods of production could be improved and farm income increased substantially.

The chapter cites a number of specific examples and gives these examples in some detail for the specific purpose of showing Emmerich's approach to the problem, his treatment of the problem, and the probable or proven results of each treatment.

I. A DRIVING AMBITION

Just as education played a major role in the formulation of Emmerich's social philosophy, it provided the impetus for improving agricultural conditions in Mississippi.

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[1]Statement by George A. Mullendore, Pike County Farm Agent, personal correspondence, March 31, 1967.

Emmerich was a student of agriculture, receiving two college degrees in that field. He also devoted two years to working as a county agent in Walthall and Carroll counties in Mississippi. But Emmerich had a problem as a county agent, as county agents were not always the most appreciated men in Southwest Mississippi and often their demonstrations were scoffed at or simply rejected in favor of the traditional dogmatic attitude of "what was good enough for my father is good enough for me." Emmerich realized a more immediate need for some form of education that the farmers would accept, even if it meant on a slow, long-time basis.[2] Cotton had been king for a long time in Mississippi, but now the king was poverty stricken with his depleted soil and was pulling Pike County farmers down with him.

The problem was certain to be one of long duration and would require a methodical approach through the best means available. Not only would he have to help overcome the lack of diversified farming, but he would also have to low prices, as well as to encourage more home grown produce, to really bring home diversified farming into its own permanency.[3]

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[2]Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal interview.

[3]Ibid.

But at the beginning, and even after many years of successful advice and planning, there would be those farmers who would challenge his ideas, providing a test of sorts as to the validity of his ideas. He would defend his programs by using examples of past successes in farm management and application procedures that would encourage his doubters to at least listen to his advice.

One such example occurred in 1948 shortly after Emmerich's "16-Point Farm Program" had been introduced to Pike County. The program, to be examined more closely in another chapter, was designed to increase production and profits to all areas of agricultural development in Pike County. But one lady was not buying the idea. In a letter to Emmerich, she challenged the validity of the program and exactly who was to profit from it. She wrote:

> Mr. Emmerich: You sure do publicize the 16-Point Farm Program. I want to say that when the farmers and dairymen needed help they couldn't get it. Now they are making a few dollars and a lot of businessmen are offering their financial support to 'promote' something or other. It is my belief that these men intend to get their money back with plenty of interest if they can find enough suckers among the farmers and dairymen. I pity those 20 people that are spending money on poultry houses. They are in for a lot of work without pay.
>
> Some of my neighbors joined the artificial breeders association, and I know how they came out. They didn't get any calves, but they spent money.[4]

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[4]Letter to the Editor, Enterprise-Journal, September 16, 1948.

Emmerich answered her publicly by pointing out what the ethics of the program involved as well as why the program had to be carried out.

> It is a mistake to hold that because men put their money into a public cause that 'they expect to get something out of it.' Surely it is possible for men and women to be unselfishly interested in their community. . . . And if the contributions are not merely unselfish but based upon selfish interest in the community, then again there is nothing wrong. Suppose the farming business in this section is lifted to new heights of prosperity and all of the people benefit as a result. What is wrong with this?
>
> You say you pity the 20 people who are building poultry houses. The people of Pike County are consuming 5,000 chickens every week. . . but we are producing less than 10% of this number. Is it wrong to encourage our own people to enjoy this poultry market at home. . . or shall we continue to pay this cash to poultrymen of other sections?[5]

He wrote that while artificial breeding of cattle was not always successful, neither was natural breeding. He pointed out that while each artificially bred cow would cost $5 to breed, there were few farmers in the county who could afford to feed a bull just for his breeding services. The artificial process would also involve better strains of cattle.[6]

Emmerich realized there would always be a few to doubt the validity of new programs or the updating of old ones and that made his educational program more acute.

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[5]Editorial in the Enterprise-Journal, September 16, 1948.

[6]Ibid.

If he could just win over most of the doubters, he felt he could not help but succeed.

When Emmerich purchased the McComb City Enterprise in 1923, agriculture was foremost in his writings and would continue to play a dominant theme for the years to come. His approach was always one of simplicity and yet direct frankness. The direct frankness would also provide some doubters from time to time, but it was a fact that he had a lot of ideas and many of them would help to improve the economic conditions of his county during his years as an editor and publisher.

His techniques varied from informative editorial pages to full page advertisements, backed by local businessmen who recognized the need for greater farm production to stimulate business growth.

An example of the latter method seemed to overstate the case, but brought a ringing truth to many of the area farmers. The advertisement read, "Farm People--On With McComb! The saddest word of tongue or pen, I have no sow, no cow, no hen!"[7] The advertisement explained that many farmers in the county were actually having to buy meat and vegetables because they had failed to raise any such items during the previous year. Their concentration was strictly on cotton and little else seemed to matter. The advertise-

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[7]Advertisement in the City-Enterprise, February 18, 1927.

ment called it poor planning and said that such planning could be eliminated if the people were but interested. Local feed and grain stores were ready to cooperate in helping to overcome the situation[8]

Emmerich's approach included a discussion of smaller items of significance as well as major means for farm improvements. One day he would be critical of the farmer who did not plan a vegetable garden for the upcoming year along with his row crop and shortly thereafter he would be critical of the farmer who did not figure some hay or grain into his farm program for the cattle and hogs the next winter. He was restless and became involved in almost every facet of agriculture that might help to improve the county's economic plight. He would offer some advice to the farmer who simply did not know how to get the most out of what he produced and scold the farmer who was simply neglectful. Each winter and spring his newspaper columns would carry advice and questions about the next crop year. The following example was typical of much of his writing and points out his approach most vividly; simplicity and direct frankness.

> What about 1926? Now is the time to think about it. What will be your farm program? Will you make more this year and, if so, how? Are you going to put more acres in cotton or are you going to get more cotton on less acres? What about your fertilize?

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[8] Ibid.

Will it be properly administered. . . ?

> And your poultry? Are you planning to keep on losing money on your common mongrel hens? Why not have the home agent cull your flock and kill off the non-layers? Did you ever stop to think that a few good hens are better than scores of poor ones?

But while he was concerned with these obviously important matters, he also nudged the farmer just a little about the prospects of "just getting by."

> And your place? Is it painted? What about a little paint this year? Wouldn't your wife appreciate it? Perhaps running water would be more appreciated? That plow, is it still in the field where you left it last July or is it under the shed? Will you have to buy tools this year because you left the last ones out in the weather? There goes your running water. Is this good farming or criminal negligence? Yes, criminal negligence in that you are wasting money that ought to be spent on your wife and children.[10]

Emmerich's editorials were basically simple and direct, but they carried his idea of successful farming to its fullest meaning--incorporate the many diversified facets of farming including the small, somewhat trivial, problems that concerned farmers, and create the well-rounded farmer.

> Remember, it is the well-rounded program that counts. Feed your stock, feed your family; all from your farm and put the balance of your time to cotton as a money crop, and you are pretty sure to win.[11]

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[9] Editorial in the City-Enterprise, December 17, 1925.

[10] Ibid. [11] Ibid.

But Emmerich did more than raise important questions regarding the farmer's well-being. He sought ways to guarantee that well-being. When a question did arise, he would quickly attack the problem, if one existed, and try to find a solution. One of his favorite ways of demonstrating his conclusions was through the creation of stories. For example, he might hear from the county agent that some farmers were having problems with getting their calves to grow off properly. If the agent had an answer he would print it, but if he had to go to the University Experiment Station in his region for the answer, he would use the scientific tests that applied and explain them in story form. One such story dealt with the way some farmers argued about the proper way to feed hogs for the most profit. Milo corn chops was the basic food for hogs in Pike County supplemented by pastures. It was being argued that skim milk should be added to the diet, but others thought it would be so expensive that it would actually cause a loss of profit. Emmerich obtained a scientific report that had been performed with one diet consisting of milo corn chops, skim milk, and pasture, another using milo corn chops and skim milk, and the third consisting of only milo corn chops and pasture. During the time period, the first hog gained 306 pounds, the second hog gained 250 pounds, and the third hog gained 95 pounds. The first hog

also made the most profit with $11.26, the second had a profit of $7.39, and the hog fed on milo corn chops and pasture made a profit of only 23 cents.[12] Emmerich's point had been made.

The lesson from such a story, based on proved data, could hardly be made more obvious. While the original expense might have been a little more on the quality feed program, the profit was so large, it could be afforded to have higher feed bills. One should have roughage as a supplement, but it should not be the full diet with some grass from time to time. Such explanations and obvious suggestions were a regular part of Emmerich's editorial page and farm page columns.

Then for the farmer who was so determined to make a success of row crop production, Emmerich had some more valuable advice--restore life to the depleted soil. Much of that advice was of a technical nature, but the type that makes theory take on practical meaning in terms of economic application and common sense.

II. IN SPITE OF DOUBT

When the boll weevil became such a menace to cotton farmers during the middle 1920's, Emmerich quickly sought ways to overcome their destructive force. One of

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[12]Editorial in the City Enterprise, December 27, 1923.

the known facts about the weevil's habits was that he hibernated in fence rows during the winter months; something that many farmers did not realize at that early date after the weevil's invasion of Mississippi. Farmers were often lulled into a pseudo-security when a cold winter would seem to have destroyed the insects. Therefore, the farmer was not necessarily in a hurry to plant his seed in the spring, an important factor in countering weevil damage. This was one false notion that Emmerich had to destroy, as it was not the hibernating weevil that did the real damage.

> The hibernating weevil. . . multiplies, and the second and third generations menace the cotton crop. The reproduction is so rapid that a small number of weevils can rapidly replenish the South with this detested pest.[13]

Emmerich said to outwit the weevil, the farmer had to work fast. He wrote, "There is only one way to make a crop of cotton, and that is to hasten the growth of the stalk and put on fruit faster than the weevil can destroy it."[14] This meant early maturity. Emmerich deduced that the question demanding an answer was: "How do I achieve this early maturity?" Emmerich supplied the answer in somewhat detailed fashion, yet with simplicity. It depended upon the proper use of fertilizers, the variety of seed

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[13]Editorial in the City-Enterprise, February 12, 1925.

[14]Ibid.

planted, and the proper spacing of the seeds. The University Experiment Station recommended a formula of 100 pounds of potash, 200 pounds of nitrate soda, and 200 pounds of acid phosphate per acre for the depleted soil.[15]

Few farmers in Pike County used potash (a fertilizer that provided a strengthening of the plant's fiber) although it cost only 75 cents per acre and could increase the yield in the county by 25 to 33 per cent. He relied on the Experiment Station again in the selection of variety. The highest yielding varieties were given in order of importance along with a reason why certain other varieties should be avoided. He pointed out that one variety, Half-and-Half, was condemned because of its short staple.

> The full inch cotton should be the goal of the hill farmer. Short staple is not considered profitable as it brings little premium.
>
> Farmers should also consider the fact that early maturity is also made available by the use of close rows; three feet for hill sides and three and a half feet for valley land.[16]

The thick spacing provided a moisture preservative by shading the soil during the long hot summer months. At a time when irrigation was at a premium, it was most important to hold as much moisture as possible through other means.

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Editorial in the City Enterprise, February 15, 1925.

Emmerich was also concerned that the farmers understand that he was basing his information on the best scientific data available and not concocting each of his suggestions from individual fantasies. The Experiment Station was making great efforts to improve the broken down methods of traditional farm practices, and Emmerich felt his farming community should be allowed to take advantage of these new developments as quickly as possible.

News and editorial columns alike carried definite information from the Experiment Station. Emmerich would interpret much of the scientific information into the layman's language, always pointing out that it was ultimately up to the farmer to implement the suggestions and data. While some farmers were using the new and successful methods, many were not and someone had to set examples for them, reflecting the urge to community action and cooperation that Emmerich felt was so essential to a well-rounded agricultural and business program in the Pike County area.

> The big task is to sell these ideas to the farmers who are afraid to venture from the beaten path and herein lies our appeal. The leading farmers have a responsibility. . . and a duty to spread this gospel of practical farming. It is their duty to place farming on higher and more profitable planes. It is an individual duty. . . of every man and woman who is interested in community advancement.[17]

This was Emmerich's driving ambition and one that

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[17] Ibid.

could not be achieved readily or easily. Dogmatic traditions provided many obstacles to Emmerich's hope for a better society, but he continued to offer suggestions and basic information that would benefit the farm, if only the farmer would take advantage of it. There was also another obstacle that Emmerich had to contend with in the form of petty politics, offering him some of his greatest challenges and rewards.

III. A TEST OF STRENGTH

While most of Emmerich's efforts were geared to a personal appeal to each and every member of the community, they seldom brought individual personalities into conflict. He seldom cited specific examples of individual failure, but instead would show what the individual could do to improve the situation in which he found himself. Seldom would he get involved in local political battles to the point of name-calling or insulting, but he was not afraid to attack any and all problems that he deemed necessary to attack.

One such problem arose in 1929 that, at the time, provided the community with some of its most anxious moments.

Huey Long was Governor of Louisiana and Theodore G. Bilbo was Governor of Mississippi. Mississippi had

passed a law that required cattle to be dipped in oil vats to rid them of Texas fever ticks, but Louisiana had no such law and "the prospects of them getting one were nil."[18] Most of the territory along the border of the two states was open range grazing and identification of cattle depended on branding. This created a problem for Mississippi farmers living along the border as their cattle would mix with those from Louisiana and therefore get the fever ticks. The entire border area was put under quarantine by the Federal Government "until such time as the ticks had been ridded."[19] What was more aggravating for the border farmers was the fact that they had to have their cattle dipped every two weeks at a central point some miles away from most of the farms. This required time, effort, and expense on the part of the farmers.

A May 10 news story in the City-Enterprise reported that for most of the county, the quarantine would end June 1. The story also reported that if a double fence was built along the Louisiana-Mississippi border, the border farmers could also be taken off quarantine eventually. The fence had become a topic for discussion a couple of months before at a town meeting in McComb as to its feasibility.

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[18]Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal interview.

[19]News story in the City-Enterprise, May 10, 1929.

A joint meeting was called for March 12 by the Board of Supervisors from Pike and Walthall counties, as the two counties bordered each other and also bordered Louisiana. Other border counties were calling similar meetings. The idea was formulated to build the double fence from the Mississippi River to the Pearl River, a distance of some 120 miles.[20]

Some of the opposition stemmed from the idea that the erection of such a fence would tend to delay the campaign of tick eradication in Louisiana, at the time a very weak movement. Others said farmers along the border would be inconvenienced and the double fence would take a lot of valuable space out of production.[21]

However, the majority of the farmers seemed to favor the structure and indicated as much at the March 12 meeting by an overwhelming vote of approval.[22]

Pike County's expenses in erecting such a structure would be approximately $7,500. Considering the previous year some $18,500 had been spent on dipping cattle alone, most of the farmers felt the fence price was reasonable enough.[23]

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[20]News story in the City-Enterprise, March 8, 1929

[21]News story in the City-Enterprise, March 15, 1929.

[22]Ibid. [23]Ibid.

Emmerich's first editorial on the subject came quickly. The Board of Supervisors had called the March 12 meeting to get a sample of public sentiment on the fence, but now they were moving slowly, or so it seemed to Emmerich. He argued that the Board had asked for an expression of opinion from the public; now they had it, but weren't doing anything about it.

> Procrastination at this time is costly. We cannot afford to permit Louisiana cattle to re-infest our cattle with fever ticks. We think too much of the dairy possibilities of our county to stand by and see this future industry destroyed for no other reason than that a few members of the supervisors prefer to play petty politics. . . .
>
> It is all right to talk of hard times and a shortage of money, but Pike County already has a bunch of money tied up in the working of tick eradication. If Louisiana tick-infested cattle are permitted to roam over our woods and pastures, it is a certainty that all of the money that has been spent will be lost and we will still have the ticks with us to hamper the development of dairying in Pike County.[24]

In the meantime, the Board of Supervisors had assigned range riders to keep the ticks in Louisiana. Emmerich protested to the public and pointed definitive editorials at the Board.[25]

In return, a Board member replied to Emmerich by calling him a "young whipper-snapper" who enjoyed printing

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[24]Editorial in the City-Enterprise, March 29, 1929.

[25]Editorial in the City-Enterprise, April 29, 1929.

"slanderous and even libelous" material.[26]

Emmerich retorted with a list of questions and statistics to enforce his questions. He wanted to know why the fence was not being built and noted that the range riders were costing as much as the fence would, and they were not doing half the job a double fence would do.

He relied on his knowledge of agriculture and continued to raise pertinent questions. But he commented:

> A large percentage of cattle grown under tick conditions are immune to tick fever. But, now that Pike County is practically tick-free, it is a certainty that this immunity has been lost. When dipping is discontinued, and if ticks from Louisiana are permitted to re-infest our herds, it is certain that thousands of dollars will be lost because of Texas tick fever.[27]

But the Board of Supervisors wasn't interested. Instead, it continued to hire range riders throughout the summer to patrol the border. Emmerich blasted the sustained effort as one of obstinacy. He ridiculed the use of range riders, added that the Legislature would reimburse local expenses for the fence, and that it was political expediency that was causing the major problem.[28]

> At present our Supervisors are literally wasting the taxpayer's money with extreme extravagance. Certainly it is high time that the Supervisors build the

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[26]Letter to Editor, City-Enterprise, May 3, 1929.

[27]Editorial in the City-Enterprise, May 3, 1929.

[28]Ibid.

> state-line fence, stop this mad spending of public funds and adopt an intelligent system for the cessation of dipping in Pike County.[29]

To add to his argument, Emmerich reported that the Federal Government, upon making an inspection of cattle in the county, extended the quarantine indefinitely from the June 1 deadline previously set and therefore slowed any marketing of beef or milk. Reaction by the local farmers resulted in the dynamiting of numerous oil vats. Although dipping would be discontinued, the quarantine would remain in effect. The government said that if the double fence were built, the quarantine would most likely be lifted much more quickly than would otherwise be the case.[30]

During the first week of October, the Board of Supervisors decided to change its position and, on October 10, began advertising for bids to buy and construct the necessary materials for the fence. Emmerich quickly "congratulated" the Board for ". . . endorsing a state-line fence to keep Louisiana's ticky cattle out of Pike County."[31] He commended them on their "foresight" saying:

> They have contributed immeasurably to the progress and prosperity of Pike County and South Mississippi by deciding to build the fence. Had the building of the fence been delayed much longer the county

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Editorial in the City-Enterprise, October 11, 1929.

> would have been compelled to pay for the entire cost of the construction. The State Livestock Sanitary Board handed down an ultimatum to the effect that no aid should be given to the county should the fence not be built by December 15. Accordingly, the Board took action.[32]

The fight to build the double fence was long and often threatened violence. Although Emmerich was highly critical of the Board at times, he recognized the position in which the members found themselves and knew what they had to do to be re-elected. Perhaps for this reason did he feel an even greater urgency and responsibility to inform his public of the critical issues involved, for he knew the meaning of petty politics and the harm that political manipulation could bring to an economically unstable community. Reflecting on the episode, he said:

> The supervisors were politicians. Patronage meant much to them. At that time, any government job was a coveted thing because the economy was hard.
>
> In lieu of the fence the Board planned to have patrols along a 30-mile border, working in three shifts of eight hours each. This meant the employment of ninety men and a force sufficient to be of much help politically to the members of the county board. The newspaper reasoned that one guard for each mile would be ineffective. If a patrolman on horseback went along his beat for one mile and back he would be traveling two miles from a given point. Obviously while he was traveling this distance a tick-infested heifer could walk 100 yards across the state line. So we advocated the double line fence and the supervisors plugged for patronage. And because jobs were scarce and many wanted the jobs as

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[32] Ibid.

patrolmen the fence idea was unpopular. But the fence was built.[33]

Although the idea was somewhat unpopular, Emmerich realized that the long-range farm program would be hurt drastically if the tick-infested cattle were allowed to continue mixing with the dairy cattle in Pike County. Even when the local officials were against him, Emmerich ventured out to guarantee that the future of the community might be safeguarded.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Emmerich has had a tremendous degree of foresight over the years with which he could quickly recognize a problem. His alertness to those problems helped him solve many problems and bring compromise solutions to others where a guaranteed method did not exist.

He despised Mississippi's great agriculture bane--non-diversification. He disliked the dogmatic thinking of so many Mississippians, and more specifically, Pike County farmers, but he recognized such a problem as one of life's great challenges.

His desire for an educated farming community was excelled only by his efforts at getting more scientific and proved methods of agricultural production across to the

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[33]Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal correspondence, April 18, 1967.

public.

Examples in this chapter show how he approached the problems with simplicity to enhance understanding, and yet with a direct frankness that brought the economic plight of the farmers into direct confrontation with reality. Many of the problems recognized in this chapter seem somewhat minute today, but one must remember that such things as the boll weevil, dry weather, lack of scientific know-how served as major obstacles to the farmer of the 1920's.

His urge to action was demanding. He felt one should not simply read what he had to say, but should employ the advice as well. He was determined to help improve his geographical area economically through education by showing there were more profitable ways of doing things than most realized. If the cause of the poor economic standards was dogmatic traditions based on a lack of education, then Emmerich would point out how modern methods of farming could offer greater financial rewards than had previous methods.

When he saw something being done incorrectly, he did not complain. Instead, he would suggest that there might be a better way to get the job done hoping that the person involved would realize his own way was not the best way. Emmerich felt that his purpose was to keep the fires burning under the community so that they would take the

initiative to improve themselves, knowing full well that it was a cooperative effort toward improvement. He used the power of suggestion on many occasions. If the farmer could be convinced to change his method of farming for the better and believe it was his own self-enlightenment that brought about the eventual change, then Emmerich had achieved his objective.

Emmerich felt that all he could do must be done in the name of progress and service. If a farmer raised his profits over the previous year, that was progress. If he raised those profits through the advice of Emmerich, then that was service. By combining the two, Emmerich felt the county could achieve its growth more rapidly. Progress was dependent upon enlightenment of the farmers to the improved farming techniques. To provide that enlightenment was the first duty of Emmerich's ambitious undertaking.

CHAPTER VI

THE GRASS ROOTS MOVEMENT

> . . . Mr. J.O. Emmerich's imagination, interest, enthusiasm, and editorial leadership were the principle factors influencing the acceptance of the 16-Point Development Program.
>
> . . . It is my opinion that the Enterprise-Journal, more than any other single institution, within or without the county, has contributed most to a better way of life for the people of Pike County.[1]

This chapter contains an examination of Emmerich's efforts in implementing "The Grass Roots Sixteen-Point Farm and Home Program of Pike County, Mississippi," hereinafter referred to as "The Grass Roots Movement." It considers how Emmerich prepared the people for the farm program, what problems he faced, what in essence the program involved, and what the results of the program were.

I. STABLE ROOT STRUCTURES ARE BASIC

Oliver Emmerich sought for many years to help foster a positive attitude among Pike County farmers toward building a stable agricultural economy in the area. Emmerich recognized the need for a more diversified agricultural program early in his career after watching cotton bankrupt the farmers with increasing rapidity, but he became more concerned about implementing a specific farm program following

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[1]Mullendore, loc. cit.

World War II. He felt the major problem was the continuing lack of education among the farmers, and he had been trying to help offset the problem as much as possible during the past twenty years. But he had not realized the measurable degree of success he desired most. He felt the success or failure of any long range farm program depended primarily upon whether the farmers were willing to help themselves. He noted that if the farmer expressed a willingness to begin, and if he could get just a little initial help financially, he would prove himself capable of establishing that desired stable economy.[2]

For many years, it had not been possible for farmers to decrease their indebtedness because of poor crops. Few could actually find it possible to make it through the following winters without extending credit notes at banks and lending agencies. The personal indebtedness of Pike County's 40,000 residents in 1946 ran almost to $1,700,000, instead of the more comfortable $400,000 it would run in 1951. Most of the indebtedness was upon the farmers.[3] But Emmerich knew that if the community's agricultural problems were to be solved, it would be ultimately up to local

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[2]Harold C. Wire, "A County Builds Its Own Prosperity," Country Gentleman, December, 1950, p. 68.

[3]Jackson Hand, "Pike County Mississippi. . . Mecca of the Farm Improvement Faithful," Harvester World, May, 1951, p. 23.

farmers to solve them, regardless of their present economic status.

Emmerich felt local responsibility was a necessity for making any local program effective. He reflected that philosophy more recently when he wrote:

> Behind every achievement are the dreams, the purposes, the energies of the people responsible for their attainmnet. This concept applies to individuals and corporations, and must apply to communities which seek to be up and coming and on the march. This means that the community which covets a stronger economy, more enjoyable surroundings, increased opportunities for growth and a more dynamic civic personality, must recognize the potential of self help. The center of the earth is where we live. Directions and distances radiate out from this center. The civic-minded, alert citizen can say, 'This is where we live and ours is the responsibility to make the most of it.'[4]

Emmerich began in 1945 to encourage not only individual farmers toward better production methods, but also began to encourage some type of community effort that would give the farmers the incentive needed to develop those methods. For almost two years, he encouraged businessmen to consider the importance of farm income to their own income and suggested that the entire county join the effort to develop a total economy in the area. Motor caravans traveled throughout Mississippi and even into neighboring states where experimental farm improvement programs had been undertaken and had already enjoyed some degree of success.

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[4]Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal correspondence, May 20, 1967.

The most notable of these trips for Emmerich was a trip to the University of Mississippi at Oxford where he heard Editor George McLean of the Tupelo Journal tell a group of agricultural leaders about his successful campaign to help build a relatively successful agricultural-industrial economic program in that Northeast Mississippi community.

> Mr. Emmerich, his newspaperman's zeal for community service fired by his county agent background, could hardly wait to get back to McComb. He quickly assembled 27 local businessmen and farm leaders and carted them all up to Tupelo for a first-hand glimpse at what was being done there.[5]

Emmerich was soon pushing the idea of a large community farm program in his editorial columns, directed at stimulating the thought processes among the farmers in the hope that his idea would catch on quickly. The ills of his community were recognizable immediately and demanded unequivocal attention if they were to be negated.

> Late in 1947, his front-page editorials pointed out what was wrong with Pike County's farming. Some of them were: 75 per cent of the farm income was from soil-depleting crops, mostly cotton. The farmers were not marketing poultry, eggs, dairy products or beef to any extent. Only 2,000 acres of the county were in improved pasture land, out of a potential 45,000. The county lacked storage and processing plants for sweet potatoes and other perishable crops.[6]

While Emmerich's editorials were appearing on page one of the Enterprise-Journal, he was busy holding numerous

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[5]Christian Science Monitor, loc. cit.

[6]Wire, op. cit., p. 30.

conferences primarily with Stennis Johnson, Vice President of the McComb First National Bank, and George Mullendore, Pike County Farm Agent.[7]

Farmers, storekeepers, and civic club representatives were soon responding to Emmerich's appeal for a meeting in McComb to discuss any and all aspects of a farm program.

Emmerich told community leaders that if the county really wanted to get on stable ground economically, the farmers would have to grow more crops, develop better pasture land, and display a willingness to work hard at making any farm program pay.[8] He noted that it would take some $60,000 to carry the program through the first three years, according to a report prepared by County Agent George Mullendore. Leaders quickly pledged the necessary financial aid and turned to the sixteen points for farm progress that Emmerich had proposed, providing the initial help that Emmerich felt was so necessary to get the farmers moving.[9]

II. THE SIXTEEN POINT PROGRAM

On January 6, 1948, "The Grass Roots Movement" was inaugurated officially by 200 county leaders at a meeting

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[7] Ibid.

[8] "Mr. Dynamite," Newsweek, February 20, 1950, p. 52.

[9] News story in Enterprise-Journal, January 7, 1948.

in McComb. The Enterprise-Journal reported the next day that the plan was approved unanimously, and elaborated on the hope for its success, but hinted that nobody should expect miracles immediately because the program would be a long range investment of time and energy.

> In advancing a program of development for McComb and Pike County and all of the communities within the trade area of McComb, Summit, Fernwood, Magnolia, and Osyka, it becomes necessary to think in terms of what is needed for overall expansion of resources and to plan, not for one year, but for several years.[10]

The plan was carried to all the local communities by their own representatives, who had attended the McComb meeting. The systematic explanation of the program began with the experts--the county agent and his assistants--describing the plan in detail to the elected representatives from each community who in turn ". . . told their neighbors in regular, well-attended monthly meetings at community schoolhouses."[11]

It was explained that the program was to be more than just breaking up the county's "once basic one-cropism," taking on broader aspects in an attempt to develop the total resources of the county more fully.

The program began slowly during the first year, but it did gain some support as individual supporters showed

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[10]News story in Enterprise-Journal, January 7, 1948.

[11]Hand, op. cit., p. 20.

how certain parts of the program were beneficial to them. The speed-up of the program in 1949 was reflected in the one and a third million dollar increase of Pike County's farm income over 1948.[12] The year 1949 was a bad cotton year and the farmers lost $70,000 on cotton, but total income from other sources created by "The Grass Roots Movement" increased by $1,362,625.[13] This was what Emmerich called the essential beauty of diversified farming; losses from one crop could be offset by gains in another, allowing the farmer to be more independent in his financial planning and status.

In the first of the sixteen projects outlined in the "Grass Roots Movement" it was recommended that a sweet potato storage plant be constructed to serve the potato-developing area in the northeastern part of the county. A 30,000 capacity plant was figured to cost $15,000 with the county farmers having to raise an immediate $5,000. Emmerich explained that the Bank of Cooperatives of New Orleans had already agreed to allow Pike County to float a $5,000 loan over an extended period of time. The Mississippi Legislature had agreed to make an outright contribution of $5,000.[14]

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[12]Wire, op. cit., p. 67.

[13]Hand, loc. cit.

[14]News story in Enterprise-Journal, January 7, 1948.

McComb's Exchange Club pushed the project and encouraged an extra effort among the potato farmers to show that it could be a successful project. The immediately needed $5,000 was raised largely through the efforts of the Exchange Club and the project was already a success before the end of the year in 1948. The Jackson Daily News lauded the farmers and the Exchange Club for their high measure of success.

> To make Pike County the sweet potato capital of the world. . . is the laudable objective of the Exchange Club of McComb.
>
> The first annual Sweet Potato Festival held at McComb Saturday under the auspices of that organization was a huge success, starting even members of the Exchange Club with its proportions.
>
> Although the (sweet potato) movement had a rather late start. . . , the yield was heavy and of excellent quality, and there is a profitable market for the entire yield.[15]

Although the editorial did not indicate specific figures for the total income, Emmerich's personal records revealed that the sweet potato crop grossed $115,000. The farmers then increased their 1949 income over the 1948 figure by a $23,200 actual dollar increase.[16]

The second project called for greater efforts in the artificial breeding of cattle, which was designed to

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[15]Editorial in Jackson Daily News, November 2, 1948.

[16]Oliver Emmerich, "The 16-Point Farm Program," (McComb, Mississippi: Personal Records File, 1949), p. 21.

improve the average milk production of cows in the county.

> Already, the Pike County Artificial Breeders Association has an investment of $12,000 in such a (program). . . . The association owns three bulls and has a fourth bull borrowed from the Illinois Central Railroad Company.[17]

But now the emphasis was on a larger program to improve the milk production from 400 gallons to 600 gallons of milk per cow each year. Quality-bred stock would be a major contributing factor in attaining that goal.[18] By January 1, 1950, the association owned nine bulls valued at a total of $15,000 as opposed to the three bulls in 1947. The artifical insemination program served six counties and in 1949, there were 5,394 cows bred through the program as opposed to only 300 in 1947.[19]

Two different projects called for a major dairy and beef stock show during the fall and spring respectively to maintain a constant interest in the two programs. The show in the fall would be the South Mississippi Dairy Show, created and sponsored by the Mississippi Legislature to encourage dairying in the county, and the spring show would be the continuation of the Pike County Livestock Association's established show. It was felt that a continuous

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[17]News story in Enterprise-Journal, January 7, 1948.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Emmerich, "The 16-Point Farm Program," op. cit., pp. 12-13.

emphasis should be placed on prize dairy and beef-type cattle and that could best be accomplished with the two shows each year.[20]

County Agent George Mullendore added emphasis to the corn production improvement program when he suggested that the county's corn yield could be doubled easily in three years if the proper methods of production were followed. Farmers in the dairy business and the beef stock program welcomed this added incentive to greater feed production. But many were skeptical that such a prediction could be actualized.

Some 28,000 acreas of corn in 1947 produced an average of 15 bushels per acre at a value of $420,000. The average was raised to 24 bushels per acre in 1948 at a value of $672,000. The 1949 crop averaged 25 bushels per acre on 21,000 acres and averaged 49 bushels per acre on 7,000 more acres for a 31 bushels per acre average yield and a gain in value of $448,000 over the 1947 crop. The area farmers were astounded to find that the prediction by Mullendore had not taken the predicted three years, but had been accomplished in two years. The success involved no secret formula or miracle worker that came along, but a simple application of good farming methods involving proper seeding,

[20]News story in Enterprise-Journal, January 7, 1948.

fertilization, and cultivation. Emmerich never ceased to emphasize the nonexistence of any secrets in the program, but just simple application of basic farming techniques.[21]

Emmerich felt that "The Grass Roots Movement" would be incomplete if it excluded the youth of the county. He therefore emphasized aiding the 4-H Clubs and Future Farmers of America organizations in the county by helping them to develop basic skills necessary in handling farming techniques adequately. In the same spirit, it was suggested that a beef chain and dairy chain be started to aid young boys who were interested in developing quality livestock herds. The Illinois Central Service Club and the Magnolia Rotary Club donated two heifers each in 1948 and 1949 respectively to create a continuing dairy chain in the organizations; and the McComb Lions Club and the Summit Rotary Club donated a total of three purebred heifers to start a beef cattle chain. The inclusion of youth in "The Grass Roots Movement" was reflected in the value of the 4-H Club products in 1949 at $72,195.[22] The beef chain worked as follows: Three registered calves were purchased by the local service clubs and placed with three boys selected from the 4-H clubs and/or the Future Farmers of America

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[21]Emmerich, "The 16-Point Farm Program," op. cit., pp. 5-6.

[22]Ibid., pp. 13-15.

clubs in the county. The first calf born to these heifers would be returned to the club and in turn given to another club boy, forming an endless chain of beef development.[23]

But the county agricultural leaders were also pushing for more and better beef production among the adults. Their efforts helped bring a $172,000 increased value in two years to the beef production program in the county.[24]

The development of a better and larger permanent pasture program was also needed. Emmerich wrote in 1948:

> The average per farm family income in Mississippi last year was $1,316. The per farm family income for the nation for the same time averaged $4,085. Agricultural leaders recognize that this is the result, first: From the fact that 75% of our farm income is from soil depleting crops and only 25% is from livestock and livestock products. In the nation as a whole 55% of the cash income is derived from livestock and livestock products and only 45% comes from soil depleting crops. . . and second: In the South 75% of our milk production comes from highly concentrated feed and only 25% from pasture grazing and cheap stored roughage. In the Mid-West 75% of milk production comes from pastures and cheap stored roughage whereas only 25% is derived from expensive concentrated feeds.[25]

If this sad economic fact was to be eradicated, then it would take a solid program of land improvement fertilizers and development. Lime was a good example of how

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[23]News story in Enterprise-Journal, January 7, 1948.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Editorial in Enterprise-Journal, September 16, 1948.

pasture improvement methods worked.

> A farmer, Reid Estess, offered to gamble his time in handling the lime and spreading it. Banker Johnson arranged a loan to buy Estess two special lime-spreading trucks, at a cost of $5000 each. The Illinois Central Railroad offered three sidings, in separate parts of the county, so that stock piles of lime would always be handy. A young dairyman, Earl Williams, agreed to lead off in proving the lime program on his 68 acres of pasture land. All this was early in 1948.
>
> The result? Reed Estess now owns six of his special lime-spreading trucks with an investment of $30,000. From almost no lime used when the program started, 220 carloads, or 11,000 tons, were spread in 1949 alone.[26]

Of equal importance, if not more important, was the fact that Williams built his 68 acres into fertile pasture land and reaped the profits from a good pasture.

> . . . he has built up a herd of 28 milkers and 12 heifers. In 1949 his cash income from milk alone was $7800, not counting sale of calves and culled-out cows.[27]

This was only the beginning of the pasture improvement program. County Agent Mullendore used examples like Williams to show other Pike Countians the value in spending a few extra dollars (the lime cost $7 per ton) in order to get a larger return. More minerals were put into the soil along with the lime and by the end of 1949, the value of the permanent pasture program in increased meat and milk

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[26]Wire, op. cit., p. 66.

[27]Ibid., p. 67.

production alone was $220,000. It also showed some 11,000 acres placed in improved permanent pasture land in 1949 compared to the 4,000 acres in 1947. The program was not yet a complete success, but it was making great inroads into improving the basic feed program for the cattle in Pike County.[28]

Poultry production was another major area on "The Grass Roots Movement" progress. Emmerich was concerned with the fact that Pike County's grocery stores and restaurants were having to import most of their poultry and eggs to meet consumer demands. He felt that if the county would produce even enough for its own needs, that would be a start. The county was producing only 5,000 birds every twelve weeks in early 1948, but increased that to 100,000 every twelve weeks in 1949.[29]

> In 1947 the annual broiler production was 20,000 birds. . . . The employment of a poultry specialist was part of the program. Last year Pike County produced one million broilers.[30]

The phenomenal success in this area rested primarily in the fact that the poultry specialist first helped already-existent producers by showing them techniques that

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[28]Emmerich, "The 16-Point Farm Program," op. cit., pp. 17, 19.

[29]Wire, op. cit., p. 68.

[30]Oliver Emmerich, "Magnolia Bank Plays Important Role in Developing Pike County," Mississippi Stockman-Farmer, March, 1952, p. 6.

Secondly, the arrangement of cooperatives helped to stimulate the poultry production program,[31] whereby large loans could be obtained over long periods of time through state and regional poultry dealers.

A program for the eradication of Bangs disease, an infectious cattle disease that often causes abortive pregnancies, was pushed by the cattle producers. The eradication of such a disease was invaluable to the farmers and could not be measured in specific terms. The important thing was that the disease had to be eradicated if the other beef and dairy programs were to mean anything.[32]

Forestry was another major industry in the rolling hill country of Southwest Mississippi, but was often overlooked as a means for stimulating any major economic growth in the area, perhaps because of its lengthy demands for growth. But Emmerich felt improved forestry would greatly enhance any economic growth in the total program. He noted:

> . . . 356 farmers made forest land improvements, 3500 forest acres (were) checked by foresters, 1070 units of pulpwood (were) marked and sold, and 2,870,000 feet of saw logs (were) marked before sale. . . . resulting in a $64,910 value increase over 1948.[33]

What was not so easily measured in the forestry

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Emmerich, "The 16-Point Farm Program," op. cit., p. 16.

[33] Ibid., p. 27.

program were the clinics on fire prevention and how to evaluate and cull timber.

Although emphasis had been placed on ending the county's "one cropism" problem, cotton still maintained a major position in the farm program. It was a staple crop and one, in the right kind of year, that would pay exceedingly good dividends. Instead of excluding it, the county agent and his assistants taught the farmers to realize the need for good fertilizers to enrich the soil, to choose a good variety of cotton, and to cultivate it properly through "modern farming techniques and practices." The point now, however, was that cotton would simply not get the attention it had received in years past.[34]

A beautification program was also launched. Emmerich's brother, a Methodist missionary, called Emmerich's attention to the Japanese practice of having a lighted cherry blossom trail in season each year. Since McComb was well known throughout the state for its azaleas, the question of a lighted azalea trail in McComb each year was considered. The idea carried with widespread support and was developed into a major production to the point that it became a major festival in the town's calendar of events.[35]

Emmerich enjoyed thinking that "The Grass Roots

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[34]News story in Enterprise-Journal, January 7, 1948.

[35]Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal interview.

Movement" was successful in that the entire community was involved and it worked in a positive attitude with a sense of pending accomplishment. The specific accomplishments were astounding, but Emmerich's deep satisfaction rested in the area of human action and thinking as reflected in a positive and energetic mind.

The overall program cost some $20,000 the first year and $18,000 the second.

> Of the original backers, one has died, one moved away and one deserted. The rest are still supporting it strongly and will renew it next year. This has happened in a region where, 25 years ago, 18 dipping vats were dynamited in a single night by ignorant, angry farmers protesting the state dipping law to eradicate ticks.[36]

At the end of the three year program in 1950, the vast majority of the county's residents had realized finally just how important the diversified farm program was. Many of the skeptics in the early stages of the program were now some of the more ardent supporters.

> New methods, new farm buildings, old land being planted successfully to new crops--that's the story you see all up and down Pike County. Farm benefits stimulated by Pike County's 16-Point Program are plain enough. . . . Then what has the program done for the businessman?
>
> Success brings success and money brings money--to everyone--that is the answer. Businessmen sponsors who backed the 16-Point Farm Program figure that their investment has brought an actual cash return

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[36]Charles Nutter, "A Crusading Editor Gets Results," Reader's Digest, January, 1951, p. 137.

to the county at a rate of 10,000 per cent.[37]

But Emmerich recognized something else in the program that was equal to the 10,000 per cent, not in terms of economics but in terms of individual initiative. He had often complained that big government with all of its bureaucracy was overrated as a provider of answers to agricultural problems. He felt local responsibility again had to be the answer to the local problems. Reflecting on the three year program, he noted that, "We've proved that the man at the grass roots level will produce more, and better, with only a little help--then leave him alone.[38]

Emmerich felt that with the outbreak of the Korean Conflict, there would be a great demand for the quick production of more food. He also felt that Pike County was ready to do its share in meeting that demand.

III. PROBLEMS, ACCEPTANCE, TRIBUTES

Emmerich's role as an editor was one of keeping the program before the public and keeping it in proper perspective. This he did by devoting large segments of his newspaper to reporting and explaining the progress of the program. Emmerich followed a hard-sell policy, because the program simply did not gain acceptance rapidly enough.

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[37]Wire, loc. cit.

[38]Ibid.

He attributed the slow start to a general skepticism among the farmers that there was a good possibility that they would be out expenses on programs on which profits could not be guaranteed unequivocally. Emmerich knew that while continued efforts through the newspaper toward convincing the farmers of the program's value was necessary, he felt merely explaining the program's values was not enough. What he needed most was local examples of success stories, but those examples took time to develop. The immediate need, then, became one of orienting the people to the program and making efforts toward encouraging active participation by as many farmers as possible in the least amount of time. This he did with much determination and optimism. He later recalled:

> The editor of a community or area newspaper is in the position of emphasizing this philosophy. People must be reminded. Leadership must be inspired, aroused, or cajoled to seek laudable community goals--and while prodding leadership into action the newspaper can help in the development of greater followship to get behind this leadership when it is aroused to action. . . . A newspaper is in the position of selling this area to its people and arousing them to needed action.[39]

Emmerich had the leadership aroused, but that alone could not solve the problem. It would take an active participation on the part of the individual farmers to make it work. In lieu of the examples, he quickly found other

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[39]Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal correspondence, May 29, 1967.

other means to add incentive for participating in the program.

> Emmerich's newspaper stimulated the program through contests, pictures, news stories and suggestions. It named outstanding farmers, mothers, homemakers, 4-H boys and girls for the week, month and year, both white and colored. First prize winners in community service projects received $500.[40]

Most of 1948 was spent in encouraging the individuals to action. Slowly, but surely, Emmerich's desired examples of success developed and more individuals began an active participation in the program, providing him with extra information and means for encouraging the program with even more enthusiasm and on a bigger scale.

After the 1948 crops were harvested, examples of astounding improvements added the greatest stimulation possible for the farmers to actively support the program. One farmer that had raised 15.5 bushels of corn per acre on five acres in 1947 and who had turned to the new farm program in its first year, harvested 95 bushels per acre on the same ground in 1948, an accomplishment unachievable in previous years, and felt that he could raise as many as 200 on it.[41]

Other similar examples served as Emmerich's most stable answers to the remaining skeptics. Annual "Grass

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[40] Nutter, op. cit., p. 136.

[41] Ibid.

Roots Banquets of America" were inspiring with their newly created atmosphere of prosperity and optimism. For the first time in the history of the community, it seemed there was a distinctive life to be found that reflected a new kind of thinking among the citizens.[42]

A correspondent for Newsweek magazine covered the 1949 "Grass Roots Banquet of America" in McComb and reported that the success of the farm program was evident by ". . . Pike County's bulging silos and cellar pantries and the new electric lights in many rural homes."[43]

The awards for community service were quick in coming; Progressive Farmer magazine named him its "Man of the Year in Mississippi Agriculture" for 1949. His editorial leadership won numerous awards for him at the state and national levels from his own colleagues.[44]

Harold Wire, writing in Country Gentleman, said of Emmerich's efforts in developing the new farm program in his community:

> If there was a miracle in Pike County, it was mostly in having a leader with concrete ideas about what should be done, and the initiative to get out and start doing it. He is Oliver Emmerich. . . . But Emmerich is quick to swing the credit in some other direction.

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[42]Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal interview.

[43]"Mr. Dynamite," Newsweek, loc. cit.

[44]Ibid.

> Self-help is his guiding theme. Editorially and otherwise, he constantly voices his belief that Federal programs with their inevitable controls and top heavy tax costs are not the answer to agriculture's local problems.[45]

Instead, Emmerich felt it was necessary to allow the local farmers to solve their own problems whenever and wherever possible. He was a firm believer that every community has a degree of leadership, apparent or otherwise. If that leadership can be aroused, the community would follow eventually and the entire community would benefit and progress. The arousal of that community leadership was Emmerich's first objective in "The Grass Roots Movement," and then once provoked to action, it could lead the "followers" into a positive, progressive, and profitable exercise.[46]

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The 16-Point Program was more than just a quickly developed production. It was the culmination of many years of effort on Emmerich's part to develop an attitude for economic growth among the community's farmers. It was a well-developed program that brought a widespread diversification of agricultural planning into practical application. Emmerich provided the initiative for the program

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[45]Wire, loc. cit.

[46]Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal interview.

and inspired other community leaders to follow suit.

A few individual farmers borrowed money on easy terms from local banks to get their particular program started, but Emmerich understood why others were reluctant at first to go deeper into debt. Yet, he knew the value of the program and sought as widely spread participation as possible and as quickly as possible. His job soon became one of selling the program to these farmers. He based his argument on local success stories resulting from the newly-implemented program.

To add extra incentive, he encouraged community and individual production contests, youth participation, and annual banquets; therefore creating an attitude of positive community action.

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CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

While a summary and conclusions are provided at the end of each chapter, there are a few general statements that may add to a better understanding of Emmerich's methodology.

For Emmerich, there were but two choices for the community, and the newspaper was deeply involved in either of them.

> A community can be one that is dragging its feet, a place where life is dull and living is listless and where negation prevails and people are uninspired with the things about them; or a community can be moved by the growth of education, science, industry, commerce, religion, and share in these things, and be a part of life and progress. A newspaper must contribute to the existence of a community which is lagging behind or help create one which is abreast of the times.[1]

This was Emmerich's editorial philosophy in all facets of the community life. He realized that he had in his hands an important tool that could provide the impetus for a progressive community, if used properly.

Emmerich analyzed his situation early in his career and had the foresight to understand the need for long range analysis as well as immediate application of recognized services. His community was in need of a better agricul-

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[1] Statement by Oliver Emmerich, personal correspondence, May 20, 1967.

tural economy and a leader to help destroy some of the dogmatisms that were forbidding the emergence of that better economy. Although Emmerich realized that education was no panacea, he recognized its merits and felt that it provided the best means to an enlightening program for community betterment.

When community or individual farm problems developed, Emmerich was careful to turn the situation into an educational experience. By this means, Emmerich helped a farmer or community to not only solve the problem, but to understand the solution as well. Emmerich sought ways to improve his community's economic life. When he attended the agricultural conference at the University of Mississippi in 1947 and saw how another community solved its economic problems, he seized upon the opportunity to initiate a similar program in his community.

This was the duty of an editor: To seek out new means and ideas for the social and economic improvement of the community and at least provide the community with the means or ideas insofar as they would be discussed as to their potentialities.

The same approach was used during critical times in the community. When the 1964 racial crisis had passed, Emmerich wondered if he had been as effective an editor as he should have been because of the violence that was not

prevented. But others commenting on his efforts felt he had done an excellent job. Still, his basic feeling for leadership caused him to pause and think.

Emmerich's efforts in these two vital areas of community life portray him as a responsible and effective editor. He has achieved many of his goals in agriculture, and has managed a considerable degree of racial harmony in his community. Although doubt lingers as to the best approach to the racial problem, Emmerich's editorial approach is one for cooperation and racial harmony based on mutual agreement. While he does not belabor the racial questions of today, he does take an active interest in them in hope of finding a harmonious pattern for practical adjustment. He has written that the pattern can, and must, be found somewhere within the framework of constitutional law.

But whatever the problem and whatever the need of his community, Emmerich has patiently worked for the answers, hopefully avoiding the loss of rationality and positive thinking.

Emmerich could have produced editorial copy that would have delighted his readers. He could have made his newspaper anything but the institutional leader that it is. But that was not Emmerich, and it could never be.

Emmerich's editorial leadership was reflected in

efforts to integrate progressive ideas into the fabric of community life--and it was he who was able to fit rationality and foresight in the greatest degree into the puzzle of social and economic change.

II. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

One of the more interesting aspects of Emmerich's editorials is the style in which they are written. He has a natural eloquence, founded in simplicity, that makes his prose distinctive. An analytic study of this style might be of value for studying editorial effectiveness.

Another aspect that lends itself to further study would be a comparative study of Emmerich's methodological approach to community problems compared with approaches to the same type of problems by other editors in Mississippi and/or the South.

A third area that could provide study material would be a biography of Emmerich, if it was approached with the idea of studying a country editor in the South. He has many interesting stories and problems to relate as to how personal feuds developed, delicate application of practical solutions to critical problems was administered, and to his personal fulfillment of reflecting on a successful journalism career.

But his main contribution to journalism has been

his effort to instill in his community a desire to seek and to find a better way of life through a dedicated self-initiative and a practical application of accumulated knowledge.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES BY MCCOMB RESIDENTS ON NOVEMBER 17, 1964, COUNTERING RACIAL DISHARMONY

The great majority of our citizens believe in law and order and are against violence of any kind. In spite of this, acts of terrorism have been committed numerous times against citizens both Negro and white.

We believe the time has come for responsible people to speak out for what is right and against what is wrong. For too long, we have let the extremists on both sides bring our community close to chaos.

There is only one responsible stance we can take: And that is for equal treatment under the law for all citizens regardless of race, creed, position or wealth; for making our protests within the frame-work of the law; and for obeying the laws of the land regardless of our personal feelings. Certain of these laws may be contrary to our traditions, customs or beliefs, but as God-fearing men and women, and as citizens of these United States, we see no alternative course to follow honorably.

To these ends and for the purpose of restoring peace, tranquility and progress to our area, we respectfully urge the following:

1. Order and respect for law must be re-established and maintained.
   (a) Law officers should make only lawful arrests. 'Harassment' arrests, no matter what the provocation, are not consonant with impartiality of the law.
   (b) To insure the confidence of the people in their officials, we insist that no man is entitled to serve in a public office, elective or appointive, who is a member of any organization declared to be subversive by the Senate Internal Security Sub-Committee or the United States Army, Navy or Air Force, or to take any obligation upon himself in conflict with his oath of office.
2. Economic threats and sanctions against people of both races must be ended. They only bring harm to both races.
3. We urge citizens of both races to re-establish avenues of communication and understanding. In addition, it is urged that the Negro leadership cooperate with local officials.
4. We urge widest possible use of our citizenship in the selection of juries. We further urge that men called for jury duty not be excused except for the most compelling reasons.

5. We urge our fellow citizens to take a greater interest in public affairs, in the selection of candidates, and in the support and/or constructive criticism of Public Servants.

6. We urge all of our people to approach the future with a renewed dedication and to reflect an attitude of optimism about our county.

We, the undersigned, have read and hereby subscribe and support the principles and purposes herein set forth.

The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate Faculty, have examined a thesis entitled

J. O. EMMERICH: STUDY IN COMMUNITY JOURNALISM

presented by

Carl Lester Willis

a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism

and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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Willis, C.L.