Silver Criticizes Closed Society, Politicians Blamed For Violence

BY EDDIE PRICE

Pressure from outside forces, such as the Justice Department and civil rights groups, is the only thing which will break up the closed society in Mississippi, according to Dr. James W. Silver, Professor of History at the University of Mississippi.

Author of the best seller, “Mississippi, the Closed Society,” Dr. Silver reviewed his book for the overflow audience of Houstonians and Rice students, then moved on to discuss the dramatic events of Summer, 1964.

Bombings and Burnings

Silver discussed the bombings, burnings, police harassment, and the spectre of nightriders and blasting shotguns which greeted “the brave young outsiders who brought the spirit of democracy into Mississippi this historic summer.” The worst, however—mass murder of the defenseless rights workers in rural Mississippi—did not happen.

“(Governor Paul) Johnson,” Dr. Silver pointed out, “and the officials of Mississippi wanted no more federal troops so they were easy with the civil rights workers.

“In previous years the vicious and belligerent elements—who will be found in any society, not just Mississippi—were given the go-ahead by the leadership. The power structure poured lies into the rednecks—and the responsibility for violence rests on the politicians.”

White Determination

Dr. Silver questioned what kind of society would allow college freshmen to throw stones at American troops and call themselves Freedom Fighters, and where the surest road to political success lies in denouncing the federal government as being under Communist control.

According to Dr. Silver, it is the determination of the citizens to keep Mississippi absolutely white regardless of the cost, that has created the closed society.

A refusal to accept the fact that white supremacy is a discredited notion everywhere else in the world, the perpetuation of false assumptions in science, religion, and politics to create intellectual foundations for segregation, distortion of the past and present and absolute support of the status quo by the entire press and political and social leadership of the State mean that dissent is absolutely silenced.

(Continued on Page 6)
(Continued from Page 1)

Indoctrination by persuasion and fear has turned Mississippi into the nearest thing to a police state that the United States has ever produced, in Dr. Silver's estimation.

Dr. Silver characterized his feelings by his closing statement on Southern Heritage: "I would take a delegation of Mississippians to Washington prepared to sell out that heritage—for a big price."