

THE WORLD SCENE

by Teddy Roosevelt Deans

With one bold stroke the Supreme Court settled the question of segregation in the nation's schools. By a unanimous 9-0 decision that august robed body shattered the old separate but equal doctrine that had protected outspoken Southern educational interests. Now all students, regardless of their race or creed, are assured an equal place in any public school in America.

But this is only in essence. A solid south stands rigidly opposed to the decision. In fact the opposing parties are lined up much the same way as they were before the Civil War almost 100 years ago. North of the Mason-Dixon line where the cry for equality in education rings loudest there are few instances of outright resistance to the Supreme Court ruling. For in many communities negroes have been attending school side by side with their lighter skinned comrades for years. In others the integration program has proceeded with ease.

But the South, where the tremendous numbers of negroes pose a real problem for the people, is determined to circumvent the Supreme Courts decision. Governor Herman Talmadge of Georgia even went so far as to suggest striking out the provision for public schools in the state constitution. Here the problem indeed is understandable. What is surprising is that the Court's decision should encounter such spirited opposition from a northern constituency.

Milford, Del., is a small town of less than 6000 with a negro population of slightly over 1000 but the recent segregation controversy has brought it international attention. It all centers on ten teenage negroes who fearlessly went to the first day of classes in the Lakeview Avenue school. Immediately many irate parents withdrew their children from the school, determined to disregard the Supreme Court decision. It is these people who have thrust the little town of Milford into the spotlight. In fact almost every citizen of Milford has taken sides in this controversy. However, few seem to sense the importance of their so-called isolated position. They do not realize that the eyes of the world are upon them, that every word spoken on the subject becomes fodder for innumerable newspapers, and that the action which they take will have far-reaching consequences. Nor do they realize how important their stand is to the north.

In the North lay the great impetus for the Supreme Court stand; here equality was supposedly well established in the public schools. It was the South that had to put its house in order. Now suddenly the north finds itself on the pan, as racial prejudices rear their ugly head, and the south sits back and enjoys the discomfiture of a rival that supposedly keeps its own nose clean.

Very shortly the Supreme Court is to deal with this Milford situation. It should be their job to deal severely with recalcitrant school authorities who would threaten and perhaps permanently mar the record of a united North. For unless they first up their own house in order they can hardly expect the south to push for equality in the public schools. It is there that the real problem lies, and where the new battle lines will be drawn. The Milford incident may have hastened that inevitable struggle—and influenced the strategy.