Speech of Governor Orval E. Faubus, September 2, 1957

**[Section 1]**

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen of the television and radio audience.

In view of the decisions I have made, I think it is well to review for the people of the State and the nation, some of the background in the tense situation which has now developed relative to the forcible integration of the public schools of Little Rock.

It is safe to say, to the informed and intelligent, that Arkansas has been known as a liberal and progressive State – perhaps the most liberal and progressive State in the South today.

We have set up an industrial program to promote the betterment of the entire State and to bring about a better way of life for all of its citizens of whatever color, race or creed. The program has been highly successful, and I say without hesitation is now the envy of many other States of the Union. We have begun a program of increasing State park facilities, have set up and expanded publicity programs which have told the story of Arkansas in every section of the nations, resulting in much good and advancement in the State, not only in the tourist industry, but other fields as well.

The Legislature recently enacted a program for the upgrading and improvement of all State services for all the people.

I believe that the great majority of the citizens of the State are gratified, as I am, with the bright prospects for the future.

**[Section 2]**

I would like to review this program, and other activities in the State, as they relate to the racial problem, and as the program and other activities affect the people in all walks of life.

It is well known that Negroes are now in attendance and have been attending the University of Arkansas, a State institution, for a number of years.

Last year, members of the Negro race were enrolled in many State supported colleges of Arkansas.

Also, Negroes have been integrated into the public school systems of the State, where it was acceptable to the majority and could be peaceably accomplished.

The public transportation systems of the State have been peaceably integrated, with no disorder and no untoward incidents except of a minor nature.

Negroes serve on both the Republican and Democratic State Central Committees, and Arkansas is the only State in the South where this is true.

A Negro elected by the vote of the people serves on the Board of Aldermen of the City Government of Hot Springs.

We also have in the State what is sometimes termed inter-racial sports events. For some years, professional football teams have played to capacity crowds in War Memorial Stadium in Little Rock, with both teams having Negro members.

Last year in the Aluminum Bowl Game, the two outstanding small college teams of the nation competed in War Memorial Stadium. There were Negro members on both teams. It is well known that such competition is not permitted in some other States.

In the matter of the public school program, a part of the over-all progressive program adopted by the Legislature, teachers’ salaries were increased an average of $810 annually in Arkansas. It is well known that the average increase for Negro teachers was in excess of the average increase for white teachers.

In the welfare program, the benefits have gone to the members of both races alike. On July 1st, of this year, the grants were increased $8.00 each per month. Also, a medical aid program has been set up for medically indigent people of the State.

Negroes have been given recognition, as is their due, in the field of State employment. They fill positions in the Education Department, in the Revenue Department, Highway Department, and other agencies of the State.

Negroes have been appointed by me and other Arkansas Governors to Boards and Commissions of the State Senate.

The Medical Center of Little Rock is not only an educational institution, but also a great charity and service facility. At the Center, a far greater proportion of the indigent people who receive treatment at State expense are members of the Negro race.

In the State Hospital, Negroes have been employed, as well as others.

Under an appropriation of the 1957 Legislature, the State is now completely rebuilding the Fargo Girl’s Training School near Brinkley, a school devoted wholly to the training of female members of the Negro race.

By appropriation of the 1957 Legislature, a considerable sum of money was provided for improvements at the McRae Sanatorium – an institution devoted entirely to the care and treatment of tubercular Negro patients. The Sanatorium is staffed entirely by Negro personnel.

The largest increase in any appropriation for any State college went to the Negro A. M. & N. College at Pine Bluff, an institution headed by one of the most able and respected scholars of the South, and a member of the Negro race.

During my time in office as Governor, I have never received any report of any effort to deprive the Negro citizen of his right to vote in any election throughout the seventy-five counties of the State. As the nation-wide audience and people of the State will recall, this was a subject of great controversy during the recent session of Congress in Washington, wherein much was said about civil rights measures to protect Negro citizens’ right to vote. I am proud now to say to you that no such action is necessary in the interest of the Negro, or any other minority, in Arkansas.

These facts are given as irrefutable proof that the citizens of Arkansas have been mindful of their problems as they relate to the good relations of the races, that the citizenry as a whole have met their responsibilities in this and other fields, and that improvements and progress have been made in an orderly and peaceful manner.

**[Section 3]**

We are now faced with a far different problem, and that is the forcible integration of the public schools of Little Rock against the overwhelming sentiment of the people of the area. This program gives every evidence and indication that the attempt to integrate forcibly will bring about widespread disorder and violence.

There is another aspect which I must recognize, and that is the fact that this particular problem and its solution is not only State-wide, but nation-wide in scope. This, of course, is most unfortunate, but it is a situation not of my making.

The plan of integration now being forced upon us by the Federal Courts was set up by the Little Rock School Board and its Superintendent, and approved by a Federal Court prior to expressions of the people, which have been made manifest since that time. These expressions of the people have been clearly indicated by the greatest, time-honored principles of Democracy – by the exercise of the franchise at the ballot box, and the expressions of the member of the Legislature who are elected by and are the representatives of the people.

Even the most extreme of these measures seeking to prevent the forcible integration of the schools against the people’s will – the one known as the Johnson Amendment – was approved by the people by a vote of 185, 374 to 146,064.

The Pupil Assignment measure seeks by constitutional and legal means to retain in the School Boards of the State some discretion and authority as to assignment of the pupils. It was approved by the people 214,713 to 121,129. The vote in Pulaski County, the area now most affected by the problem at hand was 27,325 for, and 16,666 against.

The Resolution of Interposition, which sought to interpose the sovereignty of the State between the people (whom it is the duty of the State to protect) and any unjust and unwarranted interference of the Federal Government, was approved by a vote of 199, 511 to 127, 360. The vote on this measure in Pulaski County was 23,038 in favor, and 17,808 against.

It is a known fact that citizens who are not fully informed on ballot measures will usually vote against any amendment, rather than for it. If these numbers could be determined and subtracted from the opposition vote, the result would reveal that the people are even more overwhelmingly in favor of the measure than the actual vote indicates.

Furthermore, during that last session of the Legislature, four measures dealing with this and allied problems were passed overwhelmingly by both Houses. Only one vote was cast against any measure in the House, and in the Senate all the measures except one received two-thirds or more of the votes of the members of that body.

These measures, both those approved by vote of the people and those passed by the Legislature, are now upon the stature books of the State and to all intents and purpose are the law of the land at the present time. They will remain the law of the land until, by the proper authorities, they are declared to be otherwise.

Litigation seeking to determine the validity of these measures has now been filed in the Courts of the State and in the Federal Courts. There has not been sufficient time to adjudicate these measures to a final conclusion.

To my mind, this is one of the greatest reasons for the unrest and for the imminence of disorder and violence which exists at this time in relation to the forcible integration of the schools tomorrow.

As the Governor of sovereign State, pledged to uphold its laws and Constitution, to defend and protect the welfare of the people, and to preserve order and protect the rights of tits citizens and their property, I feel strongly that time should be given to litigate these measures to final conclusion, in order that we may see clearly and unmistakably what is the law of the land – either State or Federal.

**[Section 4]**

Now that a Federal Court has ruled no further litigation is possible before the forcible integration of Negroes and Whites in Central High School tomorrow, the evidence of discord, anger and resentment has come to me in a deluge from many, many sources. There is evidence of disorder and threats of disorder which could have but one inevitable result – that is, violence which can lead to injury and harm to persons and property.

A police check has revealed a sale of unusually large numbers of weapons in the Little Rock area. The check reveals that some stores have completely sold out their stocks of knives. These sales have been mostly to Negro youths, but many have been sold to Whites as well.

One stores reported that a gang of negro youths came as a group, and every one of its members purchased knives while another group waited outside. When the first group went out, the second group entered for the same purpose, whereupon the owner took his remaining stock of knives, locked it up and declined to make further sales.

Last Thursday, I testified before the Chancery Court of Pulaski County in part as follows: “I have information that a number of revolvers were taken from students in high school, both White and Colored”.

It is significant that Mr. House, Attorney for the School Board, did not cross-examine me on this statement. I can tell you why he declined – he knew the source of my information because the people he represented had the same information. They knew it was reliable, and that I had stated the truth.

In the same trial, Mr. Blossom, Superintendent of the Little Rock schools, testified he had been to see the Little Rock Chief of Police fifteen or twenty times to discuss the keeping of the peace at the opening of the school term. But Mr. Blossom declined to state that he anticipated violence. However, today, Mr. Blossom appealed to me for help.

I have undeniable reports of a telephone campaign of massive proportions going on in the City of Little Rock at this time, calling upon the mothers of White children to assembly peaceably upon the school grounds at 6:00 A.M. tomorrow, the opening day of school.

I have reports of caravans that will converge upon Little Rock from many points in of the State, to assemble peaceably upon the school grounds in the morning. Some of these groups have already reached the city, and are here now. Some of the information about these caravans has come to me from the school authorities themselves.

Telephone calls have come to me at the mansion in a constant stream. The expressions of all are the fear of disorder and violence, and of the harm that may occur tomorrow in this attempt at forcible integration of Central High School.

Other evidence of the alarm and concern comes from a Negro newspaper.

**[Section 5]**

Coming as a boy from the hills, from a family of modest circumstances, I learned and have treasured many of the time-honored adages.

“A stitch in time saves nine.” “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

Remembering the wisdom of these maxims, and begin aware of the overwhelming evidence of impending disorder which could lead to violence and even bloodshed, I have therefore, in accordance with the solemn responsibilities and my Oath of Office, made the decision to act and to act now. It is only good judgment to act before the situation gets out of hand – before the resulting violence creates lasting enmity, animosity, and hate between citizens of this community, which would do irreparable harm to the good relations that have existed between the races. I have, therefore, taken the following action:

Units of the National Guard have been, or are now being mobilized, with the mission to maintain or restore the peace and order of the community. Advance units are already on duty on the grounds of Central High School.

I have briefed the Commanders as to the situation, and they already have or are now briefing the members of their commands.

I have informed Chief Lindsey, Director of the Arkansas State Police, of the developments. He is now mobilizing a force to act as an arm of the State Militia in maintaining or restoring the peace and order of the community, and to act in every way possible to protect the lives and property of the citizens of Pulaski County.

This is a decision I have reached prayerfully. It has been made after conferences with dozens of people, and after checking and verifying as many of the reports as possible.

The mission of the State Militia is to maintain or restore order and to protect the lives and property of citizens. They will act not as segregationists or integrationists, but as soldiers called to active duty to carry out their assigned tasks.

I must state here, in all sincerity, it is my firm conviction that it will not be possible to restore or to maintain order and protect the lives and property of the citizens, if forcible integration is carried out tomorrow in the schools of this community. The inevitable conclusion, therefore, must be that the schools in Pulaski County, for the time being, must be operated on the same basis as they have been operated in the past.

I appeal now for reason, clear thing, and good order. Let us all be good citizens, and continue as a people and as a State, upon the road of progress on which we have so enthusiastically embarked.

THE PUBLIC PEACE WILL BE PRESERVED!