

## It Is Not To Be In Oak Park

[The following editorial first appeared in The Advertiser Aug. 27, 1958. It applies as well to the present situation.]

PROBABLY the colored citizens who petitioned the City Commission to mix the races in Oak Park are aware that a law already exists through which the park can be sold or even given away to private interests.

In 1956, Alabama voted to ratify an amendment (No. 3) to the State Constitution that opens the way for cities to evade possible court orders to mix the races. The law means business. It provides:

Section 94. The legislature shall not have power to authorize any county, city, town, or other subdivision of this state to lend its credit, or to grant public money or thing of value in aid of, or to any individual, association, or corporation whatsoever, or to become a stockholder in any such corporation . . . by issuing bonds or otherwise.

*It is provided, however, that the legislature may enact general, special, or local laws authorizing political subdivisions and public bodies to alienate, with or without a valuable consideration, public parks and playgrounds, or other recreational facilities and public housing projects, conditional upon the approval of a majority of the duly qualified electors of the county, city . . . or other subdivisions affected thereby, voting at an election held for such purpose.*



THERE you have it. The City Commission has already formally stated that Oak Park will not be integrated.

In the face of a race mixing court order, the commission might, if it chose, give the park away to some individual or company to operate.

A park is not a bus system or a school. It is something that can be disposed with. Oak Park might simply be closed.

Certainly it must be obvious that before the races are mixed in Oak Park that the squirrels would be trapped and set free in Catoma swamp, the roses and azaleas would be ploughed up, the ancient oaks and pines would be cut and sold for timber.

An official who saw it otherwise could not survive in Montgomery politics.



WE SUSPECT that the colored petitioners know this. Perhaps their

motive is to prod the city to move faster and on a larger scale to provide truly separate but equal parks in Montgomery. It is too bad that we whites did not have the will and foresight to commence such equalizations much before we did.

It is understandably human that white leaders, in such cases as the Oak Park petition, should remark the fact that colored citizens pay a comparatively insignificant part of the taxes, that the white taxpayer has largely provided the colored citizen with what he has. Human that reflection may be, but it is not sound inasmuch as certain white elements and neighborhoods pay far more in taxes than other white elements and neighborhoods. But one white section does not jab this at another white section. In fact, demagogues among our politicians always make their big promises to the white elements that pay the least in taxes.

Nevertheless, even a visionary like Dr. King must know perfectly well that race mixing in Oak Park is not to be. Probably he does. Possibly what he has in mind is something like that which occurred in a similar circumstance in Bessemer. The whites assured the Negroes of improved park facilities and the Negroes wisely and gracefully agreed to forget mixed facilities.