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**Massive Resistance – III**

**Lead: After the Supreme Court declared segregated schools unconstitutional in 1954, Virginia leaders tried to incite massive resistance to integration. They were encouraged by a novel, but ultimately ludicrous, constitutional theory, interposition.**

**Intro. : *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: In the early days after the epochal Supreme Court decision, the reaction of Virginia's leaders was muted, but then the returns from the**

**Southside began to come in. Governor Stanley appointed a Commission to study the implications of the Court decision, and the so-called Gray Commission recommended a modified form of local option, which would allow some districts the chance to experiment with integration.**

**Senator Harry Byrd, leader of the Southside-based Organization, which up to that point controlled Virginia politics, playing on white fears of intermarriage and black progress, decreed that Virginia would engage in massive resistance to school desegregation. Anger against the Court and the blacks that had provoked this Federal intrusion was instrumental in the 1956 General**

**Assembly's rejection of any local option, indeed any compromise that would lead to segregated schools.**

**Stoking the debate was a series of inflammatory, yet seemingly well-reasoned editorials in the *Richmond News Leader* by its young editor, James Jackson Kilpatrick. His theory, interposition, was that the states had the right to interpose themselves and block Federal law. Unfortunately, this vaguely familiar theory was intellectually indistinguishable from that of John C. Calhoun in the 1830s Nullification Crisis. Rejected with disdain by President by Andrew Jackson at the time and rejected at the point of a bayonet in the 1860s, it still had the capacity to stir the white**

**faithful and secured Kilpatrick iconic  
status among movement  
conservatives, an appreciation which  
remained into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Next  
time: the end of massive resistance.**

**At the University of Richmond,  
this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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