

CORE - Congress of Racial Equality
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.S. ACTION AGAINST POLICE AND KLAN FOLLOWS ASSAULTS ON PICKETS

Bogalusa, La., July 22, 1965---Following two days of attacks by whites against pickets at the Pine Tree Shopping Center while state and city police stood by inertly, the U.S. initiated broad legal action against local police officials and the Original Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

Specifically, Police Chief Claxton Knight and Public Safety Commissioner Arnold Spiers were accused of civil and criminal contempt of a federal injunction calling upon them to protect civil rights demonstrators. Deputy Sheriff Walter Adams of Washington parish was charged with beating and intimidating Negroes. An injunction was sought to restrain the Original Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 20 of its members and 15 other whites from "assaulting, harassing, threatening and intimidating" either civil rights workers or business men complying with desegregation orders.

On July 16, segregationists attacked the shopping center pickets six times, with onlooking state troopers only 50 yards away. Charles Bellows and John Hamilton, both CORE volunteers, were twice beaten before being taken to a doctor. CORE Community Relations Director Alan Gartner was struck repeatedly in the face and his glasses were shattered. Later, city police arrested seven of the pickets for "trespassing," but none of the attackers. Since January, 30 segregationists have been arrested for assaulting civil rights workers, but none have been prosecuted.

On July 17, pickets at the shopping center were drenched with hoses. "You still smell a little bit like a nigger to me," said Ray Risen, a local barber and city fireman, as he finished dousing Henry Park, a white CORE volunteer. Later in the day, civil rights marchers were pelted with rocks and fruit. Again, police arrested none of the attackers, but took three marchers into "protective custody."

Since July 19, when the U.S. took legal action, the marches and picketing have proceeded peacefully and four restaurants have served Negro testers. However, the main issues of equal employment and improved community facilities for Negroes remain unresolved, despite a recent series of negotiations sessions with Mayor Jesse Cutrer, Jr. and Mayor John McKeithen. Negotiators for CORE and the Bogalusa Civic & Voters League flatly rejected the governor's proposal for a 30-day truce in return for the granting of state jobs to two Negro leaders.

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