

SUMMARY OF INCIDENTS IN BOGALUSA, LOUISIANA, APRIL 7 - 9, [1965]

CORE Southern Regional Office
2209 Dryades Street
New Orleans, Louisiana

Wednesday morning, 7th

Bill Yates, CORE staff worker, was leaving the Hicks' residence walking to his parked car, when a blue pick-up truck appeared, containing three whites, and began photographing him with a movie camera. He reached his car, got in, and a dark green truck pulled up and blocked him. The green truck had been circling the neighborhood for some time, also containing three whites.

The man closest to the door of the truck got out, took out a blackjack, and came towards Bill. Bill rolled up the window and started the ignition, recognizing the man as the one who had broken his hand in an earlier incident. The man tried to bash in the window, but it held fast, and Bill was able to put the car in reverse and get away.

The green truck tried to catch up with him, but he managed to circle around and make it back to the Hicks house, where Mrs. Hicks threatened the whites with a pistol. They left.

Wednesday afternoon

A test was made of the Virginia Inn, the local Klan hang-out, without incident (the testers weren't even allowed in the door). A test was also done at the Big R, a local drive-in, and the testers were served.

Wednesday evening

At 6:00, Bill Yates called from a booth outside the local Negro union hall, where a voters clinic was in progress. He reported that Klansmen had been arriving in the area in 2's and 3's for quite a while, and were now arriving in carloads. Mrs. Hicks called a few minutes later and informed us that the Klansmen were holding a meeting two blocks from the hall, and it looked very bad. The Klansmen numbered, varying, between 60-70.

We called the FBI, Justice Department, local and national news media, and tried to get in touch with the governor. McKeithan stated that he would look into the matter personally, though there was no real pressure on him to do so at that point.

Speedy action was taken, we are glad to say, by state and federal agencies and soon the Negro community and civil rights workers were so well protected that the Klan couldn't move. This, however, did not stop the burning of a 10-foot cross later that night, or the setting of two black coffins in front of the union hall, with floodlights on them, one of which bore Bill Yates' name.

Thursday morning, 8th

In the wee hours, three carloads of Klansmen passed the Hicks residence, where the CORE staff was staying, shooting at the house. The cars returned, but by this time members of the community were on the scene to protect the Hicks' from further intimidation.

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All downtown stores and the Crown-Zellerbach plant were closed down. Canvassers, primarily volunteers from Kansas University, went into the northern section of town, followed by 4 carloads of Klansmen. Bill and some others tried to get police protection for them, but could not; they finally managed to rescue the canvassers themselves, and return to the union hall. Meanwhile, the Klan was holding a lengthy rally, of about 200 persons, in their location two blocks from the hall.

Students from the Negro schools in the area walked out of classes, planning to march on the downtown section; the police barricaded the town, and local residents were afraid that violence would ensue if Klansmen waved guns at the students. The march began at 12:30, but was halted by police. The marchers returned to the union hall to reorganize for a later march on City Hall.

Thursday night

Mr. James Farmer, National Director of CORE, addressed a crowd of about 500 at the Central High School gymnasium. More than 100 city and state policemen were on the scene, at one point having to turn back 32 carloads of Klansmen who attempted to approach the school. A.Z. Young and Mr. Washington had acid poured on the cars during the rally, but other than that there was no incident.

Friday morning, 9th

Jim Farmer and Ronnie Moore led a march of about 480 people to City Hall. The marchers returned to the union hall, as there was inadequate police protection: a group of whites tried to attack the photographers, and a Negro landed in the hospital after being hit by a 2-by-4.

Many CORE chapters and projects all over the country sent telegrams to the Justice Department and President Johnson asking for the heaviest protection possible, in hopes of avoiding another Selma.

Friday afternoon

The marchers returned, and completed the march without incident. They were met at the City Hall steps by the mayor and a number of State Troopers; the mayor stated that he felt the grievances presented by the Negro community could easily be settled over the conference table.