

*Federal and local officers  
crack down on the hooded hoodlums*

## Hard Times for The Klan

*April 1952*

**T**HE present-day Ku Klux Klan is a far cry from the powerful "Invisible Empire" which terrorized the South and parts of the North in the Twenties. It now consists of a few third-rate satrapies ruled by power-hungry little men who spend much of their time quarreling among themselves. Yet in limited areas these terrorist splinter groups are still a serious threat to safety of the person.

The Association of Carolina Klans, headed by a self-styled "Grand Dragon" named Thomas L. Hamilton, is one such group. It achieved notoriety in 1950 when some of its members raided a Negro nightclub in Horry County, S. C. A gun-fight ensued, and when the shooting was over one Klansman, a Conway policeman, lay dead and abandoned by his companions. Since that time, Horry's Sheriff C. E. Sasser has waged a running campaign against the organization.

Members of the same group have been active across the state line in North Carolina. During the past thirteen months, more than a dozen persons have been flogged by masked nightriders in Columbus County. Many of the victims

were white persons whose morals did not suit the floggers' fancy. Among the few local persons who dared speak out against this lawlessness were two newspaper editors, who rightly termed it "a reign of terror."

Some of these high-riding Klansmen recently had a nasty fall. On February 16, some forty agents of the FBI staged a surprise roundup of members of the now defunct Fair Bluffs Klavern. All ten of those arrested were indicted by a special federal grand jury on charges of abduction and conspiracy.

A few weeks later, the Columbus County sheriff, aided by state agents, dealt the Klan another blow. This time eleven men were arrested and charged with kidnapping and assault.

At about the same time, the sheriff of nearby Robeson County apprehended fifteen alleged Klansmen, charged with violation of an old statute which forbids membership in secret political organizations. Three renounced their membership and were released; the rest denied the charge and were placed under bond.

Too often, arrest in such cases is not followed by conviction. It remains to be seen whether North Carolina will change the pattern. But one thing is unmistakable: the public revulsion against the Klan and its principles is angry and widespread. One index is the demand in North Carolina for state laws that will permanently end such terrorism. The Attorney General of the state is considering a measure that would outlaw the Klan and other organizations which conspire to take the law into their own hands.

Such sweeping legislation has its dangers, as Alexander F. Miller, the Southern director of the Anti-Defamation League, recently pointed out. Alternatively, the ADL suggests the following as effective ways to curb the Klan's illegal actions without endangering the constitutional right of association:

1. *Klan members associate secretly to conspire against the public order and safety. The secrecy can be stripped from the Klan by a Secret Society Registration Act which requires the membership list, the officials and finances of certain secret societies, such as the Klan, to be registered with the Secretary of State and open to public inspection.*

2. *Klan violence is usually committed under cover of masks, hoods, or robes. Obviously an anti-mask law such as has been passed recently by four Southern states will remedy this evil.*

3. *The Klan intimidates its intended victims by terroristic signs and symbols, especially cross burnings. The use of these symbols can be limited and prohibited by appropriate law such as is now on the books in Georgia.*

4. *The Klan has sometimes infiltrated the law enforcement machinery. This problem can be solved by legislation providing that each law enforcement officer take periodic oaths that he is not a member of the Ku Klux Klan or any like organization.*

Such laws, vigorously enforced, would be another way of saying what the Solicitor of Robeson County recently told a group of arrested Klansmen:

"You understand physical force, but there is another force which we wish to impress upon you. The same law which has protected you all your lives is not your individual or collective possession. It belongs to the rich and to the poor, to the Negro, to the white, to the Indian, to the native born, to the foreign born, to the Protestant, to the Catholic, and to the Jew. It is going to stay that way."