

February 22, 1964

Pine Bluff: Iris

Gregory got out of jail yesterday, primarily, he says, to contact the justice department about jail conditions in Pine Bluff. He called Robert Kennedy twice yesterday and Burke Marshall is now on his way to Pine Bluff to investigate. Kennedy called the FBI last night an FBI agent visited the county jail and interviewed the sheriff, but didn't go into the jail itself. (more below re conditions)

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Several whites (the Arkansas Council for Human Relations and PB Commercial) believe that Faubus is using the Pine Bluff situation as a campaign issue. They feel he is trying to consolidate white votes and keep them away from Winthrop Rockefeller who has thrown hat into ring for Republican nomination Ekk for governor. The Pine Bluff Commercial ran an editorial saying "If the Faubus administration seeks to use Pine Bluff and its troubles for political gains they will find the responsible people overwhelmingly in the majority."

There is a group of local white mediateors pressuring the governor. ██████████ Circuit court Judge Smith pressured Sheriff Norton and Ray's ████ has been ordered closed for 72 hours. Negotiations are supposed to go on during this time. Mediators are concerned with stopping demonstrations from spreading to the city. They are also concerned with squelching violence, especially by "white agitators." Through their negotiations the hospital coffee shop has been opened and steps are being taken to open the board of the hospital to Negroes. Negotiations are on with the Holiday Inn and Pines Hotel. They feel that there will be no trouble integrating these places.

Faubus contends that the situation in Pine Bluff is "threatening" and he has said, "We don't intend to let any group of demonstrators take over any place of business or the streets of any town in Arkansas." State troopers have been mobilized ████████████████████ around Pine Bluff and are on riot call. Faubus has also said that "White integrationists and Negroes have faught to inflame others. All were attempts to inflame a riotous situation." The Pine Bluff Commercial contradicted him however stating, "the assailants have been known segregationist militants. The Negro demonstrators have not fought back."

It is probably important also that Sheriff Norton is up for reelection this year.

Yesterday Gregory had a press conference where he discussed jail conditions. He said, "The health department would have to clean that place up and disinfect it before he could go in there to condemn it." It is of solitary confinement (he was in for 2 1/2 days, seemingly for no reason) he said, "It's like somebody's secret torture chamber." Hansen is still in solitary (3 1/2 days) but will be banded out with the others today. Hansen is sick; he has been on a hunger strike- no water, no medical attention. They have refused to let him see a lawyer.

A 72 hour moratorium has been called (they need a rest) during negotiations

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Pine Bluff: cont'd

The office has been told that Watson, owner of Ray's, was convinced to integrate until Governor Faubus intervened.

There was a student meeting at AM&N yesterday : they voted to form a committee to see how they could participate. They said, "we blame SNCC for instigating trouble". They're to have a meeting this morning. NB: the President of the college is now back in Pine Bluff- while he was away the student body of 2600 had voted to demonstrate.

Ben Grinage and Gregory will be having another press conference today. So far they have gotten very good coverage from the PB Commercial and the Arkansas Gazette. Gregory has made the jail conditions the focus of his discussion. Grinage has said that if something wasn't done to take care of the whole situation that federal intervention would be necessary.

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Hattiesburg: Sandy Leigh

They are having mass demonstrations today for 'anniversary of Freedom day'- one month today. Four mass meetings last night were well attended.