

Report on attempt to integrate the white public city park in Canton, Miss.

On Thursday evening, June 17, 1965 a group of about 20 Negroes and one white Cofo volunteer went to the Canton Park and Recreation Center at or around 7:30 P.M. The group, led by Mr. C.O. Chinn (who lives in Canton and is on CORE staff) drove from downtown Canton to the park, some three blocks away. Approximately 50 Negroes followed on foot and watched the subsequent proceedings from a hill overlooking the park.

At about 7:00 C.O. Chinn Jr. drove near the park and reported that Canton police, the sheriff, and the highway patrol were parked in their cars at the entrance and exit to the park. They were there when the five cars from Cofo drove up and into the parking lot. The cars parked without difficulty and Mr. Chinn led the group directly to the bleachers. The park was crowded with whites playing baseball or filling the bleachers. White ball players were warming up for a league game. Upon taking their seats, the integrated group was approached by a park employee, Mr. Lewis Lonus Hucks, whose exact title we do not have. He told the group he had been requested to ask them to leave. (The events in and around the bleachers were recorded and filmed by an NBC unit) Asked who "they" were who had ordered the group to leave, Mr. Hucks would not answer. Asked why the group should leave, Mr. Hucks again would give no reason, nor would he give Mr. Chinn his name.

After about 5 minutes in the bleachers Mr. Chinn led the group back to the cars. He had intended to do this should the group be asked to leave since a much larger attempt had previously been scheduled for the 25th, 26th, and 27th of June and did not want anyone to go to jail on this occasion. At the park there had been considerable verbal abuse, but no violence. About the only thing that approached that was when Peterson, a local white who has often made trouble drove up the exit route from the park scattering the people walking back down the hill. Peterson was seen to cock a shotgun and hand it to someone riding in the back of his truck.

The alderman in Canton in charge of parks and recreation is Mr. S Lewis C. Smith of 316 S. Union St. According to the City Clerk, Mr. Lewis Smith was out of town attending a municipal conference. The mayor of Canton is Mr. L. S. Matthews of 467 N. Liberty St.

report by Charney Bromberg
CORE volunteer