

TITLE: NAACP Activities and Integrating of The Greyhound Bus Terminal in Poplarville, Mississippi, Pearl River County.

INVESTIGATIVE PERIOD: November 14, 1961

INVESTIGATED BY: Virgil Downing, Investigator

DATE OF REPORT: November 20, 1961

TYPED BY: Marie Rayfield

I was requested by Albert Jones, Director of the State Sovereignty Commission to contact County Officials of Pearl River County and City Officials of Poplarville, Mississippi, regarding the integration of the Greyhound Bus Terminal in Poplarville and the integrating of the white waiting room of the Greyhound Bus Terminal by so-called Freedom Riders during the month of November, 1961, and also to check with County and City Officials regarding any NAACP activities that may exist in Pearl River County.

I contacted J. W. Owens, Sheriff of Pearl River County, personally. He informed me that the NAACP had not caused him any trouble in the county and relations were very good among the races. He stated that the integrating of the white waiting room of the Greyhound Bus Terminal by Freedom Riders this month was the only trouble he has had from any subversive organization.

Sheriff Owens said that he had ordered his officers to follow the same procedure as the Police Department in Jackson, Mississippi, should the Freedom Riders attempt to integrate public places in Pearl River County and to arrest all that violated under Breach of the Peace Statute.

Sheriff Owens was very cooperative and expressed his appreciation for the Sovereignty Commission and stated he would contact the Commission should any trouble develop in the county.

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I contacted Norman Reuse, the Chancery Clerk. He stated that the NAACP had not caused him any trouble and he was under the impression that the Negroes were well satisfied in Pearl River County.

I contacted J. Monroe Spiers, the Circuit Clerk. He stated that he was not having any trouble with the NAACP or any other subversive organization in the county and he thought relations were very good among the races. Mr. Spiers was very nice and said he appreciated my visit and assured me he would notify the Sovereignty Commission should the NAACP start trouble in Pearl River County.

I contacted Harry B. Sones, Supt. of Education of Pearl River County. He stated that he was of the impression that the Negroes were well satisfied with the schools of the county and he did not think that he would have any trouble from the NAACP.

Supt. Sones was very cooperative and complimented the Sovereignty Commission for the good work being done by the Commission. He stated that if any trouble came from any subversive organization he would immediately contact the Sovereignty Commission.

Supt. Sones stated that the schools of Pearl River County were divided into three districts and there were no Negro schools in the county. He stated that the Negroes in the county attended school in Poplarville and Picayune, Mississippi, and the county school buses picked them up at their homes and carried them to school and brought them back home every school day, also their noon lunch was served in the cafeteria of the schools and all the colored students and their parents seemed to be well satisfied with the colored schools of Pearl River County.

Supt. Sones said that he was very confused about a white high school that the money for construction has been available for ~~for~~ the past two years. He stated there was a minority group that stated they would appeal to federal court and let the high school be integrated, if the school was not erected where they wanted it to be. Supt. Sones stated that this minority group of white people has as their counselor, ^{Attorney} Jess Stockstill of Picayune to represent them in court where the location of the high school is to be erected in Pearl River County. Mr Sones said that his power was very limited, due to the fact that the schools

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in Pearl River County operated under three school districts. He said one district was in the City of Poplarville and one in the City of Piquayune and the other in the County at large. Mr. Sones stated that Tommie Naylor knows all about the school trouble that is causing all this confusion at this time. He further stated that he was a personal friend to Honorable Jess Stockstill and he was sure that Attorney Stockstill was only interested as an attorney in this matter.

I contacted the office of the Tax Assessor, Hal B. Breland, and was informed that the NAACP was not causing any trouble and that relations among the races in the county were very good at this time.

I contacted Honorable Pat Hyde, Mayor of Poplarville. He stated that the only trouble he has had was the Freedom Riders this month. Mayor Hyde was very cooperative and stated that he was advised that the Freedom Riders were on their way to Poplarville and he ordered his Chief of Police and Marshall, B. F. Orr, to handle the situation the same as the Jackson Police did and if they refused to move on when ordered to by City Police Officers, to arrest them for Breach of the Peace. Mayor Hyde said that by doing this he was sure it kept down violence in the City of Poplarville, Mississippi. He stated after the trial he furnished the Freedom Riders police escort out of the city. These Freedom Riders were Frank Nelson, white male, New York City, Alice Thompson, colored female and Patricia Smith, colored female, both of New Orleans. Each were fined \$250.00 and sentenced to two months in jail. All three made bond for \$500.00 each and will appeal to Circuit Court. Bonds are returnable to the April, 1961 term.

Mayor Hyde was very cooperative and expressed his appreciation for the interest the State Sovereignty Commission has shown them in these troubled times.

I contacted B. F. Orr, Chief and Marshall of the City of Poplarville. He was very cooperative and stated he was ordered by Mayor Hyde to cover the Greyhound Bus Terminal the day the Freedom Riders arrived. He stated he was inside the white waiting room sitting down when the two Negroes and a white man entered. He said one of these Negroes came and sat down on the same seat by him. He said that he saw a group of white people gathering and he ordered them to move on. They refused to move and he arrested all three and after the trial he furnished police protection for them out of the City of Poplarville.

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Chief Orr and this investigator checked the facilities of the bus terminal. It was determined at this investigation that there were no signs designated in either waiting room and was separated by a petition that separated the races. There was a ticket window that opened into the colored waiting room where Negroes were sold tickers, soft drinks and sandwiches. Chief Orr stated that as far as he knew there never were any signs showing white and colored waiting rooms for the bus terminal in Poplarville. Chief Orr stated that a Mrs. Windom was manager for the bus terminal and on the day the Freedom Riders came she was out of the city and a Mrs. C. W. Stafford was acting as manager in her place.

I contacted the Circuit Judge, Zebe Dale. He stated that ~~the only thing~~ he was confused about was the high school. He ~~stated that~~ a minority group has said they would file in Federal Court and would have an integrated high school if the school was not built where they wanted it built.

This is the end of my report for Pearl River County.