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THE KLAN AND THE CRUELL CASE

With Governor Timmerman and U. S. Senators Thurmond and Johnston, to say nothing of judges, mayors, sheriffs, chiefs of police and pro-white newspapers all shouting defiance of the courts, it is not to be wondered that the hoodlum element has felt free to act as in the Cruell case in Greenville.

After two weeks of investigation into the beating of Claude Cruell, 58-year-old upper Greenville County Negro farmer, it has been learned that a number of Ku Klux Klan members were among the mob of 15 white men taking part in the crime.

Cruell said the men broke into his home located four miles north of Travelers Rests, chained his arms and beat him with blackjacks and sticks. They accused him of being "too friendly" with his white neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood Turner.

At the time the beating occured, Cruell and his wife were caring for seven of the Turner children. Turner, 34 told police he left the children while he visited his wife in the hospital.

Greenville police began acting immediately to roundup suspects in the case, and thus far have charged eight men with participating in the beating.

One of the suspects — A. Marshall Rochester, 30 — has admitted in a signed statement that he was one of the group that went to the Cruell home and has identified himself as president of the "Ku Klux Klan at Greenville."

Several other suspects have also admitted being members of the Klan organization.

The Klan for a year or so has been experiencing a considerable revival in Gdeenville County and other counties astride the border between South and North Carolina and close to the coast. Except for organizational activity, rallies and cross-burning and the like, however, the Klan hasn't done anything to cause headlines.

One other distressing Klan-type of incident during the past year occured near Camden, where a small group of masked men seized Guy Hutchins, Camden High School bandmaster, and severely flogged him because of alleged sympathetic views on integration. Six men were arrested in the case, but the county grand jury refused to indict two of them charged with conspiracy to violate the state's civil rights statute. As for the other four, the grand jury reduced the charge from an offense carrying a maximum penalty of up to 10 years' imprisonment to one of simple assault, punishable by no more than $100 fine or 30 days' imprisonment.

It cannot pass unnoticed that the Cruell beating in Greenville came at a time when Congress, despite opposition from diehard southern segregationists, was taking steps forward in the matter of non-discriminatory citizenship.

Greenville law enforcement officials have said they will seek a quick indictment of the men charged in the Cruell case.

It remains to be seen whether the Greenville officials will fare better than the Camden officials against the resurgent Klan, and see that justice is done.

Meaning of Civil Rights Bill

By Roy Wilkins, Executive Secretary
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

For the first time in 87 years a civil rights bill has been passed by the United States Senate. During this long period, many civil rights measures have been passed by the House only to succumb to a Dixie filibuster in the Senate. That this bill met no such fate s in itself significant.

The fact that no filibuster developed on the motion to take up the bill (where it has always developed in the past) is a tribute to Negro voters in the November election who demonstrated their flexibility and determination to support issues rather than blindly to support parties. The November election shift, coupled with the pressure for a change in the Senate filibuster Rule 22 last January, awakened both parties to the foolhardiness of a filibuster against taking up the bill. The Negro voter can thank himself for the fact that there was no filibuster.

As passed by the Senate the bill is not as strong a measure as we of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People want and believe the people are entitled to. It has been shorn of its most effective elements. However, even in the Senate version there are residual potentialities for (a) increasing the number of Negro voters in the South; (b) discovering whether, as has been claimed, the vast majority of voting cases will be disposed of in civil actions without a jury; (c) determining whether or not, for the official record, southern juries can render verdicts in voting cases on the basic of the evidence and the law; (d) investigation and exposure by the federal government of the deprivations of voting rights; and (e) establishment of an effective and fully manned civil rights division in the Department of Justice.

When I testified, on behalf of the NAACP and 25 other organizations, in support of the bill before the subcommittee on constitutional rights of the Senate Judiciary Committee on Feb. 15, 1957, I said: "Our immediate and overriding interest is in making a start, in taking a first step toward breaking the congressional stalemate through the enactment of a minimum meaningful bill."

The bill which the Senate approved is not that bill. It is obviously minimum; yet it is still meaningful in that it gives congressional recognition to the right to vote and provides the federal government with the instruments with which to enforce the right. Neither the Senate nor the House version of the bill confers any new right. The bill, as it stands today, merely confirms constitutional rights and promises wider implementation of these rights.

It is noteworthy that the principal labor, civic, fraternal and majority group organizations which, year after year, have fought side by side with the NAACP on all civil rights issues, joined the Association in urging "Senate supporters of civil rights to vote for the bill in the hope that some means will be found to strengthen it in the House." These organizations expressed their bitter, disappointment" that the bill had been altered by the Senate. Further they declared:

"The action of the Senate in deleting Part III of the bill and attaching a jury trial amendment to Part IV seriously restricted a program which was modest and moderate to begin with."

Nevertheless, they agreed with the NAACP that the important thing now is to make a start. "Any bill passed now will be the beginning, not the end, of our struggle," the joint statement asserts. "We shall continue to demand legislation implementing the Supreme Court's decisions against segregation, for fair employment practices, for anti-poll tax law and other civil rights laws."

If finally enacted, the bill places upon the federal government a responsibility to see that no qualified citizen is denied the right to vote solely on the basis of race or color. It also place upon the NAACP and other organized groups the responsibility to redouble efforts to expand Negro vote not only in those districts where it is now restricted by discriminatory practices but also in other areas, both North and South, to the end that Negro citizens may participate fully in the electoral process and thereby enlarge their share of the fruits of American citizenship.

The FBI has a record of 94 % convictions in cases brought to court.