

White Association Disclaims Violence Charges As Negroes Point To 5 Deaths

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is the first of two articles to be published by The Delta Democrat - Times concerning the racial situation in South Mississippi since the advent of secret societies in the state dedicated to extremism in racial practices. Today's article was written by Andrew J. Reese of the Jackson Bureau of United Press International. The second, to be published this week, was written from on the scene observations by a staff writer of this newspaper.

NATCHEZ, Miss. (UPI) — A hush fell over the room as the speaker, a heavysset preacher with sweat glistening on his brow, launched his sermon on the evils of integration.

He spoke in a strong, booming voice:

"You hear a lot of talk these days but don't you believe it.

"Don't you ever let anybody make you feel ashamed because your skin is white—because you believe in our way of life."

The scene was a small country courthouse in central Mississippi on a warm spring night. About 200 men and women were gathered in a meeting room on the second floor. Most sat quietly, apparently engrossed in the speaker's words; a few voiced their approval with profound "amens."

It was one of several such meetings being held weekly by a new white supremacist group that has sprung up in this race-conscious state. The purpose, according to its leaders, is to "unite the Southern white man" and to fight integration on a

"grass roots" level.

The organization, called Americans for the Preservation of the White Race (APWR), started in this old river town more than a year ago but went largely unnoticed until recent rumors began linking the group, or some of its members, with an alleged outbreak of racial bloodshed and cross burnings in southwest Mississippi.

APWR officials angrily disclaim any connection with any violence, pointing out that their by-laws specifically reject "violence, force, demonstrations, lawlessness, intimidation, coercion and threats of violence."

Civil rights groups charge at least five Negroes have been mysteriously killed in southwest Mississippi since last November. Local authorities say none of the deaths is believed racially inspired.

Witnesses at a civil rights hearing in Natchez this week told of beatings, bombings, threatening phone calls and countless cross burnings. One portly Negro testified he and another man were stripped and flogged near here a few weeks ago by five hooded men.

The most widely publicized death was that of Louis Allen, a 44-year-old Negro logger found lying in the driveway of his home at Liberty last Jan. 31. He had been shot in the head with a shotgun.

CIVIL rights leaders claimed Allen had been warned that local whites were out to "get him" because of the 1961 slaying

of another Negro by a former legislator. Allen had testified he saw the victim threaten the legislator with a tire iron.

Later, he allegedly claimed he lied at the hearing because he feared for his own safety.

A federal investigation into the case failed to change a coroner's verdict of justifiable homicide.

Four other Negroes were reportedly killed in neighboring Wilkinson County, including three whose bodies were found in a car near the little town of Woodville last December. Sheriff Burnett McGraw said they appeared to have been in a fight. They were listed as victims of carbon monoxide poisoning.

A HIGH-ranking APWR officer, who asked that his name not be used, stressed his organization was not associated with the klan or any other group, including the Citizens Council.

He said some members formerly belonged to the Citizens Council but dropped out because its dues were too high and they felt it was not doing all it should on a local basis. "The citizens council does an excellent job at the state and national levels," one member said, "but we work on the grass roots level."

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

6 Raymond Street, N.W.

Atlanta 14, Georgia