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 August 19, 1970

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ALLIANCE AGAINST RACISM  
 Newsletter # 4

AAR is an Information Clearinghouse which develops analytic and factual material on racial issues in Jackson in order to stimulate lobbying with public officials and social agencies, in favor of anti-racist policies. AAR is a project of the Greater Jackson Area Committee, and is co-sponsored by the Jackson Area Council on Human Relations.

THE HEDERMANS, THE BLACKS, AND THE JACKSON STATE COLLEGE INCIDENT

The following is the original draft on an article by Edwin N. Williams, Jackson correspondent for the Delta Democrat-Times, a slightly abridged version of which was published in the Columbia Journalism Review, Summer, 1970, under the title "Cimout in Jackson."

Most Negroes distrust what they refer to as the "white press." ... [Black] persons interviewed ... believed ... the media are instruments of the white power structure. They thought that these white interests guide the entire white community, from the journalists' friends and neighbors to city officials, police officers, and department store owners. Publishers and editors, if not white reporters, supported and defended these interests with enthusiasm and dedication.

... Many people in the ghettos apparently believe that newsmen rely on the police for most of their information about what is happening during a disorder and tend to report much more of what the officials are doing and saying than what Negro citizens or leaders ... are doing and saying. Editors and reporters ... acknowledge that the police and city officials are their main -- and sometimes their only -- source of information....

Some of these problems are insoluble. But more first-hand reporting in the ... riot area should temper easy reliance on police information and announcements.\*

Coverage by the Jackson Clarion-Ledger of the May 13 - 15 disorder at Jackson State College provides a point-by-point validation of ghetto criticism of the press in the Kerner-Commission report published two years ago.

The Ledger is the state's largest morning daily. It is the cornerstone on which the Hederman family has built a statewide publishing empire including the state's largest afternoon daily, two weeklies, a third large daily in Hattiesburg, part ownership in radio and television stations, a corner on the state government printing business, and other lucrative enterprises. The Ledger is The Hederman paper. The afternoon Jackson Daily News was a longtime rival acquired in the 1940's. The Ledger, much more than the Daily News, speaks with the voice of the Mississippi establishment.

\* From Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, Governor Otto Kerner of Illinois, Chairman, published in March, 1967.

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The Hedermans, staunch Southern Baptists and political conservatives, epitomize the white power structure in Mississippi. If an agency or institution wields official power here, chances are the brothers Bob, Henry, or Zach or cousin Tom have a hand in it or are close to someone who has.

Examples? Henry is a member of the Board of Trustees of Institutions of Higher Learning, which governs the eight state-supported colleges and universities. He also is president of the Jackson Chamber of Commerce. Zach is a member of the Mississippi Memorial Stadium Commission, which controls use of the modern stadium here. Bob is a member of the Pearl River Industrial Commission, which oversees Ross R. Barnett Reservoir, a burgeoning water recreational complex near here. His wife is on the State Library Commission. Tom is a member of the state Research and Development Council.

The Ledger and its sister publication, the afternoon Jackson Daily News, traditionally assay the political field to insure that at least one of them backs the winner in the governor's race. After dalliance with former Governor Ross Barnett, an also-ran in the first Democratic primary in 1967, the Ledger joined the Daily News behind Congressman John Bell Williams as he trounced political moderate William Winter in the run-off.

The newspapers have become less blatantly racist since the early 1960's. Then, their news and editorial pages reflected -- and contributed to -- the segregationist fanaticism which culminated in violence and bloodshed when Negro James Meredith entered the University of Mississippi in 1962.

In recent years, news of Negro activities and achievements has appeared with increasing frequency in both papers. But blacks haven't gained access to society pages, and black obituaries are uncommon. The Daily News inserts a page of black news into papers carrier-delivered to black homes, but that news doesn't appear in papers sold on the streets or delivered in white neighborhoods.

The Hederman papers have shown no inclination to explore the problems of blacks in Mississippi, or to use their influence to temper the truculent white supremacist policies of state political leaders. The papers have no rapport with black activist, or even moderate, leaders in this city where almost two-fifths of the 150,000 residents are black. Neither paper has made a noticeable effort to gain credibility in the black community. Neither has integrated its reporting staff.

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When police responded to reports of disorder near Jackson State May 13, the Ledger police reporter took charge of coverage. He remained on the story throughout, and the Ledger's lead stories became a conduit for the police viewpoint to the virtual exclusion of all others. Here is a summary of the first three days of Ledger coverage, listing the inches of information attributed to various sources.

May 14: "Mob Attacks Autos Here", page one, 16-inch story. Sources: police, 7½ inches of copy; the mayor, 3 inches; newsmen, 3½ inches; witnesses, 1 inch; rumors, 1 inch.

May 15: "Vast Force Moved Into Jackson State Area", lead story, 23 inches. Sources: police, 20 inches; students, 2 inches; newsmen, one sentence; area resident, one sentence.

May 16 (early bird edition): "Sniping Said Prior to Police Arrival", lead story, 42 inches. Sources: police, 24 inches; mayor, 8 inches; governor, 8 inches; Jackson State president, 2 inches..

May 16 (Home edition): "Mayor Names Bi-racial Panel to Probe Deaths", lead story, 64 inches. Sources: police, 21½ inches; mayor, 20 inches; prepared statements by college faculty and officials, 9 inches; governor, 8 inches; hospital sources, 3½ inches; NAACP official, 2 inches.

Of the 145 column inches the Ledger carried in the first three days of Jackson State coverage, 73 inches -- more than half -- came directly from police. Another 47 inches -- about a third -- came from the mayor and governor. From students, on-the-scene newsmen, NAACP officials, college faculty and officials, came 16 inches -- about one-tenth of the total. Nowhere in the staff-written Ledger stories is there a hint that many eye-witnesses dispute the official contention that police fired only in direct response to sniper fire.

The New Orleans Times-Picayune and Memphis Commercial Appeal rival the Ledger in morning circulation in Mississippi. Each paper maintains a fulltime reporter in Jackson. Compare the lead stories in the May 16 Ledger, Picayune, and Commercial:

#### Clarion-Ledger

Jackson police and Mississippi Highway Patrol officials Friday blamed dormitory snipers for a brief gun battle at Jackson State College that brought two deaths and nine injuries, one of the latter regarded as critical.

They said gunshots were heard on the campus up to an hour-and-a-half before officers actually moved in to try to quell snipers.

Det. Chief M. B. Pierce ... said policemen and patrolmen did not actually move into the campus and return fire until after a fire truck and its crew had been fired upon.

He quoted a columnist for a liberal Memphis, Tenn., newspaper as saying he "abandoned" the truck and its crew after a "volley of gunfire" was aimed at it from dormitory windows.\*

#### Times-Picayune

JACKSON, Miss. -- Federal and city investigations were ordered Friday into the deaths of two young blacks and wounding of a dozen others at Jackson State College campus after withering gunfire by officers ripped into a girls' dormitory in the early hours of the day.

An angry Negro community later blamed the gunfire on "racist" state highway patrolmen who launched a 30-second barrage of rifle and shotgun fire after hearing what they believed were two sniper shots outside the dormitory.

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\* A brief but intense telephone conversation between the Commercial reporter and the Ledger executive editor after this story hit the streets resulted in this version in a later edition of the Ledger: "He [Pierce] quoted ... a columnist-reporter for the liberal Memphis, Tenn., Commercial Appeal as having told him that "a volley" of shots burst from behind a building when the fire truck went onto the campus...."