

Klan Planning 'Banishment' Of Reporter

REC 9 1980

By KKK Thompson
By SAUNDRA IVEY
Tennessee Staff Correspondent

TUSCUMBIA, Ala. — The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan will institute banishment proceedings against Tennessee reporter JERRY THOMPSON, who infiltrated the racist group, Imperial Wizard Don Black announced here yesterday.

Black termed the idea that Thompson could be in danger from the Klan "melodrama," but said the reporter will be asked to appear before a "jury" charged with determining whether he should be banished. **TENNESSEAN ****

"UNDER THE circumstances, there is not much doubt what they will decide," Black said at a press conference he called to denounce Thompson's stories about life in the Klan as "a farce."

"I don't believe I'll go," Thompson said when informed Black is trying to contact him to set up banishment proceedings.

"I'm fully aware of the banishment procedure outlined in the Klan handbook, and as we went into the story, I expected to be banished."

"I EXPECT TO be banished from Bill Wilkinson's group, too," Thompson said of the rival Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan, which he also infiltrated.

"It makes me feel good, because I'll officially be out."

Black said he has not decided whether to open banishment proceedings against Thompson to the media, but that regardless of the decision, "the actual jurors' identities remain confidential, even from the defendant." **TENNESSEAN ****

STANDING BENEATH a picture of Confederate Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest at the Klan's small white cinderblock national headquarters, Black alternated between denouncing Thompson as a "spy" and claiming that his stories reveal nothing of significance.

"He found out that I was anti-Semitic, but he didn't have to infiltrate the Klan to find that," said Black from an improvised podium decorated with U.S. and Confederate flags.

"He found out our members have guns," the imperial wizard said. "Big deal. With spiraling crime rates, riots, and the possibility of armed insurrection, certain citizens being armed is nothing sinister or ominous."

"THE REAL THREAT is not from the Klan — it's from black militants and communist groups."

Black charged that Thompson did not participate in a full range of Klan activities, but acknowl-

edged that he frequently talked with the undercover reporter about Klan business.

Asked if he had asked Thompson only last Saturday for help locating rental property for the Klan in Birmingham, Black said:

"YES, DID HE find that for us, by the way? I'm hoping he'll call me back to let me know."

Black said Klan members initially were "a little suspicious" of Thompson because they were unable to fully check his background.

"But aside from that, if you'd asked me two days ago if he was a spy, I would have said no."

"I WOULD NEVER even have suspected him of being a reporter, and I congratulate him on that," said Black, who indicated that Thompson's appearance on a national television program yesterday was "the first time I ever saw him in a suit."

"I'm not paranoid, but I think The Tennessean is out to get us," Black said, adding that as a result of Thompson's undercover work, the Klan is "making some attempt to limit that kind of thing."

Black said some other reporters are openly members of the Klan, not to write stories, but because they sympathize with the group's racist philosophy.

"MANY MEDIA people are very favorable to our organization, because they see what's happening in the country," Black said.

30
"In the broadcast media, there's a great deal of anti-white discrimination, and some people are interested in joining — not a lot."

Asked how many media representatives are Klan members, Black said, "I wouldn't want to estimate. There are some. Nobody here."

BLACK CALLED Thompson's report that his group is losing members "absurd speculation" but declined to give membership figures.

"I'm not claiming we're a large organization," Black said. "We're a small organization. We have a long way to go."

"But our membership has not shrunk; it has stabilized. We've done better than I hoped."

BLACK SAID Thompson's stories about his group "might even enhance morale a little bit."

Asked if Thompson could be in danger from the Klan, Black said:

"No. It's pure melodrama about the police protecting his house. It's hard for me to believe the local police have nothing better to do."

BLACK SAID HIS reaction to Thompson's undercover role is "more amusement than anything."

Asked why he scheduled a press conference to respond to stories he described as unimportant, Black said, "You all are concerned or you wouldn't be here."

"I didn't anticipate that this would be a big story that would put Mr. Thompson on the TV talk show circuit," Black said.