



EXECUTIVE COUNCIL / THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH 815 SECOND AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017/TN 7-8400

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THIS IS THE FULL TEXT OF A STATEMENT BY THE RT. REV. JOHN E. HINES, PRESIDING BISHOP OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES, ON THE ACQUITTAL OF THOMAS COLEMAN IN HAYNEVILLE, ALABAMA ON SEPTEMBER 30, 1965.

Seminarian Jonathan Daniels and his fellow civil rights worker, the Rev. Richard F. Morrisroe, were gunned down by deputy sheriff Thomas Coleman on August 20. It was not the "shot heard round the world," even though its reverberations have not lessened; but the verdict rendered by the jury on September 30 in Hayneville was heard around the world.

What it said about the likelihood of minorities securing even-handed justice in some parts of this country should jar the conscience of all men who still believe in the concept of justice in this land of hope.

It is simply inconceivable to intimate acquaintances of both young men that Jonathan Daniels flashed a knife or that Father Morrisroe was armed. Alabama's own attorney general branded testimony that they were armed as perjury. The studied care with which the defense assassinated the character of a man already dead rightfully angers fair-minded men everywhere. Fortunately, Jonathan Daniels' integrity survives such despicable action.

A more pervasive question is whether or not the jury system, as it is now administered in the state of Alabama (and some other areas), if allowed to perpetuate itself without radical reform, will deal a blow as lethal as Coleman's shotgun blast to the common man's hope for justice. The horror of the Coleman case may bring cries for swift federal intervention, legislative and otherwise, by which capital crimes connected with civil rights be made federal offenses.

Such may indeed be a viable strategy for more equitable justice, but more germane and safer in the long run would be the mounting of a jury selection process which reduces to an absolute minimum the cultural and emotional pressures in localized areas. The end result would be a jury genuinely representative of all the people over whom it holds such powers of judgement. As basic as is the right to vote, the right to a jury trial by a man's peers antedates it in the long struggle for responsible freedom. Even the most intensive campaign for voter registration will founder if potential voters, looking ahead, are able to discern only the wreckage of their hopes for justice on the jagged rocks of bias and discrimination. The Philadelphia Enquirer's editorial comment is pertinent --- "the ancient form of trial 'by a jury of his peers' cannot function if the 'peers' in effect admit they would have committed the same senseless criminal act as the defendant if they had had the opportunity."

The acquittal of Thomas Coleman, which is surely a travesty of justice, is not the price we must pay for the jury system. Rather it is the fearful price extracted from society for the administration of the system by people whose prejudices lead them to sacrifice justice upon the altar of their irrational fears.

The life of Jonathan Daniels is no more and no less valuable than that of any other man in the sight of God. But the cause in which he offered it is a cause dear to everyone who breathes the air of free men. Because of this free men must not permit the devastating verdict of the Hayneville twelve to be the final word of injustice in Alabama or anywhere else.

October 4, 1965