9-28-1962

Raymond R. Coffey to Chicago Daily News, 28 September 1962

Raymond R. Coffey

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WESTERN UNION
PRESS MESSAGE
W. P. MARSHALL, PRESIDENT

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By Raymond R. Coffey
Staff Writer
Oxford, Miss. -- Mississippi police reoccupied the Ole Miss campus Saturday in a fresh show of defiance against U.S. efforts to integrate the university here.

The police began arriving here Friday about the time federal judges at New Orleans found Gov. Ross Barnett in contempt for blocking the enrollment of Negro James H. Meredith as a student.

Barnett was given until Tuesday morning to end his obstruction tactics or face jail and a $10,000 a day fine.

But even as word of the verdict reached this small community, police cars were seen arriving from towns as far away as Gulfport, at the other end of the state.

At least 40 policemen had arrived before midnight and their coming seemed a clear indication that Barnett has no intention of permitting Meredith to register.

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Barnett has proclaimed publicly that he will go to jail before permitting racial integration of the 114 year old institution and has said other state officials should be prepared to follow his example.

As the new police build-up began, there was no word from the federal government on when it would try again to enroll Meredith.

The 29 year old Air Force veteran has already been turned away three times.

The possibility was not ruled out that the government would try again Saturday, although Monday or Tuesday were considered more likely dates for the next showdown.

More than 500 police had blocked campus entrances Thursday when Meredith's last attempt was scheduled. But they departed quietly Thursday night and the campus returned to its normal, peaceful atmosphere all day Friday, with hardly a policeman to be seen.
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State police made up most of the force here Thursday, but those arriving Friday night were local officers from other towns.

Many of them were put up for the night in the red-brick Alumni House at the edge of the campus.

Many students left Oxford to attend the Ole Miss-Kentucky football game at Jackson Saturday night. Others went home for the weekend and the campus was relatively deserted.

Since the Mississippi show of force Thursday, the federal government has also strengthened its hand for any violence that may develop.

Some 700 U.S. Marshals were just across the border from here in Memphis, Tenn. They were being fed and housed with the help of 110 Army engineers flown here Friday morning from Fort Campbell, Ky.

While Barnett had strong and loud support in his stand, there were growing signs that some Mississippians were wondering if the whole thing hadn't gone too far.
some students, faculty members and alumni expressed concern that the university might lose its accreditation because of political interference in its operation.

This happened to Ole Miss once before, in 1930, when the late Gov. (and U.S. Sen.) Theo. G. Bilbo ran the school and fired personnel on a wholesale basis.

A Methodist minister who came to Oxford Friday from a small town nearby said parents also were concerned.

"Unfortunately, they're not as concerned as I would wish they were on an ethical basis, but they are concerned on a practical basis," he said.

Parents of students from his community, he said, feared the university would be closed, leaving their children no place to go.

A handful of students here, with the same concern, confirmed that they have already made calls to Alabama, Georgia and Memphis schools about the possibilities of enrollment should Ole Miss close.

The Lauderdale County Chapter of the Alumni Assn. adopted a formal resolution asking that the school be kept open.
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But for every expression of this kind, there were a dozen on the other side.

Auto bumper stickers began showing up all over town Friday, reading "Help Ross Keep Mississippi Sovereign."

Lt. Gov. Paul Johnson faced a contempt action, identical to that against Barnett, at a hearing Saturday in New Orleans.

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