



Department of Justice

Statement

By

ATTORNEY GENERAL NICHOLAS deB. KATZENBACH

Before the

HOUSE UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

On

H.R. 15678, To amend the
Internal Security Act of 1950
and for other purposes

Wednesday, July 20, 1966

Mr. Chairman:

I welcome your invitation to appear before this Committee. It affords a double opportunity; to salute the Chairman and the members of this Committee for the careful and illuminating investigation they have made of the Ku Klux Klan and also to comment on the legislative proposals you are making in H.R. 15678.

Terrorism and intimidation are an intolerable affront to the spirit and meaning of our democratic system. Though the Ku Klux Klan no longer has as pervasive and malignant an influence as it once did, we have found that it still possesses considerable and in some areas growing strength. Its activities remain a serious blight and threat.

This Committee has clearly revealed a number of vital facts.

--That the strength of Klan membership is well above the common estimates;

--That Klans have frequently employed deceptive "cover" arrangements to conceal existence of their Klaverns and bank accounts;

--That many Klan officers and members have criminal records; the involvement of the Klan in several brutal killings such as that of Mrs. Liuzzo is clear;

--That within the Klan there are a number of secret organizations formed for the express purpose of carrying out acts of terrorism and violence;

--That generally members of the Klan have easy access to a variety of weapons and to training in their use, that Klan members purchase weapons from other Klan members licensed as gun dealers and that citizen band radios are often used by the Klan for communication purposes.

Mr. Chairman, you and your colleagues have brought to public scrutiny a compelling and disturbing account of organized terrorist activity.

The facts you have developed in your hearings have had the closest attention of my department. In drafting Title V of the Civil Rights Act of 1966, which seeks to deal with terror and violence, we have been conscious of your work and your findings. The Department of Justice has drawn much benefit from these searching hearings and has been pleased to cooperate. From the Committee's efforts the public now has a much fuller awareness of the structure and activities of the Klan.

As presiding officer, you have, Mr. Chairman, set an example both by your courage and the judiciousness of your approach. May I observe that you and the Committee have shown a full concern for due process and rules of fairness in the hearings. The Department of Justice had your complete cooperation in not prejudicing the rights of any individuals in pending criminal prosecutions.

It is appropriate that this Committee should now seek legislative remedies for the evils which it has identified. The President and the Department of Justice also are determined to find proper correctives. H. R. 15678 and Title V of the Civil Rights Act of 1966 both aim at the same target. Both approaches deserve consideration.

While it is impossible for any of us to claim certainty as to the right course to counter and deter violence by Klan members, I believe that Title V of H.R. 14765 possibly represents the wiser response to this problem. Then, too, there are constitutional difficulties and problems with some aspects of the Committee's bill.

And finally, in my judgment, the organizational and conspiracy concepts upon which the bill is based might unnecessarily complicate prosecution of the perpetrators of such violence.

There are very real problems. I am not certain that all of them can be solved in a bill which is both constitutional and effective. I am sure, however, that the Committee will continue to attempt to meet these problems. It will have the cooperation of the Department of Justice in that effort.