

Black Panel Blames Officials For Shootings at Southern U.

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BATON ROUGE, La., Nov. 29.—College administrators, police and state officials were entirely to blame for the Nov. 16 shooting deaths of two black students at Southern University, an unofficial panel of black investigators said in a preliminary report today.

D'Army Bailey, a Berkeley, Calif., city councilman and chairman of panel, said committee members reached the conclusion that the students were killed by shotgun-wielding sheriff's deputies and unanimously agreed there was "more than adequate reason for criminal prosecution of those responsible for the deaths."

The committee's conclusions were read at a news conference by Bailey and did not cite specific testimony of witnesses interviewed. Bailey said a detailed report would be issued in two weeks.

The black panel's findings drew immediate criticism from Louisiana Gov. Edwin Edwards who termed it "as much blackwash as they accuse the state of a whitewash."

"It was my feeling that very few of the members of the panel had come to Louisiana with an open mind," said Edwards, who appeared before the black group Monday to answer their sometimes hostile questions.

An official investigating committee appointed by Edwards and headed by state Attorney General William Guste is looking into how and why students Denver A. Smith, 20, of New Roads, La., and Leonard Douglas Brown, 20, of Gilbert, La., died.

The unofficial committee was formed by blacks who said they didn't trust any official inquiry.

The state-appointed committee was in recess today, with hearings scheduled to resume Thursday.

The students died of buckshot wounds to the head during the police-student confrontation on the steps of the Southern University administration building. Law enforcement officials have said no live ammunition was fired by the officers, only tear gas cartridges. But Bailey said his committee was sure the deputies had fired buckshot.

Bailey said the committee also concluded:

- Students had not occupied the administration building, as university officials maintained, on the day of the confrontation.

- Prior to the violence, student protesters had made sincere efforts to negotiate their complaints, while university administrators "acted in bad faith."

- Police officers called to the campus by the all-black administration behaved in an undisciplined manner, used more force than necessary and precipitated the violence by firing the first tear gas.

- Edwards was "irresponsible in his public statements" about alleged acts of violence by students.

Guste's committee staff has interviewed more than 100 witnesses, and plans to question many more before drawing any conclusions, the attorney general said. The black committee met for two days and interviewed a dozen persons.

Edwards criticized the black committee for "attempting to portray this incident as something it was not, namely a black-white conflict." The governor has maintained the

problem at Southern involved black students against black administrators, and that white politicians and law officers acted only as peacemakers and arbitrators.