

Two Southern Probes Temporarily Halted

Two committees probing the deaths of two students at Southern University in Baton Rouge during a police confrontation have temporarily halted their investigations.

A committee of black leaders completed two days of testimony yesterday and adjourned for two weeks. The committee chairman said a report on the panel's findings will be issued later.

The state's official committee of inquiry, headed by Atty. Gen. William Guste, is conducting more interviews before reconvening in a few days.

GUSTE'S PANEL was formed at the request of Gov. Edwin Edwards to investigate the deaths Nov. 16 of the two 20-year-olds, Denver A. Smith of New Roads and Leonard Douglas Brown of Gilbert. That committee is operating behind closed doors.

Yesterday, at the black investigating committee's session, Army and Navy ROTC instructors who witnessed the student deaths characterized law officers at the scene as charging about, "acting as individuals, with no noticeable leadership."

Army Maj. Leon D. Jackson, an assistant professor of military science, said he had trouble persuading officers and university officials to call for aid for the two students — one dead, one dying on the pavement.

When he attempted to examine the students, he said, a state trooper told him: "You are not God. Leave those people here until the coroner gets here."

NAVY LT. CMDR. Howard Walton said he "saw a state policeman firing at the fleeing students," and "an object ricocheted off the naval science building" near where he stood.

He described the situation as "very confused, with little or no control being exercised by deputies or state police."

Officers who went to the campus Nov. 16 said they fired nothing but tear gas.

Edwards has theorized a deputy could have inserted a buckshot cartridge in his shotgun accidentally and fired, thinking it was a tear gas cartridge.

BATON ROUGE City Councilman Joseph Delpit yesterday said he could not accept Edwards' theory. "There's no question in my mind that the incident that happened at Southern University was murder," he said.

Southern's Baton Rouge campus is closed until Jan. 3.

Southern University in New Orleans resumed classes yesterday but a student boycott remains virtually complete. Officials said fewer than 100 of SUNO's 2,700 students attended classes yesterday and there were very few students on the campus this morning.

Asa Sims, dean of academic affairs at SUNO, said a student-faculty committee will meet tomorrow with Jesse Bankston, a member of the state Board of Education, to discuss student grievances.

Sims said he sent a letter to all students, advising them they would be protected and informing them that they must attend classes or withdraw from the university.

THOSE WHO continue to boycott classes without withdrawing will receive failing grades in all courses, he said.

A SUNO student, Al Aubry, described the letter as a threat aimed at halting the boycott. The move "presents a prevailing danger to all students," he said.

Aubry said there will be no intimidation of students, because "we've had a 100 per cent boycott. The student body is behind us 100 per cent." He added: "We want to continue the boycott because it's the best thing for all concerned. We'll all be returning to classes as soon as everything is cleared up."

SUNO students have called for the formation of departmental and university councils, improved medical facilities, bus service on Press Drive from Chef Menteur Highway to the school, and the firing of Dr. Emmett W. Bashful, a SUNO dean and vice president of the Southern system.

Bashful resigned under student pressure after about 150 dissident students occupied the SUNO administration building for more than a week. The state Board of Education refused to accept his resignation.