

Prof. David Garrow
Political Science
CCNY,
New York, N.Y. 10031

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Senate Civil Liberties Committee

Dear David,

When I came to mention of Bull Connors in Bearing the Cross this morning I stopped to reminisce. My mind only recently had turned back to the 1930s after a call from Prof. Maurice Isserman. We investigated Bull and held hearings on him and Tenn. Coal & Iron. He was then its chief cop. The hearings were in January 1937. They are in Volume #3. I have them and I gave a duplicate set to Hood, rather the first four volumes, the only duplicate I had.

I don't now recall how we got onto Bull. I do recall that when I was an investigator I was involved in the phony citizens' committees set up by such people as the Iron and Steel Institute and that got us into U.S. Steel, which owned TC & I. It may well have been Virginia Durr. (We were then good friends, she wanted me to head the anti-poll tax committee she was starting a little later with Lee Geyer but I wanted to continue with my exposes of Nazi cartels. Lil used to date her nephew or Hugo Black's before we met.) But however we got into it, one of our witnesses was Joe Gelders, former physics professor at Alabama. He'd been severely flogged by Connors' thugs and left for dead.

This made me think of the fact that there were a few efforts made in those days to better the lot of blacks in the south. Through Homer Clay I met either one man who was both a preacher and a poet, Don West, or him alone if he was only a poet. He was an itinerant who tried to help. I'm sure there were a few others. Gelders, when he testified, ran the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners. I think Lincoln Steffens started it and his widow then ^{headed} it. Among the others in it was Rockwell Kent.

It occurs to me that this area, if it does not interest an established scholar, might be suitable for an honors study or thesis.

In those days J. Edgar Hoover was quite racist and in close and public association with the radical right of the era. What I had on this I gave to Wisconsin, Stevens Point, some years ago. So, I'm inclined to believe that there might be some perhaps interesting ^{FBI} records not destroyed. I'm inclined to think this would include Horton and Highlander. My recollection isn't clear but I think I met some of them with Clay in Knoxville later in 1937 when the Department of Justice borrowed me from the Senate to help in its prosecution of the operators and thugs of "Bloody Harlan."

If anyone is ever interested in this kind of research it would be easier for Hood to xerox that testimony because four volumes are bound in one. Come to think of it, I gave a complete set of separate volumes, among other things, to the Mine Workers in the 1950s. Lil had worked for both the Mue Munitions investigation and Bert Wheeler's railroad investigating committee, so those volumes, among others, were also given to the UMW. The Harlan County hearings tell incredible stories, first-person and under oath, with considerable documentation. Transcripts of the later prosecution ought be on file at federal district court, London, Ky. But the operators fixed the jury despite its custody by the U.S. marshals. Thus, acquittals. (I left before the end of the case because D.J. didn't believe me when I reported when and how and by whom the jury had been fixed. My source was the jury, through the marshals, to the clerk of the court, none of whom trusted either the FBI or DJ.)

Of course I have no idea what studies were made, if any, of how it was before Montgomery and what followed, on all of which the FBI ought have records, but if such studies have not been made I think they'd be worthwhile.

cc: M. Moscato

Best wishes, Harold Eisberg

Harold