

Klan Chief, 5 Others Held in Pontiac Blasts

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From News Dispatches

FBI agents yesterday arrested six persons, including the grand dragon of the Michigan Ku Klux Klan, in connection with the bombing of 10 school buses Aug. 30 in Pontiac, Mich.

The six were charged with conspiracy to violate federal bomb laws, conspiracy to obstruct federal court orders and conspiracy to violate the 1968 Civil Rights Act.

Attorney General John N. Mitchell said the arrests were based on warrants issued in U.S. District Court in Detroit following an intensive FBI investigation into the bombing of the school buses the night of Aug. 30. Pontiac has been the scene of continued protests over court-ordered busing of pupils.

Arrested were Robert Edward Miles, 46, of Howell,

Mich., whom the FBI identified as the grand dragon of the local Ku Klux Klan, and Wallace Elwood Fruit, 29, of Drayton Plains, Mich., allegedly a state officer of the Michigan Klan.

The government said the alleged conspiracy involving the six men began at a statewide meeting of the Klan at Lake Odessa, Vassar, Mich., on July 4.

It charged that a number of other meetings were held, and the bombing was planned by the six. It said a report on results of the bombing was made at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Michigan Klan on Sept. 5.

That meeting was held at the farm home of Miles, who was said to be unemployed.

See BUS, A2, Col. 3

Three days later, the government said, the six accused and others unnamed met and discussed additional acts of violence and destruction involving the school buses.

It has long been known that the FBI keeps watch on the Ku Klux Klan through informers.

Besides Miles and Fruit, FBI agents arrested four others whom they did not connect with the Klan.

They are: Alexander John Distel Jr., 28, of Clarkston, Mich., who works for a water conditioner firm; Dennis Claxton Ramsey, 24, of Drayton Plains, who works in an auto plant; Raymond Quick Jr., 24, of Pontiac, an employee of a cemetery, and Edmund Reimer of Howell.

It was not immediately known where the arrests were made.

The FBI said Fruit was an auto plant employee and Reimer was unemployed.

The complaint accused the six of conspiring "to willfully and knowingly attempt by force to prevent, obstruct, impede and interfere with the performance of the Pontiac school district in the exercise of its duties under an order of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan."

It said they entered the Pontiac school bus parking lot and maintenance area and set explosive charges designed to damage the school buses.

The six were accused of willfully and knowingly conspiring to "intimidate and interfere with . . . Negro students in the Pontiac school district because of their race and color."

Attached to the complaint was an unsigned affidavit submitted to the court in support of an FBI request for a search warrant.

In it, the federal officer who apparently swore to it said he had received information relating to a conspiracy to bomb and burn the school buses from "a reliable informant who has served as a non-paid FBI undercover agent for approximately four years."

"During this period of time he infiltrated and became a member in good standing of the Pontiac unit of the United Klans of America, Inc., Knights of the Ku Klux Klan," the affidavit said.

"Since joining the Klan, the informant has furnished written and verbal reports and information on a regular basis on Klan activities and meetings to the Detroit office of the FBI."

The affidavit listed a long series of "facts" as the basis for search warrants. Included was a statement attributed to M. H. at the July 4 "campout" at Lake Odessa when he allegedly said, "If they bus the Niggers, we're going to do something about it."

Prior to the July 4 meeting, the affidavit said the informant had been told by two Klansmen that the Pontiac unit of which he was a member had dynamite stored at its meeting place in Pontiac.

Among the "facts" in the affidavit was a statement that on Aug. 29 Fruit met with a man identified as Jerome Lauinger, a klansman, to receive information about the Pontiac fire department "and

to discuss the best method of delaying the fire trucks from reaching the location where the buses were kept."

The agent who signed the complaint, and who is a material witness, was Philip L. Mercado, a special agent of the FBI who described himself as a "material witness" in connection with the charges.

The warrants were issued by U.S. Magistrate Paul J. Kominives.

Picketing of Pontiac's public schools, meanwhile, crumbled in the face of a heavy show of force by Michigan state troopers, sheriff's deputies and city police.

Some of the white protesters against the city's massive school busing program also were disenchanted by what they viewed as the defection of Irene McCabe, leader of the National Action Group which is fighting the desegregation plan.

She turned up again this

morning at the school bus depot opposite the Pontiac Motor Division plant to urge an end to the picketing and concentration instead on a boycott of the schools.

The pickets, about 100 strong, had little choice in the face of some 50 officers who lined one of the driveways leading from the bus depot.

But not a few of the demonstrators simply stepped back to the sidelines rather than leave as Mrs. McCabe has been suggesting since Wednesday afternoon in hopes of avoiding any more scrapes with the law.

"I can't believe this is the real you, Irene," one mother chided.

Later in the day, school officials reported that absenteeism seems to be dwindling, despite the white boycott, and fears of violence that have led other parents, both white and black, to keep their children home.