

TP 8-9-68

# Hawkins Cleared in Bombing

Jury Delivers Verdict After 2 1/2 Hours

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — A jury acquitted Joe Daniel Hawkins Thursday of unlawful use of explosives charges stemming from the bombing of the Blackwell Real Estate Co. office last year.

The jury took just 2 1/2 hours to deliver the verdict.

Conflicting testimony was presented in the closing hours of the trial. A prosecution witness said Hawkins carried the explosives to the office but Hawkins' wife vowed he was at home with her.

Hawkins, 24; Burriss, Leon Dunn Jr., 38; and J. L. Harper, 24, all of Jackson, were indicted for unlawful use of explosives in the destruction of the one-story concrete block office near downtown Jackson March 7, 1967.

Robert Earl Wilson, 24, of Jackson testified that he and the three indicted men drove together to the Blackwell office, and that Hawkins, accompanied

by Harper, carried the explosive device to the building.

Hawkins took the stand to declare his innocence, and his wife Katherine testified she had been with him constantly since 10:30 p.m.

Wilson also testified that Ku Klux Klan leader Sam Holloway Bowers Jr. of Laurel ordered the Blackwell bombing the night of Feb. 25, 1967, at a party at Dunn's home.

Dunn has not been tried. Judge Russell Moore has twice declared mistrials in the case of Harper, a house painter.

Mrs. Hawkins testified that she and Mrs. Joe Denver Hawkins, mother of the accused, returned from a meeting of the women's auxiliary of the Klan the night of March 6 about 10:30 p.m. to find Hawkins, who's called "Danny Joe", at his mother's home.

Katherine Hawkins said she and Danny Joe got home about 12:30 p.m., talked about 45 minutes and "he was there in the morning when I woke up."

The explosion occurred at about 1:30 a.m.

Both Mrs. Joe Daniel and Mrs. Joe Denver Hawkins testified they were members of the auxiliaries of the Klan and the Americans for Preservation of the White Race.

At APWR meetings, Mrs. Joe Denver Hawkins testified, there

were discussions prior to the bombing about the Blackwell agency selling houses to Negro buyers.

The APWR decided to encourage white people not to sell to Negro buyers, she said, because, "we believe in white supremacy."

Wilson, denounced as an FBI informer by Hawkins' lawyers, testified that he and Dunn sat in the front seat, while Hawkins and Harper sat in the rear with a bomb between them.

On the way conversation was about "sorry no good nigras in the state of Mississippi and those sorry no good white people who are helping them," Wilson testified, and what a "sorry no good fellow Blackwell was."

Among those in the courtroom was L. E. Matthews, 44, of Florence, identified as a Klan leader by the FBI. Matthews fixed a steady glare on Wilson at one point for about five minutes.

Originally, the Hinds County Grand Jury had indicted 10 men in the Blackwell bombing, including Matthews, Bowers and Harry Kelly, one of Hawkins' lawyers.

Judge Moore quashed three indictments on grounds of hearsay evidence, and the remainder were dropped. Only three men were indicted a second time.