

AUG 12 1970

HE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12,

Jackson Policeman, at Inquiry, Withholds Details of Shooting

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Special to The New York Times

JACKSON, Miss., Aug. 11—The President's Commission on Campus Unrest apparently was stymied today in its attempt to learn exactly what happened at Jackson State College the night of May 14 when two students were killed and 12 others wounded by law enforcement officers firing shotguns.

Lieut. Warren M. Magee of the Jackson police who led the city and state police force involved in the incident, declined to supply certain details.

After conferring with his attorney, Lieutenant Magee said that he had testified about the matter before a state grand jury and that Mississippi law provides that he would be in contempt of court if he revealed any grand jury testimony. Other police officers are expected to refuse to give the same details, citing the same reason.

Unanswered Questions

Although several commission members grumbled about it, the commission chairman, William W. Scranton, the former Pennsylvania Governor, would not require Lieutenant Magee to answer such questions as:

¶ Why did the Jackson police deny firing any shots?

¶ How were officers able to fire many rounds of ammunition at the students and still turn in the same number of shotgun shells that they were issued?

¶ Why wasn't tear gas used to disperse the students before the shooting?

"It is not our purpose to seek to identify persons who fired their weapon," Mr. Scranton said. This plus fixing any blame, is a grand jury function, he said.

It is the commission's purpose, he said, to try to find out what brought about the unrest at Jackson State, a predominantly Negro institution of 4,200 students, and to fit it into a general national pattern of campus unrest so that a report and a recommendation can be made to President Nixon by Sept. 15.

Denies Seeing Shots Fired

Lieutenant Magee said that he did not see who fired the shots anyway because he was busy yelling at the students through a voice amplifier, ordering them to disperse and to

cease throwing bricks and bottles.

The shots fired at the students were fired contrary to his orders, he said.

None of the first witnesses called was able to tell exactly why Jackson State students were in a state of disorder on the nights of May 13 and May 14.

Lieutenant Magee said he thought it was just part of the annual spring "riot," saying that Jackson State had had one every year since 1964 and "they have gotten worse each year."

He said that Negro students are "antagonistic" toward the police. A crowd of Negro spectators in the commission room jeered when Lieutenant Magee testified that white policemen were not antagonistic toward Negroes.

The closest to an insight that the commission got today from a witness came from Andrea Reese, a former Jackson State student now teaching remedial reading in a rural Mississippi county. She was grazed by a buckshot pellet in the May 14 shooting incident.

Miss Reese, who wears her hair in an Afro cut, said that before the demonstrations on May 13 and 14 there had been campus complaints about the invasion of Cambodia by American troops and about the draft for the armed services.

"But those aren't the major things," she testified. "They just start you to thinking. And then you think of all the things that are wrong and if you can't get to the source to correct them, you do the next best thing."