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Anti-Negro Group Vexing Police in Wilmington, N.C.

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WILMINGTON, N. C., Oct. 6 — A new anti-Negro organization called Rights of White People, considered by local law-enforcement officials as more dangerous than the Ku Klux Klan, has complicated efforts to halt the civil strife that has beset this port city since last February.

The leader of the vigilante group, Leroy Gibson, a crew-cut ex-marine sergeant, has been sharply critical of the way the Wilmington police department has met a series of outbreaks of firebombings and sniping in a small area inside the city.

He said local whites were impatient and ready to take the law into their own hands to suppress what he called "Communist-inspired black revolutionaries."

"We're going right where the trouble is and do some shooting if we have to," he said today in an interview. "We'll destroy them all if necessary."

His remarks were familiar extremist rhetoric, but unlike the Klan and other right-wing groups, his organization is visible in large numbers.

Klan Restraint Cited

Over the weekend he organized rallies in Wilmington that attracted several hundred armed white men. A proclamation put into effect yesterday to bar the possession of weapons in Wilmington was directed by local officials at night-rider members of this group, who had been driving into the black community here with guns sticking from their car windows.

Since the ban, there has been no violence reported in the city.

"For the past few nights we've had to assign half our staff to prevent these whites from causing trouble," said H. E. Williamson, chief of the city's 76-man police force. Mr. Williamson even met with state leaders of the Ku Klux Klan this week and praised their restraint and cooperation during the crisis.



Herman Benton
Mayor B. D. Swartz, Wilmington, Del., telling of the emergency yesterday.

"I don't approve of anything the Klan stands for," Chief Williamson asserted, "but they have not posed a problem for us like the R.O.W.P. has."

Racial strife in this city of 46,000, where about 25 per cent of the citizens are black, has had its roots in the public school system, which has undergone extensive desegregation in the last two years.

Outbreak After Fight

Last February protests over the expulsion of black high school students led to several days of firebombings and bloodshed before National Guard troops quelled the disturbance.

Early last summer two white security policemen were slain as they patrolled the hallways of a local school. This crime has not been solved, and it has helped inflame most local whites who have blamed black militants.

A fight at a high school football game last Friday night resulted in the arrest of a young black militant. A new outbreak of firebombings and rock-throwing followed the next day within a few square blocks inside the black community.

The police barricaded streets

in the neighborhood during trouble on subsequent nights. Three city policemen suffered superficial gunshot wounds during the disturbances, but no blacks have been reported injured, according to Chief Williamson.

Mr. Gibson, a 41-year-old, square-jawed man who said he had served 20 years in the Marine Corps, deplored what he called the "coddling" of the blacks by the police.

"If the black people won't abide with law and order we'll have to take matters into our own hands," he said. "We have as many as 2,000 white men in Wilmington who are ready to settle this trouble right now. If it weren't for the Wilmington police, the blacks in there would have been destroyed by now."

He said his followers engage in paramilitary training and that his organization is amassing a variety of weapons. White high school students, he said, are given free target practice training.

Mr. Gibson lives about 50 miles from here in Jacksonville, N. C., the home of the Marine Corps' Camp Lejeune. He said 90 per cent of the leadership cadre of his group consisted of combat-experienced former servicemen.

The group began as an anti-busing protest in North Carolina, he explained, but evolved into a militant organization when its membership decided peaceful protest against the Nixon Administration's school policy was fruitless.

"Our organization is growing, and not just in the South," he boasted. "If necessary we'll eliminate the black race. What are we supposed to do while these animals run loose in the streets? They'll either abide by the law, or we'll wipe them out."