



PROFESSOR DAVID HOROWITZ
(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Ku Klux Klan in Portland: big in 20s, says professor

by Robert Lothian

The Ku Klux Klan during the 1920s had a powerful influence on Oregon's political life, according to Portland State professor David Horowitz.

Up to 50,000 Oregon men may have been members of the Klan in the decade from 1920 to 1930, he said. Considering the size of the state at that time, the Oregon Klan during the 20s achieved the size of "a huge mass movement," according to Horowitz.

In addition, said Horowitz, "the Klan did play a major role in electing Governor Walter Pierce in 1923." He showed slides of Klan documents which implicated Oregon's "progressive" governor as a Klan member.

Horowitz spoke to an overflow audience at the Oregon Historical Society on information gleaned from Oregon Historical Society films. His researches were made possible by a grant from the Oregon Committee for the Humanities.

Horowitz' slides of Klan gatherings and documents were accompanied by recorded protestant hymns. Spotlights in a corner was one of the infamous hooded white robes donated by a student whose aunt had kept it in her attic for years.

Horowitz said his research revealed that the Klan has had three periods of more or less influence — right after the Civil War, when it formed to intimidate newly freed Black slaves, during the 20s, probably the Klan heyday so far, and during and after the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

It was during the 20s, according to Horowitz, that the Klan achieved the status of a national mass movement, with an estimated 3 million members in the U.S.

With the exceptions of the anti-war movements prior to WWII and during the Viet Nam war, the Klan during the 20s was "perhaps the largest mass movement in U.S. history," according to Horowitz.

A dramatic and frightening slide depicted an open Klan parade in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 26, 1924. Thousands of white-robed Klansmen from all over the U.S. paraded with

American flags and crosses in front of the nation's capitol.

The Klan at that time was big in Oregon, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Ohio, Illinois, Chicago, New York City and Indiana, "where they pretty much ran the state," said Horowitz.

"It was in the cities where the Klan attracted its greatest following," he said. "Portland was the center of Klan activities in Oregon...not Medford."

A slide of a newspaper photo from August, 1921, showed robed Klansmen with Portland mayor Baker and police officials. Fred Gifford, "exalted cyclops" of the Portland Klan, was one of those pictured. Gifford dispensed jobs and political patronage from the Klan's office downtown in the Pittock Block, according to Horowitz.

Multnomah County government was said to have been run by the Klan and the Klan elected mayors in Astoria, Tillamook and Medford, Horowitz said. Klan members were sheriffs and officials in other cities, he said.

The Klan in Oregon was violently dedicated to "racism and nativism," "pure womanhood," prohibition, anti-Bolshevism and anti-Catholicism, he said.

An excerpt from La Grande Klan meeting minutes referred to "a Catholic in the woodpile," doubling up on a racial and a religious slur, said Horowitz.

Of the three documented cases of Klan nightriding in Oregon, according to Horowitz, all three occurred in Southern Oregon during the 1920s.

Two of the three cases involved Black men accused of associating with white women, and the third involved a Hispanic-Indian man accused of the same thing, Horowitz said.

"In all three cases, these men were strung up so their toes just touched the ground," he said. One was driven to the California border and told to keep walking, according to Horowitz.

One of Horowitz' slides showed an authentic Klan application form. "Do you believe in white supremacy?" asked one of the questions.

"Don't choke 'em, smoke 'em" T-shirts banned

by Lanita Duke

GRASSROOT NEWS, N.W. — On April 26, while Tony Stevenson was being laid to rest with military honors, a Portland policeman was in the parking lot at East Precinct selling T-shirts that read, "Don't choke 'em, smoke 'em."

At a Monday morning press conference the Black United Front issued a blanket condemnation of the T-shirt sales and a statement from the Stevenson's family attorney:

"While we still feel the great majority of Portland Police Officers do their best to perform a very difficult job and are truly concerned with the safety and welfare of Portland's citizens, this ugly and cynical response to events connected with Stevenson's death serves to remind us all that there is still an element within the Police Bureau that is unfit for the serious responsibilities that the public has entrusted to them," stated Ronnie Herndon, co-chair of the Black United Front.

"These officers should be subjected to the severest form of appropriate disciplinary action. This disgusting T-shirt business only deepens our worst fears," Herndon added.

Sgt. Jay Decker, public information officer for the Portland Police Bureau, said Officers Richard A. Montee, 46, and Paul A. Wickersham, 31, were involved in the T-shirt sales.

"From what I understand, they were frustrated because the cardiac level of control was taken away. They were saying, 'If you take that away, you have nothing left but to shoot.' Whatever their reasons, it was poor timing and tasteless. It ruins the image of the whole bureau," said Decker.

Decker said between 20-26 T-shirts were distributed. In terms of disciplinary action, Decker said the Police Union's contract outlined an oral

or written reprimand, demotion or discharge.

"The more serious the discipline, the more safeguards are built into the procedures," Decker added.

A formal hearing will be conducted before the Chief (Penny Harrington) and the Police Commissioner (Bud Clark). Currently, Montee and Wickersham have been reassigned to personnel pending the Chief's findings.

Herndon said the T-shirt incident proves, "You have a small group of police officer on the force who are dangerous. The message is to shoot a Black person, don't choke him. This mentality is what you would expect from police hit-squads in El Salvador. And this is an individual your and my tax dollar pays for."

Herndon interjected that the discipline focus should not stop with the officers who sold the T-shirts, but those who purchased them, as well.

"I hope Harrington does her dead level best to try to root this element out of the force," Herndon added.

Rev. John Jackson, co-chair of the BUF, said Portland Blacks had responded to their leadership when they asked them not to destroy the protest over Stevenson's death by rioting.

"Do you think this kind of thing helps us when we try to keep people calm?" Jackson asked rhetorically. "Someone has taken it upon himself by intimidating things that say what they (police) did was justified."

Herndon said during the 1981 opossum-tossing incident, in which Portland Police officers threw dead opossums in front of a Black-owned restaurant, investigation revealed a "dirty thirty."

"There are a group of officers who got most of the citizens' complaints regarding misconduct. Whatever happened to them? It looks as if they showed up at East Precinct," Herndon noted.

4-yr. nursing requirement opposed by Rep. Carter

by Robert Lothian

Representative Margaret Carter helped pass a bill through the Oregon House of Representatives April 11 that would stop plans by the Oregon Board of Nursing to require registered nurses in Oregon to have a four year nursing degree.

The nursing board had administratively ruled that starting in 1990, nursing candidates would be required to have a Bachelor's degree before taking the RN license exam.

HB 2928 would take the authority to decide nursing education requirements away from the Oregon Board of Nursing, putting an end to the four year degree requirement. The bill calls for the board to form a planning commission to come up with a plan for nursing education to be presented to the next session of the Legislature.

Carter and nurses' representatives say the bill is necessary to avoid a situation where nursing careers are available only to a well-educated elite that can afford to attend expensive four year programs.

"I will fight to the living end" to keep nursing career opportunities open for minorities, single mothers, people changing careers and others who receive their nursing education from relatively inexpensive two year community college programs, said Carter.

Many nursing candidates are unable to get into the profession except through community college programs, according to Carter.

"I am confident (the bill) will pass the Senate," she said.

The move toward four year degree requirements is a big issue with nurses in Oregon and across the country, said representatives of Concerned Nurses of Oregon. They worked with Rep. Carter in lobbying for the bill.

About 70 percent of the nurses in Oregon now have two and three year degrees from community colleges, said Kathann Zerzan, spokeswoman for Concerned Nurses of Oregon.

The effect of the nursing board's four year degree ruling would be to close off the profession to 70 percent of the nursing candidates in Oregon, including many low income and minority candidates, said Zerzan.

A four year nursing degree from the University of Portland, for instance, she said, can cost up to \$6,000 a year.

"It is a question of the profession becoming a very elitist, upper class, non-caring, non-hands-on profession," she said. "I see it as an attempt to disenfranchise nurses and turn the

profession over to a small, white elite," said Zerzan, referring to the four year degree requirement.

Nurses with two and three year associate degrees do most of the bedside nursing now, she said, while those with Bachelor's degrees often end up in nursing management.

The four year degree requirement would reinforce a tier system within nursing with highly paid white nurses with Bachelor's degrees at the top, according to Zerzan. A majority of lower-paid minority and low income nurses, who couldn't afford the four year degree and who thus would be barred from taking the RN license exam, would be relegated to menial tasks, she said.

Furthermore, said Kathy Schmidt, president of the Oregon Federation of Nurses, those RNs with licenses, yet without the four year degree would probably have a harder time finding jobs. Once the nursing board made its administrative ruling, she said, the next step might be to take away the "grandma" clause protecting those nurses who received licenses without a Bachelor's degree.

The nursing board contends that four year degrees are necessary to upgrade the profession. The board is charged with overseeing nursing in Oregon to insure "the health and safety of the citizens of the state of Oregon."

But Concerned Nurses of Oregon contends that the board is made up of white management types who see a "surplus of nurses" and who want to protect the wages and positions of well educated white nurses.

The nursing board's ruling "will have such an impact on the health care system in Oregon that we think the legislature should be involved," said Schmidt.

Concerned Nurses of Oregon was formed in 1984 for the sole purpose of fighting the four year degree requirement, said Zerzan. The group has a mailing list of 1,500, and it organized an aggressive letter writing and phone campaign to gather support for HB 2928, she said.

King. Assn. meet

There will be a meeting held on Wednesday, May 8, 1985, in the King Neighborhood Facility, Cafeteria, 4815 N.E. 7th Ave., at 7:30 p.m. to discuss strengthening the Inner Northeast Police Precinct Council and looking at possible cooperative efforts with North Portland Police Precinct Council.

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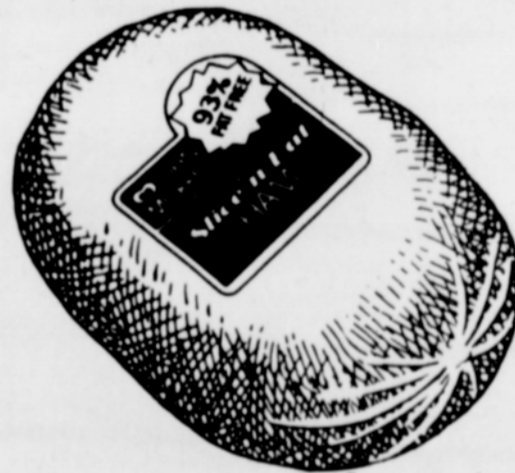
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Susan S. Meyers, left, and Jeanie Marie Fryer, right, were two of three women arrested Monday in a downtown Portland demonstration against the nuclear arms race. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)