

'All Barriers' Should Be Removed, Says Kennedy Of Birmingham Racial Tensions

WASHINGTON (UPI) — President Kennedy said Wednesday he was gratified at the easing of racial tensions in Birmingham, Ala., where he said widespread violence and fatalities were "only narrowly avoided."

The President opened his news conference with a statement saying the Negro demonstrations and resultant police action in Birmingham should serve as a reminder to every other state and locality that "all barriers" to the rights of citizens should be removed.

Kennedy praised the business community of Birmingham for promising what he said were "substantial steps" that would "begin to meet the needs of the Negro community."

He also noted that the Negroes who had been taking part in demonstrations in the city had called a halt to their actions. And he said that when the new mayor of the city takes office Birmingham will move "wholeheartedly" toward resolving its racial difficulties.

He said that while much remains to be done "we can hope that tensions will be eased."

The President called the Birmingham racial strife an "ugly situation" and said he was "gratified to note" that efforts by white and Negro citizens to settle the difficulties had made some headway.

The President was asked to comment on the techniques employed by both sides in Birmingham—the dogs and fire hoses used by white law enforcement officers, and the Negro children used in the demonstrations.

He gave no direct reply. But he said he was interested now in seeing a peaceful settlement reached and that all remarks should be directed to that end. The best way to prevent a repetition of such incidents, he said, is to take steps to ensure equal treatment for everyone.

The President pointed out that Burke Marshall, assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, had served as a mediator to "halt a spectacle which was seriously damaging the reputation of both Birmingham and the country."

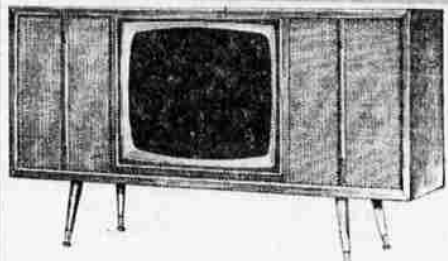
Other highlights of the news conference:

—Kennedy said the United States strongly opposes any use of force in the Middle East and would support United Nations measures or "adopt other courses of our own" to stop any aggression there.

He was commenting on reports of increased tension between Israel and her Arab neighbors.

—Kennedy expressed the belief that there will be no new wheat legislation enacted this year if farmers reject the control plan proposed in the coming referendum in the wheat country.

HERALD AND NEWS, Klamath Falls, Oregon Thursday, May 9, 1963 PAGE 3-A



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