

CHAIRMAN LILLEY: Reverend Johnson, we

swear all our witnesses.

Q Could we ask you to take an oath as a

witness?

THE WITNESS: My religion does not prevent

it.

REVEREND BENJAMIN F. JOHNSON,

Sworn.

EXAMINATION BY MR. FORTUNATO:

Q Will you give your full name, please?

A Benjamin Franklin Johnson.

Q Your address?

A 400 Bergen Street, Newark.

Q Is that located in the Fourth Precinct?

A It is, definitely.

Q Your age, please?

A 1896 until now will make me 71 on my next birthday.

Q Your birth place?

A Evington, Virginia.

Q How long have you been a resident of Newark?

A Twenty-three years.

Q What is your occupation?

A I am the minister at the present time at the

Metropolitan Baptist Church, and I am a teacher at the Northern

1 Baptist School of Religion, among other things, if you want
2 to know the others.

3 Q Where is that church located?

4 A 32-36 Prince Street.

5 Q In Newark?

6 A Yes.

7 Q How many members are in the church?

8 A Well, we have around 6,000 on roll but about
9 4,800 that are active.

10 Q What did you do before you came to Newark?

11 A Well, I served as a minister, school teacher and
12 I was in the undertaking business.

13 Q Where was this?

14 A This was in Goldsboro, North Carolina.

15 Q With what groups are you affiliated?

16 A I am affiliated with the Baptist Church and, of
17 course, so far as groups are concerned, I am a Mason, I am a
18 Pytheon. I belong to no subversive groups.

19 Q Are you also a trustee of the United Community
20 Corp.?

21 A I am a trustee of the United Community Corporation
22 and also a trustee in the UCF. That's the United Community
23 Fund.

24 Q Are you also a member of any groups in connection
25 with the administration of Newark?

1 A Well, I am a member of what they call NCNCR.
2 That's the Neighborhood Help Service or Self-Help Service.

3 Q Are you familiar with the civil disorder that
4 took place in Newark this past summer?

5 A I was here. It happened that the first group to
6 leave the Fourth Precinct came right down by my house.

7 Q What caused the riot?

8 A No one thing caused this riot. It takes a lot of
9 straws to make the stack. Police brutality ignited it but
10 that was not the underlying cause of it all.

11 Q When you say police brutality, in what respect
12 and to whom?

13 A Well, when they brought this fellow in and they
14 beat him unmercifully a lot of people, especially the women
15 from the project, they rushed in and began to give vent to
16 their feelings.

17 Q Now when you say project would this be the Hayes
18 Homes?

19 A Yes.

20 Q And the individual involved, would that be Mr.
21 Smith the cab driver?

22 A That's right.

23 Q Did you personally witness this incident?

24 A I did not personally but they called me down there
25 after the thing had just been gotten out of hand to see if we

1 couldn't persuade the folks to leave the Precinct.

2 Q Who called you?

3 A Well, Tim Still, he said that Mr. Spina had told
4 him to call the ministers to see if they couldn't get these
5 people to behave well.

6 Well, when I got there --

7 Q Could we place the time that we are talking about,
8 bearing in mind our understanding that the arrest of Mr.
9 Smith was on Wednesday, July 12?

10 A Well, that was the time when we were called, when
11 the people all assembled around there. There were about 300
12 people gathered up around there.

13 Q Do you recall what time of the evening you were
14 called?

15 A They called me about 8 o'clock.

16 Q What time did you get to the Hayes Project?

17 A I got there in about 15 minutes. I didn't rush out
18 of the house but I got there and things were pretty well in
19 hand. I was persuaded to go along with the crowd and leave
20 and not stay around because something might happen.

21 Well, then I went home. Things were quiet that night.

22 Q Did the crowd leave?

23 A Yes, the crowd left.

24 Q When did you first hear the rumor that Mr. Smith
25 was dead?

1 A Well, it was rumored or in fact, I believe one of
2 the radio stations made the announcement in talking about
3 the disorder and it said that it is said that he is dead or
4 they can't find him.

5 Q Do you recall what radio station?

6 A I don't remember. Anyway, the next morning it
7 was rumored that he was dead. Just like anybody else, we had
8 to take what we heard.

9 Q Now let's back up to Wednesday. When you came
10 to the Hayes Project what specifically was told to you about
11 allegations of police brutality?

12 A Well, it was told to me that the fellow had been
13 beaten and that his ribs were separated.

14 Q Did they tell you where he had been beaten?

15 A Well, they said he had been beaten when he was
16 arrested for resisting arrest. That's the way they told me.

17 Then when he was taken --

18 Q May I stop you right there?

19 A Yes.

20 Q These people, did they or did they not tell you
21 that they had seen Smith beaten when he was arrested?

22 A They told me there was a lady in the car with him,
23 passenger, and then the people at the police precinct they
24 said they saw the man also beaten.

25 Q Where did they see him beaten?

1 Q Where did they see him beaten?

2 A They saw him when he was taken out of the police
3 car at the Fourth Precinct.

4 Q Are these people available for the investigative
5 staff of the Commission to speak to?

6 A I wouldn't say Yes because after all is said and
7 done, nobody would venture out here for obvious reasons.

8 Q I may have misunderstood you. Did you talk to
9 the lady who was in the car with Mr. Smith?

10 A I did not talk to her.

11 Q You did not?

12 A No.

13 Q I believe we were now back to the period of time
14 on Thursday morning. What did you do Thursday?

15 A Well, Thursday was a busy day for me. I had a
16 couple of funerals. That afternoon we had the UCC meeting
17 down at 124 Branford. Of course, when we left there everybody
18 seemed to be rather tense because of what happened the
19 night before and this statement was made; Unless something is
20 done to cool the passion of the community, there will be a
21 riot in Newark tonight.

22 Q Who made that statement?

23 A Tim Still.

24 Q Were you told why there would be a riot?

25 A Well, because of the anger and the excitement that

1 had developed there the day before. Of course, that's
2 exactly what was said and that's what happened.

3 Q What steps were recommended to cool the situation
4 down?

5 A First they said that they should make some adjust-
6 ment with this brutal situation that had developed with this
7 Smith fellow. The next was they should put some more colored
8 officers at that precinct.

9 Q Was this done?

10 A No.

11 Q What did you personally do?

12 A Well, at that particular time I made the same
13 recommendation. I am one of the ones that thought it might be
14 easier handled if they would take those policemen away from
15 there who had been in or figured in this incident and put
16 somebody else there. It would show some semblance of adjustment.
17 That's what I asked too. We were all at the UCC meeting.
18 That's where this was all hashed up.

19 Q Did you personally communicate these views to
20 anyone in the city administration?

21 A No.

22 Q Had these things that you speak of been done, would
23 that have prevented the riot?

24 A I believe so. Now since they put some colored
25 officials there, they made a few promotions and things have

1 been a little bit better. ... of this convention?

2 Q Do you think there should have been a riot?

3 A No.

4 Q What are your views on that issue?

5 A I believe that the same thing happened here that
6 happened in Detroit. Now I am going to say this; This is not
7 the first Commission meeting that I have appeared in. What
8 I am going to say now may shock you.

9 At Meadville, New Jersey, for 18 months they have had
10 a camp down there training subversives and the oath that they
11 take was when they go into a city in 18 months to create a
12 riot.

13 Now how do I find it out? The FBI went to the camp but
14 they claimed it was a religious organization, that they were
15 doing religious training. How did we find it out? When they
16 had this Commission meeting in Denver, Colorado--

17 Q Would you identify the Commission meeting that
18 you are talking about?

19 A This was one that was a religious meeting that was
20 called by the convention that the people who came out of the
21 riot areas could be given some specific that would help them
22 to solve the problems that would prevent riots when they
23 returned to their respective homes.

24 Hence we had people from Newark, Rochester, Brooklyn,
25 Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee and we had some from California,
the Watts area.

1 legal Q What was the date of this convention?

2 I und A This was between the 5th and the 11th of September.

3 Feder Q Of 1967?

4 peopl A 1967.

5 Q Going back, at what time were you aware of this
6 gathering in Meadsville, New Jersey?

7 A I found out then.

8 Group Q In September?

9 parti A That's right, in September. This had been going on.

10 Now here's how they discovered it. This was discovered by
11 some of the Federal officers too. They had investigated and
12 they had been told this, so they had in the same jail some
13 people brought from Rochester, from Detroit, Chicago and they
14 were all placed together. When nobody was around they greeted
15 each other as comrades. You know how they get into these
16 conversations and they found out that these were all students
17 who had been in the same institution.

18 CHAIRMAN LILLEY: I wasn't quick enough on
19 this but I think the transcript might be puzzling.

20 You said your Commission meeting was in
21 certain September of 1967?

22 THE WITNESS: Yes.

23 Q Was it determined what group held this meeting in
24 Meadsville?

25 A Well, this was done through the law or this was

1 legally done. This was done by an investigation commission.
2 I understand, the way we were told, that it was through the
3 Federal Government that this was discovered and that these
4 people were transported from one place to the other.

5 Of course, there was no other way it could be done
6 other than through the government.

7 Q Were you told what group, for example, like
8 Group X or Group Y, was involved in Meadsville? Was it a
9 particular group?

10 A No, they didn't say. They only said this: That
11 they were trained and they had both types people trained.
12 They had white as well as colored in this camp.

13 Q I gather the report to you was or the implication
14 from the meeting you had in September was that these groups
15 took part in various of the riots throughout the United States?

16 A That's right.

17 Q Did they specifically mention Newark?

18 A Well, they said the different areas where they
19 had had riots. It looked like to me the way they gave it we
20 couldn't miss Newark because Newark was one in which they
21 certainly had a riot.

22 Q In your view, what part did the medical school
23 controversy play in regard to the Newark riots this past summer?

24 A Well now, the Newark medical school would have never
25 caused any riot.

1 Q What about the board of education appointment?

2 A Well now, the board of education thing might
3 have added a little fuel to the fire.

4 Q What about the scheduling of the Black Power
5 Conference?

6 A The Black Power Conference created suspicion.

7 Q What is your view of the Black Power Conference?
8 Is that a conference that you attended?

9 A The Black Power Conference is merely so much
10 misguided non-pluses.

11 Q Why do you say that?

12 A Because it doesn't pretend anything.

13 Q Well, we will get back to that in a minute.

14 Has your life been threatened?

15 A Yes.

16 Q When did this occur?

17 A That occurred the third week in August. I was not
18 in town at the time but it appeared in the Evening News.

19 Q Can you tell us why?

20 A Well, because I disagreed with the philosophy of the
21 riot. They figured that I should have endorsed the riot because
22 of the many aspects that went in to make it up but I have
23 never and I never will.

24 Q What part did you play during the riot? I think
25 you told us earlier about Thursday.

1 A Well, you mean when the riot was actually in
2 force?

3 Q Well, I think we left you some time during
4 Thursday. I was not sure exactly what time.

5 A Well, of course, I told you we were in the UCC
6 meeting until 6 o'clock.

7 Q All right. Then what did you do?

8 A Then I went home and I stayed home about 2 hours
9 and a bongo drum started going, somebody started beating a
10 bongo drum at the corner of 17th and Bergen and the fellow
11 picked up the phone and called me and said "Hey, Reverend,
12 don't stick your head out the door. The thing is on."

13 I said, "What?"

14 He said, "The riot has broke loose. Hell has cut loose
15 in Newark. Don't come outside."

16 Well, he might as well say to come out. I got in
17 the street, out of my door and went to the corner of 17th
18 and Bergen and it was just like you had let out the World
19 Series game. They were coming up 17th Avenue, a swarm of
20 folks. They ran by me, one or two boys that I knew.

21 I said, "What's the matter?"

22 He said, "The riot is on."

23 I said, "Don't you think you better go home?"

24 He said, "Rev. I'll see you, sir."

25 In nothing flat there were 300 people passing my house

1 going down Bergen, some going up 17th, continuing, some
2 went up Bergen towards Springfield and I went towards my house.
3 out. That was the only safe, sane thing to do.

4 The next morning, in company with some other ministers,
5 we rode around as far as they let us go. By that time the
6 police were in force and you couldn't go but so far.

7 The next thing, in came the State Troopers and the
8 National Guard. I live in the midst of the riot area. At
9 the time that I did the work with the Committee trying to
10 get things worked out. I stayed right in the midst of it.

11 The National Guard, the State Troopers, lots of them
12 even sat on my porch, in my yard, in that area because they
13 found a sniper right across the street.

14 Q Were you aware of any sniper fire?

15 A Was I?

16 Q Can you tell us about it?

17 A The fellow came down--he had on a peculiar
18 looking uniform--and he had a rifle. He just shot right up
19 in the air. He didn't try to shoot it but he just shot right
20 up in the air. When the State Troopers came he had hidden
21 himself. They went away and he came out a second time. That
22 time he shot right over my house, which wasn't very comfortable
23 in feeling-wise. Then they came back again. He ran upstairs
24 to the top floor and he went to bed. They went in the house.
25 They searched it and they found him. He had his rifle under the

1 mattress. They seen it and they brought him out. I saw that.
2 He didn't shoot anybody but he shot his rifle.

3 Q I believe you called it a "peculiar uniform?"

4 A Yes. *know his name?*

5 Q Can you further describe it? *should have brought*

6 A Well, it was a jacket with a white base and he
7 had on pants something like flannel pants. He had on an
8 ordinary cap. *can provide you with it. It is somebody's*

9 Q Did either the State Police, National Guard or
10 the Newark Police use any fire power to quell this sniper?

11 A No. They went up there and he surrendered without
12 a struggle and they brought him down. They carried him on down
13 to jail. *it?*

14 Q Who summoned the police? *can tell us the date of*

15 A The roar of the rifle. They were attracted by
16 the firing of the gun because you could hear him, oh, any
17 number of blocks away and he didn't shoot just once. He would
18 shoot sometimes four or five times, one after the other. It
19 was no trouble to hear him. *ening, just before dark, I couldn't*

20 Q Did you experience any other incidents of sniper
21 fire? *He lived up on the third floor there and he came down*

22 A Well, no. I saw some other things. I saw the
23 Troopers do a lot of shooting.

24 Q Where was this? *to, National Guard. There were some*

25 A Well, they killed a fellow right on the corner of

1 18th and Bergen.

2 Q Can you describe that incident for us?

3 A Well, he just came down the stairs and --

4 Q Do you know his name?

5 A I can't recall it offhand. I should have brought
6 that memo with me.

7 Q But you can provide us with his name?

8 A I can provide you with it. It is somebody in
9 this building who can provide it for you.

10 Anyway he was killed. He hadn't committed anything but
11 I guess being nervous or inexperienced men did that.

12 Q Can you describe in more detail the exact incident
13 as you saw it?

14 MR. MEYNER: Maybe he can tell us the date or
15 if it was Thursday, Friday, Saturday or Sunday or
16 what hour it was.

17 THE WITNESS: This was Friday.

18 Q Go ahead.

19 A It was Friday evening, just before dark, I wouldn't
20 be too sure of the time but it was sundown. He came down from
21 his home. He lived up on the third floor there and he came down
22 and at that time they had blocked off everything.

23 Q Who is "They"?

24 A The State Troopers, National Guard. There were some
25 few words that passed, I understand, and a shot and a dead man.

1 front Q You indicated there were some few words that
2 passed that you understood.

3 by W Did you hear these words?

4 the A No, I didn't hear the words but that's the way
5 it was told to me because I went down there after the killing
6 and the lady was saying to me he hadn't done anything, that
7 he went out there and he was tending to his own business.
8 I didn't stay there too long because it wasn't too comfortable
9 and I just simply withdrew.

10 Q Did I understand correctly that you arrived at the
11 scene after the shooting had actually taken place?

12 A Sure. The man was lying on the ground dead when
13 I arrived.

14 Q May we back up to Thursday night? I believe you
15 had indicated that you went back to your own home?

16 A Yes.

17 Q Did you stay there all evening Thursday night?

18 A All night.

19 Q All night?

20 A I stayed there all night. That was the only place
21 that was --well, that wasn't safe but I stayed there all night
22 because they had the tanks, they had the trucks, they had the
23 cars. Bergen Street is a kind of a public thoroughfare. It
24 wasn't ten minutes for 24 hours but what the National Guard,
25 State Troopers and City Police were patrolling the street in

1 front of my house.

2 Q Did you personally make any effort that evening
3 by way of the telephone to reach those people who were in
4 the riots in order to cool it?

5 A Well, I did but to no avail.

6 Q What group or type of individual would you be
7 calling up on the telephone?

8 A Well, I would maybe call a tavern operator where
9 a whole group of folks associated. I would call a restaurant
10 where a group would be associated. I would call a drug store.
11 Those were the only public place where people would naturally
12 be.

13 They said to me "Doc, I am doing just like you. I closed
14 my place up and I am trying to live and stay out of the way."
15 The tempo of this riot can only be described by people who
16 were in it. It was vicious. The pattern of it was very
17 expertly executed. I disagree with anyone who said they did not
18 have some outside leadership.

19 Q Can you elaborate as to the basis for your belief
20 in this regard?

21 A Then they ran to the corner, on one corner there
22 there is a radio shop, on the next corner there is a club, a
23 kind of a collecting place, on the left side is a tavern, in
24 the middle of the next block there is a grocery store and
25 those fellows had some form of instrument where when they would

1 strike that glass with that instrument, they would reach and
2 strike it at the top, down the side and at the bottom it
3 would jump out just like this was done by men who knew
4 demolition work to perfection. They did the same thing. The
5 men who did the wrecking of the places didn't stop to loot.
6 The looting was done by whoever came along. These fellows who
7 demolished, that was their specialty and they did it with
8 marvelous precision.

9 It wasn't a matter of throwing rocks. These fellows
10 were equipped with the tools to do this damage.

11 Q Would you continue your description. What happened
12 on Friday? Did you then go out into the street on Friday at
13 all?

14 A Well, Friday I received a call from the minister
15 or the Council to come down to the City Hall. It was there we
16 made up a committee and we went up to the Armory to see if we
17 couldn't make some provision with the Governor. Of course, we
18 finally succeeded in getting some of the troops pulled out and
19 we felt that at that time things had somewhat tapered off and
20 on Monday when they did pull out the rest of the troops, things
21 had come to a standstill.

22 Q Going back, on Friday when you came out and you
23 had this meeting, what time Friday did you come out onto the
24 street, do you recall?

25 A Well, Friday when the riot was on. We came out that

1 morning early but we didn't go out to the City Hall because
2 there was nobody allowed through town. We didn't go down to
3 the City Hall until Saturday.

4 Q What did you do Friday morning, for example?

5 A Nothing in the world but stand around and stay in
6 the clear because that's what we were ordered to do.

7 Q What did you say?

8 A What was the use of saying anything? You might get
9 your head knocked off.

10 Q What did you see?

11 A I saw the greatest wreck ever. The city was just
12 in shambles. The places had been torn up. You just couldn't
13 believe your eyes.

14 Q Did you actually see people breaking things at that
15 point on Friday morning?

16 A No, there wasn't anything being broken at that
17 point. Well, Friday afternoon I stayed home.

18 Q Was looting going on?

19 A Looting was going on.

20 Q Who was doing the looting?

21 A Well, you couldn't name them but it was youngsters,
22 teen-agers.

23 Q Were there any adults doing the looting?

24 A Well, some, yes. There were a few adults too.

25 Q But mostly the teen-agers?

1 A Teen-agers.

2 Q Was it more of the 19-year-old as contrasted to the
3 13-year-old?

4 A Something like that. Well, anywhere from 15 up.

5 Q What about Friday afternoon?

6 A Friday afternoon the tension was still high and
7 they began, all of us, the ministers, was telling everybody to
8 keep the children off the street, get everybody in. Everybody
9 was going in because we had been told that the State Police
10 were coming and there would be a lot of killing.

11 So as far as we could we tried to advise the folks to
12 get off the streets and for people to keep the children home.
13 If they keep them home they could keep them from looting.

14 Q Did the looting continue through Friday afternoon?

15 A Yes.

16 Q What happened Friday evening? What did you do?

17 A Well, Friday afternoon I stayed home.

18 Q Friday afternoon you stayed home?

19 A Yes.

20 Q Friday evening?

21 A Friday evening and Friday night. They called me
22 out Saturday morning at 8 o'clock. We went downtown.

23 Q Who called you out?

24 A The Reverend B. B. Cantrell was the Chairman of
25 the Committee and he called us and Sid Poley and most all of

1 the leaders among our groups, met down at the City Hall, Tim
2 Still and people like that, Harry Wheeler.

3 Q After that meeting did you meet with the Governor
4 on Saturday?

5 A We went up to his place Saturday. I didn't go in
6 myself but I helped to formulate our requests with the
7 Committee. Van Ness was with us too.

8 Q Your request, as I understand it, was that the
9 troops be pulled back?

10 A That's right. At that time, you see, several
11 people had been killed. A lot of damage had been done.
12 Well, it was pretty dangerous.

13 Q What do you think is the possibility of a riot
14 re-occurring in Newark?

15 A Well, you can never say that you may not have
16 another riot but it can be prevented.

17 Q How?

18 A There's a lot of cooperation on the part of the
19 middle-class Negro. You see, there must be a dialogue with
20 this fellow that is out down here.

21 Q How can we develop that dialogue?

22 A The way to the heart they say is through the
23 stomach. The economic situation is one of the great problems.
24 When you think that 33 percent of the Negro people in Newark
25 are on relief you can get an idea of what a burden it is on

1 everybody, the taxpayers and everybody else.

2 Q Do you have any recommendations as to what can be
3 done to improve that?

4 A Well, one of the things that the Governor did or
5 somebody, when they made these openings for jobs, people are
6 being put to work, a man with a job, a full stomach and a
7 warm room to sleep in won't riot. It is the disillusioned,
8 the disinherited, the fellow who is divested of the creature
9 comforts is the fellow that can be persuaded easily.

10 Then the ignorant and the illiterate, they look for a
11 way out. They are looking for somebody to tell us what to do
12 and anybody who comes along with a loud-sounding story, they
13 follow blindly.

14 But it can be prevented but it has got to be on the part
15 of all the folks that's in Newark, from the City Hall all the
16 way through. They have got to work together. It can be
17 prevented.

18 Q What is your attitude towards the administration of
19 the City of Newark?

20 A Well, like everybody else, you know, you will
21 never get two men to agree on anything but I can say this: The
22 Mayor of the city, although he may have made some blunders, has
23 tried and he has done a very good job according to what he
24 had to work with. I have never been the one to stand on a
25 corner and belittle him because I went to his office when he was

1 in Congress and I found him to be a good man. He has lectured
2 in my church. I have known him to be a man who has given a
3 lot of help to a lot of people that didn't get it under some
4 of the others.

5 Q What programs do you think that he has instituted
6 which have been helpful in easing the situation in Newark?

7 A Well now, one of the things he has done, he has
8 given his ear to any complaint that has reached him. He has
9 not been indifferent to the complaints of the people. Some
10 things he could have perhaps been more discreet in but he has
11 done and is doing just about what any man would do under the
12 circumstances under which he has to labor.

13 Q In connection with the riot in July do you think
14 that the Mayor participated sufficiently in going out to the
15 riot area? In other words, was there the feeling of personal
16 involvement on the part of the Mayor?

17 A The Mayor was with the committees, he went along
18 with the Governor and they rode around over the areas together.

19 Q Was this on Friday?

20 A This was on Saturday and Sunday and Monday.

21 Q What about involvement on Thursday? Was there any
22 indication insofar as you were concerned that the Mayor was
23 personally involved?

24 A Well, the whole story is this: The Mayor was
25 working with the police force, Mr. Spina, and he was doing

1 just about what he could with a police force that was not
2 equal to a task.

3 Q What is your attitude towards the Newark police?

4 A A criminal never likes to see a priest or the
5 police. So now, what I am trying to tell you is this: The
6 police in Newark are like they are anywhere else. We have got
7 some over-bearing, we have got some good ones. They have been
8 a little bit over-bearing in many instances, but on the other
9 hand, the obligation of an officer of the law is to subdue a
10 man. I have been a policeman and I happen to know the oath
11 they take.

12 In some instances they have been over-bearing, but in
13 many instances they have been policemen.

14 Q Do you have any ideas on how the Negro youth of
15 Newark can be reached?

16 A Well, the Negro youth in Newark is not any
17 different from anybody else. You have got to go up, as a
18 fellow said once, a man asked him, "Do you have an idea how
19 you can bridle this mule?"

20 He said, "You go up on the right side of him."

21 So in this case the Negro youth can be reached like
22 anybody else if you will go up on the right side of him.

23 Q Well, what is the right side?

24 A Well, I have in my church something like 1,000
25 young fellows between the ages of 5 and 18. In order to

1 understand how to preach these you have got to know something
2 about the environment in which they live.

3 You see, they could be on their best behavior if they
4 are getting love, creature comfort and some sense of respect.
5 That is the one thing that will win. That has to be done by
6 a whole lot of us who call ourselves religionists and leaders.
7 We have got to go another step out there to find these fellows.

8 Now right across the street in front of my church, any
9 time you want to go there you can go up and you will see any-
10 where like 15 or 20 men and women sitting across the street,
11 doped, drunks and winos.

12 Well now, they have lost all hope and perspective and
13 they have just simply become wards of charity. They sit around
14 and wait until the end of the month comes when they can pick
15 up their relief check and then they have a ball until it is
16 gone and they sit around over there.

17 Well now, they are human beings and very often at my
18 church, two or three times a week, we serve -- some club or
19 some organization will serve.

20 Well now, what is not left over but the first thing is we
21 fix up something and give those fellows something to eat. They
22 will clean the sidewalk, they will wash the church for you,
23 they will almost lick your hand. The young fellows who are
24 drop-outs, from broken homes, we have been able to get lots of
25 them working on jobs. We picked up some who had finished high

1 school, We were able to get them away in college.

2 By holding counciling meetings we have been able to get
3 some who went to Jamesburg and Annandale to come back and go
4 straight.

5 So what has to be done is that these people must be
6 personally contacted and they have got to be made to feel that
7 somebody cares and they have got to be directed in the right
8 direction.

9 Q Well, what persons or groups can contact these
10 people?

11 A Well now, in our group up there the Council
12 of Churches, we've got two groups of people that's going to
13 Stella Wright and the Hayes Homes, making contact with groups.
14 We have church groups that are doing that.

15 Last Sunday, in my 11 o'clock service, I had a group
16 of youngsters and they were not dressed immaculately, they
17 were merely clean, but they came down and gave themselves into
18 the church because some of my people had contacted them and
19 they brought them to the church. This is the kind of thing
20 we have got to do.

21 In our school system we need truant officers who will
22 go and chase these younsters back to school and also get a
23 hold of these delinquent parents and see to it that these
24 children are kept in school.

25 Those are some of the means by which some of this can be

1 eradicated.

2 Q What group is going to do this? You mentioned, as
3 I gather one, the Negro middle-class?

4 A That's right.

5 Q Now is that by virtue of a formal group or by
6 individuals?

7 A It's got to be both, both formal and individual.

8 You see, a man alone out here in Newark is like a straw in
9 the Atlantic Ocean, but with a church behind him or with a
10 group behind him or with a mission circle behind him or
11 behind her, there is something they can do other than say come
12 and be good or say cool it. They can say "Come to the meeting
13 and meet the group" and by so doing it has its effect.

14 Q You indicated then a truant officer and I take it
15 that that would not be a project that the Negro middle-class
16 could take on?

17 A That would be the school system, the Board of
18 Education.

19 Q Do you have any other recommendations you can give
20 the Commission in this area?

21 A Well, there is one thing I hope, and that's that
22 there will be adequate space created for the people who try
23 to go to school here and that a better qualified group of
24 teachers be employed and that more qualified Negro personnel
25 be placed in these schools.

1 I have been in school work 49 years and I still go to
2 the South with pride and see Negro heads of institutions and
3 see children going out of those schools going to colleges, to
4 NYU and other institutions and they haven't got to make up
5 any deficiencies,

6 Q Is there any reason why you wouldn't want that
7 on the record?

8 A Well, I didn't want to brag.

9 Q We can put that on the record.

10 Is it your view that the equality of education in the
11 South insofar as the Negro is concerned is higher than it is
12 in the City of Newark?

13 A In a sense it is more real and more effective
14 because the people are forced to work a little harder and get
15 it a little better.

16 Q We have two teachers who are going to testify
17 later this afternoon and perhaps we will hear from them on
18 that question.

19 One other point that I wanted to cover and that is that
20 I understand you are presently in the process of developing
21 private homes in the riot area, is that correct?

22 A Well, we have our application in for land to
23 develop some units with our new church. We have got to build
24 a church and we are planning to build homes in connection
25 with the church program.

1 Q How is your program coming?

2 A We are doing pretty good, You know, the money is
3 the first thing and we are getting some money together. We can
4 talk money to the fellows who have land for sale.

5 MR. GIBBONS: Is this housing for the
6 elderly or 221-D-3 program?

7 THE WITNESS: 221-D-3 and of course, we
8 are going to have one unit for the elderly too.

9 MR. GIBBONS: The 221-D-3 will be coopera-
10 tive apartments, 3-story?

11 THE WITNESS: That's right.

12 MR. FORTUNATO: Do the Commissioners have
13 questions?

14 MR. LEUCHTER: Yes.

15 I might just as well ask this of you unless
16 our witness knows.

17 My question was this: Who was called to the
18 Fourth Precinct on Wednesday night, the night that
19 cab driver Smith was arrested?

20 Let me phrase it this way. Accounts I have
21 read indicated that some ministers were called to
22 the station after his arrest to see what he
23 looked like.

24 Is that so? If so, did you talk to anybody
25 who had gone down to the precinct to talk to him or

1 did you see him personally?

2 THE WITNESS: I did not see him and the other
3 ministers that were there did not see him because
4 he was carried into the precinct and nobody was
5 allowed to see him.

6 Q He was then taken out of the precinct to the
7 hospital, was he not?

8 A I understand that. I know he did get to the
9 hospital. At the hospital he was kept in private.

10 MR. LEUCHTER: One last question.

11 Is the identity of the passenger in Mr.
12 Smith's taxi known?

13 THE WITNESS: I don't think you would have
14 too much problem to get that because Smith himself
15 would tell you.

16 CHAIRMAN LILLEY: He knows the passenger,
17 I take it?

18 THE WITNESS: He knows who the passenger was.

19 CHAIRMAN LILLEY: Reverend Johnson, I would
20 like to ask you this: You have been a minister in
21 Newark for a number of years.

22 In your opinion, has the influence of the
23 clergy and the churches increased or decreased
24 during your time here?

25 THE WITNESS: Well, let me put it to you this

1 way: When I came to my church we had 7 people
2 that owned their homes. We had four Negro teachers,
3 we had seven Negro policemen twenty-three years
4 ago. We are still doing that. In fact, we did

5 Under my influence in my church, 639 families
6 bought homes. When I came here we didn't think
7 about sending Negro children to college through
8 the church. This last year, in the month of
9 August, my church gave money, up to \$10,000,
10 to be distributed among 57 children. I know that's
11 not too much but these children went to 17 colleges.
12 The church in instances has not kept pace with the
13 influx but the churches are still making progress.

14 The churches open their doors to the priest
15 school. Our church was the first one to house a
16 priest school of the Protestants. We still have
17 two groups, two classes going, and they have made
18 themselves available in this anti-poverty program
19 in every demanded sense.

20 The churches are not failing. When I came here
21 I had 700 people in my church. I could hold one
22 service in the morning and night and all go home.
23 When I had been here about two years I could not
24 house my group so I split the service and at 7:30
25 in the morning, and any one of you who would like

1 to visit and see for yourself, we have anywhere
2 from 5 to 800 people at 7:30 and anywhere from
3 1,000 to 1,500 at 11 o'clock.

4 We are still doing that. In fact, we did
5 it Sunday.

6 Now as long as folks will go to church you
7 cannot say the church is losing ground.

8 CHAIRMAN LILLEY: You obviously feel your
9 church is doing quite a job. In fact, you mentioned
10 what to me was a striking figure, that you had in
11 your congregation between the ages of 5 and 17, I
12 think 1,000 youngsters?

13 THE WITNESS: That's right.

14 CHAIRMAN LILLEY: Is this generally true
15 of other churches?

16 THE WITNESS: Well, we have one or two other
17 churches in town. Take Mount Cavalry, Hopewell,
18 they haven't got that mass or that large number but they are
19 doing the job. The Pilgrim, Mount Zion up on
20 North Broadway, these churches are reaching into
21 the community and they are doing the job with
22 young people.

23 CHAIRMAN LILLEY: I am pursuing this because
24 it interests me and I would like to ask just one
25 more question. Do you think the number of young

1 people without pastoral services, so to speak,
2 is increasing in Newark.

3 THE WITNESS: Well, I believe so. Now here's
4 why: The influx and the migration of people from
5 the South, those areas at times, has been greater
6 than the Newark community could absorb.

7 Of course, we haven't got the influx coming
8 now that we did have since things have somewhat
9 cooled in the South. They are finding it very
10 convenient to live and stay where they are.

11 But as long as the tirade of brutality
12 prevailed in the South, the people came in here
13 in crowds and there was no way on earth that you
14 could keep step with the influx.

15 Well now, they're here and they have to be
16 adjusted. They came up with a complex of hate,
17 of fear and ignorance, and they didn't find pie
18 in the sky as they thought they might have.

19 MR. MEYNER: You say that you have been a
20 minister here for 23 years?

21 THE WITNESS: That's right.

22 MR. MEYNER: Have you noticed a difference in
23 the type of person that has come here over the
24 years? Is the type of person today or last year
25 different than those of 22 years ago or 20 years

1 ago?

2 THE WITNESS: The ones 22 years ago came
3 looking for a job and when they found a job they
4 went to work. Some of them came up to work and
5 make money and go back and pay off farm notes or
6 mortgages. Some came up to get a start in life.

7 Those people were good people. They had
8 the program, they had an objective. But after a
9 while, the group just came and they migrate from
10 Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, coming up on
11 the East to pick the potatoes and they didn't go
12 back, where they could come into a city and squat
13 down, they just came in here.

14 Well, that was Problem Number 1.

15 MR. MEYNER: Then they found the way and
16 got relief very quickly?

17 THE WITNESS: That's what happened. I hate
18 to say this but relief has been one of the things
19 that has undermined a lot of people and destroyed
20 their initiative.

21 MR. MEYNER: Do you think you could work out
22 some sort of a system by which after a person is
23 six months on relief that you say no more relief
24 unless you move into a certain type of housing,
25 institutional housing, where there is strict

1 supervision?

2 Do you think that kind of a system would be
3 better? I know that you just can't refuse to
4 feed somebody who is hungry, but instead of
5 saying "Here's your relief check" every two weeks
6 or every month and as you say, they spend it in
7 the first couple of days and then sort of hang
8 around for the rest of the time, if you've got
9 a person who is on two months or three months and
10 say "No more money unless you go to a barracks or
11 State-maintained place where you eat out of a
12 common kitchen and you have to take some training",
13 do you think a system like that would work or be
14 helpful?

15 THE WITNESS: It will. Now let me tell you
16 this: A lot of folks have decided to go it all
17 the way with relief.

18 BISHOP TAYLOR: For the sake of the record
19 I think I must say that this whole matter of
20 relief is not a Negro problem at all. When you
21 stretch this thing out of America you must realize
22 that two out of three persons on welfare in
23 the United States of America are white. Only one-
24 third of the people in the United States of America
25 are Negroes. I think I ought to enter that as part

1 of this record.

2 MR. MEYNER: Bishop Taylor, I am not saying
3 that they are any different than anyone else.

4 BISHOP TAYLOR: I am not rebutting you at
5 all. I will go along with some of the things you
6 said.

7 MR. MEYNER: I think Negroes would react
8 the same as whites. I don't see any difference.

9 BISHOP TAYLOR: I didn't want our witness
10 to get the impression here that this whole problem
11 is just a group of lazy Negroes coming up from
12 the South. It isn't quite that.

13 THE WITNESS: Kind sir, it is not my aim
14 to create that impression but simply talk about
15 a problem we must face issues as they are.

16 Now it is not my concept that any of this is
17 all one side of the fence but I must talk about
18 the thing that I came here to talk about and I
19 must tell you and answer the questions as I
20 understand them. I am out here and there isn't
21 a day in my life, even this very day, I provided
22 for a woman and she said she has 9 children and I
23 don't know but I had to take her word for it but
24 when my social worker went there she counted 9,
25 whether they were hers or whose they were. Her

1 story is she just came here from Meridian,
2 Mississippi, and somebody helped her to this
3 place and somebody helped her to that place and she
4 is in a place with all those kids in two rooms.

5 Well, I have two real estate men in my
6 church who are very kind. One fellow had just
7 renovated a home. He said "If the church will
8 give me a certain amount of money I will put her
9 in there and I will turn on the light and let her
10 go in."

11 Well now, what is the hope? What does she
12 hope to get but relief? Now let's call a spade
13 a spade. I say again that relief has undermined
14 the initiative because as long as they can do it
15 with relief, they are not going out and look for
16 a job.

17 MR. LEUCHTER: With this woman of 9 children,
18 Mr. Johnson, what could she do with 9 children at
19 home? Are we going to say to her or what we ought
20 to do is put women like this out to work?

21 If there is no man in the house what do you
22 do?

23 THE WITNESS: Well, she is a relief problem.
24 I said that a while ago.

25 MR. LEUCHTER: Yes, but what would we do

1 without relief? Would she then be starving?

2 In other words, what is the alternative to
3 it?

4 THE WITNESS: Well, I don't know but I have
5 always believed in the old saying that there is
6 a berry for every bird. There will always be
7 some way worked out by which these people will be
8 provided for. They will get along somehow. Just
9 like she came to my church, just like my congre-
10 gation is willing to make some provision for her,
11 somebody else will do the same thing.

12 If a person is honest there will always be
13 a way of providing.

14 BISHOP DOUGHERTY: Well, you are not
15 endorsing the total elimination of relief?

16 THE WITNESS: Not at all.

17 BISHOP DOUGHERTY: In other words, a woman
18 like this, it seems to me, has no alternative but to
19 find support, is that right?

20 THE WITNESS: That's right. I agree with
21 that. That's one of the reasons why I got busy and
22 made it possible. But then I do know any number
23 of instances where relief is the difference between
24 a man getting out and getting a job. I know that too.

25 MR. MEYNER: Do you find any situations where

1 landlords take advantage of these people?

2 THE WITNESS: Well, listen, the landlord
3 wants his money.

4 MR. MEYNER: Well, he has to pay his taxes.
5 Do you think there are instances or do you know
6 of instances where the landlords keep a very
7 poor place and charge exorbitant rentals?

8 THE WITNESS: We have plenty of that.

9 You see, this NCNCR that we have down at the
10 City Hall, that is the objective of this NCNCR
11 organization.

12 MR. MEYNER: What is NCNCR?

13 THE WITNESS: That's the Newark Citizens of
14 Community Service and it is a real service because
15 we try to go to these homes where the realtors
16 are not doing their job and where the complaints
17 have been registered and they are not adjusted, to
18 put those people on the spot to make them bring
19 their homes and conditions up to livable con-
20 ditions. That's what this is for, self-help.

21 BISHOP DOUGHERTY: How about the inspection
22 of these homes by the city and rent controls?

23 THE WITNESS: That can be taken with a
24 grain of salt. It depends on whose house it is.

25 MR. MEYNER: You mean some landlords have an

1 ability not to be inspected so often?

2 generally listen THE WITNESS: Well, you heard what I said.

3 I say it depends on whose house it is.

4 I get the news BISHOP DOUGHERTY: It depends upon whose
5 through and ox is gored?

6 in the morning THE WITNESS: That's it exactly.

7 Service, River MR. MEYNER: Or who the landlord is?

8 I have to get out THE WITNESS: That's right.

9 MR. GIBBONS: You mentioned a radio broad-
10 cast with respect to this rumor that Mr. Smith
11 was dead. Did you hear that broadcast?

12 THE WITNESS: I heard the news about mid-
13 night. I don't know where it was but I heard when
14 the first news was told about the riot it said
15 that the man has been dead but it has not been
16 verified.

17 MR. GIBBONS: Do you remember what radio
18 station it was?

19 THE WITNESS: No, I couldn't say. I wouldn't
20 try to say it because everybody was listening
21 and New York was telling it and our station here
22 was telling it and Passaic was talking about it.
23 There were conversations talking about it. It was
24 general but it proved to be untrue so it's good and
25 he is still living.

1 Q Is there any radio station in particular that you
2 generally listen to?

3 A Well, I don't have time to listen to them much.
4 I get the human radios when I go home at night and get
5 through and sometimes I used to listen to Bishop Sheen and
6 in the morning I would get the program from NYU, Sunrise
7 Service, Riverside Service, the educational program. Then
8 I have to get out and listen to these human radios.

9 MR. MEYNER: Tales of woe?

10 THE WITNESS: That's right, tales of woe.

11 MR. MEYNER: There is just one further
12 question.

13 Q Could you be a little more specific as to
14 the changes in the waves of people that have
15 come here in the last twenty-three years? You
16 mentioned the relief.

17 THE WITNESS: Folk ways and mores are usually
18 subjected to circumstances. There are a lot of
19 people in this town who are victims of circum-
20 stances. One of the most damnable things in this
21 town is the presence of too many taverns. You go to
22 any tavern, when a fellow gets full of beer and
23 whisky and wine, that's it and too much of it
24 destroys the initiative and eventually destroys
25 the person. Newark is a city that is trying to

1 drink itself into some form of make-believe Utopia.

2 Now there is just a little bit too much of
3 that going on around here. Now the people who
4 come in, as I say again, there is a floating
5 element, there is a lot of folks here who just
6 come to Newark. We have some who come and work
7 a while and leave.

8 Then we have some who come just to become
9 problems and they become problems. We do not
10 have, as I started to say a while ago, the
11 objectivity on the part of folks who come to Newark
12 now that we had 15 years ago.

13 CHAIRMAN LILLEY: I guess there are no
14 further question, Reverend Johnson.

15 Thank you for coming here. We appreciate it.

16 * * *

17
18 T H E L M A H A R G R A V E, Sworn.

19 EXAMINATION BY MR. FORTUNATO:

20 Q Will you tell us your address, please?

21 A 224 South 7th Street, Newark, New Jersey. I think
22 the zip code is 07103.

23 Q I guess we can't ask you your age?

24 A Sure. I'm 58.

25 Q Your birth place?