

CHAPTER II.

THE KU KLUX KLAN.

When in June, 1922, a Negro in Muncie was kidnapped and either flogged or threatened with flogging by a band of "masked men",¹ Muncie hardly raised its eyebrows. The Press, however, was very careful to deny that an organization called the Ku Klux Klan had anything to do with the kidnapping. The city attorney, afterwards known as having Klan affiliations,² emphatically denied any Klan connections with the episode. Said the Chief of Police, "I haven't seen any masked men and I don't think there were any."³ There was no prosecution.

The rise of the Ku Klux Klan points to some very significant things about American political and mental processes and because it played such an important part in the political history of Muncie, I shall dwell upon it at some length.

¹Muncie Evening Press, June 12, 1922.

²This man, C. E. Benadum, has since been connected with similar movements in Muncie most notably the Silver Shirts which was essentially an anti-Semitic organization. He has also written a book called Blackshirt (Philadelphia, 1935) which tells about Klan-like activities of a fascist order in America.

³Muncie Evening Press, June 13, 1922.

The "big Red scare" coming as it did on the heels of the war made the nation jittery. For the first time in its history America was conscious of real labor agitation. Strikes, higher prices, and a few scattered bombs convinced a large sector of the public that all this unrest was perpetrated by insidious "radicals".

"The American business man.... had come out of the war with his fighting blood up, ready to lick the next thing that stood in his way. He wanted to get back to business and enjoy his profits. Labor stood in his way and threatened his profits. He had come out of the war with a militant patriotism; and mingling his idealistic with his selfish motives, after the manner of all men at all times, he developed a fervent belief that 100-per-cent Americanism and the Welfare of God's own Country and Loyalty to the Teachings of the Founding fathers implied the right of the business man to kick the union organizer out of his workshop. He had come to distrust anything that was foreign, and this radicalism he saw as the spawn of long-haired slavs and unwashed East-Side Jews. And, finally, he had been nourished during the war years upon stories of spies and plotters and international intrigue. He had been convinced that German sympathizers signaled to one another with lights from mountain-tops and put ground glass into surgical dressings, and he had formed the habit of expecting tennis courts to conceal gun-emplacements. His credulity had thus been stretched until he was quite ready to believe that a struggle of American laboring-men for better wages was the beginning of an armed rebellion directed by Lenin and Trotsky, and that behind every innocent professor who taught that there were arguments for as well as against socialism there was a bearded rascal from eastern Europe with a money bag in one hand and a smoking bomb in the other."⁴

⁴Allen, op. cit., pp. 48-9.

When, in September, 1919, The Boston Police went out on strike many people were convinced that der tag had come; that "the dreaded revolution was beginning here and now."⁵

Then, as if all this was not sufficient proof of a great "red conspiracy" against the United States government, there came the great steel and coal strikes of which I have spoken above. Even the most level-headed were beginning to wonder. Suddenly the Government came into the picture, United States Attorney-General, A. Mitchell Palmer, the "Fighting Quaker" turned the Department of Justice into a very effective O.G.P.U. Red-baiting, arrests, raids, and deportations were the order of the day - with little concern for such incidental considerations as American citizenship, warrants or writs of habeas corpus. "Hysteria had reached its height."

Nor did it quickly subside. For the professional superpatriots (and assorted special propagandists disguised as superpatriots) had only begun to fight. Innumerable patriotic societies had sprung up, each with its executive secretary, and executive secretaries must live, and therefore must conjure up new and ever greater menaces. Innumerable other gentlemen now discovered that they could defeat whatever they wanted to defeat by tarring it conspicuously with the Bolshevist Brush. Big-Navy men, believers in compulsory military service, drys, anti-cigarette campaigners,

⁵Allen, p. 53.

anti-evolution Fundamentalists, defenders of the moral order, book censors, Jew-haters, Negro-haters, landlords, manufacturers, utility executives, upholders of every sort of cause, good, bad and indifferent, all wrapped themselves in Old Glory and the mantle of the Founding Fathers and allied their opponents with Lenin. The open shop, for example, became the 'American plan'.⁶

Hardly a public-spirited citizen or civic group in the country did not at some time or other come under the dark cloud of accusation. The National League of Women Voters, the Federal Council of Churches, the Foreign Policy Association, even Jane Addams and Will Rogers bore watching.⁷ It was during a time such as this that "conformity" became the watchword of those who wished

⁶Allen, pp. 58-59. It is interesting to note an almost identical opinion expressed to the writer by the present mayor of Muncie - the same Dr. Bunch who went to Atlanta during his second term - on the question of "radicalism" in Muncie. In an interview in December, 1936, when asked his opinion of the Massachusetts Teachers' Oath Bill, His Honor said, "...there are too many non-governmental institutions regulating our lives. They drape the flag and the Constitution around anything they want done. Then if someone won't support them, they are immediately dubbed 'un-American', 'communistic', etc." Certainly there is no better proof of the extent to which old ways of political thinking are breaking down in Middletown when a man steeped in the tradition of the political boss, and an active boss himself, makes such a declaration.

⁷Ibid., p. 60.

to be immune from suspicion. It is this same kind of "conformity" that still pervades life in Middletown.⁸

Intolerance became a commonplace.

"Almost inevitably it took the form of an ugly flareup of feeling against the Negro, the Jew, and the Roman Catholic. The emotions of group loyalty and of hatred, expanded during war-time and then suddenly denied their intended expression, found a perverted release in the persecution not only of supposed radicals, but also of other elements which to the dominant American group - the white Protestants - seemed alien or 'un-American'."⁹

Exigencies of the war caused a great migration of southern Negroes to the North. In fact, the great need for industrial labor brought also a movement of southern whites. But at least they were not so obvious as their colored brethren. Friction and maladjustment was bound to occur whenever large aggregates of one racial group noticeably impinged upon the social and economic spheres of another. The North began to see a problem with which the South had grappled for generations,¹⁰ And this awareness brought with it violence. There were race riots in Chicago and uneasiness in other large cities.¹¹

⁸See Middletown in Transition, Chapter XII, on "The Middletown Spirit."

⁹Allen, op. cit., p. 62.

¹⁰Gosnell, Harold F., Negro Politicians, Chicago, 1935; op. xx, 1, 15.

¹¹Ibid., p. 63ff.

Henry Ford crystalized the latent anti-Semitism of many people with his series of articles called the "International Jew";¹² although he probably was not quite sure just what the stories signed by him in his Dearborn Independent - and written by his now well-known expounder of Sunday night Fordian philosophy, Mr. W. J. Cameron - actually implied. The old "international plot" tales were revived and there were those who were certain that every Jew in the world was connected with some sort of mysterious tong. Twenty million individualists, pants pressers and bankers, most of whom could not even understand each other, were to pounce upon the other two billions or less in the world and completely subjugate them.

Catholics, too, were dragged into the picture. Here was a large group of people who would not send their children to public schools. Furthermore, they were under complete control of a Pope who was not even an American. How many persons were convinced that the Vatican City would be transferred to Washington was well proved by Al Smith's presidential campaign. "It was in such an atmosphere that that the Ku Klux Klan blossomed into power."¹³

¹²Ibid., p. 64; Mecklin, John M., The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind, New York, 1924., p. 125.

¹³Allen, op. cit., p. 65. Cf. also, Johnson, J. E., (compiler). "KU KLUX KLAN", The Reference Shelf, vol. 1, no. 10. for an interesting and valuable survey of early editorial, academic, and purely partisan opinion dealing with all phases of the rise of the Klan that are mentioned in this thesis.

In 1915 a dreary-eyed mystic, William J. Simmons, a former professor of Southern history at a small Southern college, started the modern Ku Klux Klan. "Fascinated as he was from boyhood by the romantic story of the old Klan of Reconstruction days, which is looked upon in the South as the savior of Southern civilization, he called the new order the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan."¹⁴

The first five years of this "fraternal" organizations were uneventful and only scattered sections of the country were even aware of its existence. The year 1920, however, saw a sudden and most phenomenal rise in its membership and power. The whole nation took notice. Attacked by the powerful New York World and subject to Congressional investigation at an early date, the Klan weathered all opposition and soared to new heights of political power.¹⁵

This sudden expansion of the Klan in 1920 was the result of an internal reorganization by men who saw great financial possibilities in the hooded order. A propaganda machine that would have gladdened the heart of Herr Goebbels was set up by one Edward Y. Clarke whose former occupation had been organizer for such apparently

¹⁴Mecklin, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 3.

harmless movements as the Anti-Saloon League, the Roosevelt Memorial Fund, and the Near East Relief. To facilitate canvass and control from Atlanta, the national headquarters, the whole country was divided up into several geographical "domains". "Each 'domain' was divided into 'realms' or states. The head of the promotion department as a whole was Imperial Kleagle E. Y. Clarke. The head of the 'domain' was called a Grand Goblin. The head of the 'realm' or state, was called a King Kleagle, and the house-to-house solicitors, or legwork men, were called Kleagles. There can be little doubt that the purely commercial motive had much to do with the successful promotion of the Klan. The membership fee was ten dollars, which was divided as follows; four of the ten dollars went to the Kleagle, or local solicitor, when he signed up a new member; one dollar went into the pocket of the King Kleagle, or state sales-manager; the Grand Goblin, or district salesman, had to be content with only fifty cents, while the remaining four dollars and fifty cents went to Atlanta."¹⁶ With an organization of such pecuniary possibilities Emperor Simmons was hardly able to cope. He was soon left behind in the rush and a more paractical opportunist, Dr. Hiram W. Evans, a Texas

¹⁶ Frost, Stanley, The Challenge of The Klan, Indianapolis, 1923. pp. 42, 121ff.; Mecklin, op. cit., p. 8; Allen, op. cit., p. 66.

dentist, exchanged his drill for the toga of the Imperial Wizard.¹⁷

Granted the power of financial appeal, it alone hardly explains the phenomenal growth of "the giant in the white hood."¹⁸ If the Klan was a purely "taking" device it nevertheless gave back something for which its members were looking. Therein lies its great significance for American political history. To admit that men joined an organization which subtly played upon their prejudices and hatreds to the point of commercializing them is only half the story; the Klan made as strong a plea to the "patriotism and....moral idealism of its members. The baser motives were present, but they alone can never account for the spread of the Klan."¹⁹ Rather than being "un-American" as the New York World tried to paint it in its great expose, "the Klan was but the recrudescence of forces that already existed in American society, some of them recent, others dating from the more distant past."²⁰ It would be altogether a distortion of the Klan's real significance to dismiss it as something completely foreign to the American way of life.

¹⁷ Frost, op. cit., p. 20ff.

¹⁸ Ibid. Chap. I.

¹⁹ Mecklin, op. cit., p. 13.

²⁰ Ibid.

Mecklin has tried "to show that the Klan drew its inspirations from ancient prejudices, classical hatreds, and ingrained social habits. The germs of the disease of the Klan, like germs in the human body, have long been present in the social organism and needed only the weakening of the social tissue to become malignant."²¹ The important thing is to discover what there is or was in American life at the time that called for and permitted an organization like the Klan to achieve such tremendous political and social power.

The answers to this query are innumerable. I can only present a few of those which seem to me most important.

To use Mecklin's figure, the "germs" which have long been present in the social order are found most obviously in those racial and religious hatreds mentioned above. In the case of the Klan, the anti-Catholic fever seemed to rise much higher than did hatred at Jews and Negroes -- although these were very much in evidence. The primary motive in many cases for joining the Klan was this anti-Catholic attitude.²² When Klan leaders had to find something to "sell" in order to entice new

²¹ Ibid., p. 14.

²² Ibid., p. 38.

members they struck upon the idea of catering to this hatred -- an old device used with singular success to enlist "that powerful body of middle class Protestant traditions which have registered themselves in the Know-Nothing Party of the middle of the last century and in the A.P.A. movement towards its close."²³ Childhood memories of many persons were brought back by Klan-circulated stories about Catholics, their nuns and priests. A most effective story in boosting Klan membership was that describing a secret Catholic ritual by which a rifle was buried under a church or a Knights of Columbus Hall every time a male Catholic was born. This rifle was to be suddenly siezed in two or three decades, well oiled and loaded, to be used in the great Papal plot to sieze control of the United States.²⁴ Out of their context these stories are absolutely ludicrous. Their effect, however, on the growth of the Klan was most amazing. Writing in 1923, when the Klan had just seized politics by the ears, in Indiana, Lowell Mellett said; "Worry about the Catholics....has been revived. It is part of the state of mind that accounts for the amazing growth of the Ku Klux Klan in the old Hoosier commonwealth;

²³ Ibid., p. 42; Frost, op. cit., p. 102ff.

²⁴ Mellett, Lowell, "Klan and Church", Atlantic Monthly, November 1923. p. 587; Mecklin, op. cit., p. 167ff.; Frost, op. cit., p. 103.

that enables Indiana to compete with Ohio for the distinction of having a larger Klan membership than any other State. It helped make possible the remarkable election results of last fall, when practically every candidate opposed by the Klan went down in defeat."²⁵

Aside from its scapegoats, the Klan found its greatest appeal in its promises to "clean up" things -- especially in local governments. The Post-war breakdown of traditional morality caused a reaction in favor of "law and order." If the legally constituted force of the state was unable to prevent this growing laxness, the Klan would. The appeal of the sheet struck the Robin Hood note in many cases -- as well as the Freudian.²⁶ That the common law had placed great emphasis upon the inviolability of personal integrity and one's private life made little difference to a group of self-appointed "reformers" who took the morals of the community under their own surveillance. If a woman's drunken husband disappeared too often she might appeal to the Klan to take him in hand. And woe to the Klansman who traded with

²⁵ Mellett, op. cit., pp. 587-8.

²⁶ Mecklin, op. cit., p. 40. In the early period between 1915 and 1920 "it is probable that the role of a vigilance committee rather than that of a purely fraternal order was the real attraction of the Klan. The traditions of the old Klan together with the lax post-war conditions acted to combine to turn the Klan into a sort of local hooded vigilantes."

a merchant not approved by his brethren. From the "slow of thought" the Klan received its support in these undertakings. Here was an organization that "got things done."²⁷ "I hear the Klan kind of fixes up things that ain't right"²⁸ expresses most forcefully the ideas of many people who looked upon the Klan as a panacea for almost every kind of personal grievance. The "nice people", too, in most communities supported the Klan at its inception because they saw a chance to rid their respective cities of corrupt political machines.²⁹ This situation, however, was more common in the South where the name of the Klan still brought back patriotic thoughts of the old organization's role in Southern history. The significant factor in much of this early attitude toward the Klan is the speed with which the breakdown of the traditional gadgets by which most Americans lived brought about a desire for authoritarianism to relace the indecisiveness of representitive institutions. Comparisons with similar German experiences are most striking.

²⁷ Frost, op. cit., pp. 161ff., 199.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 167.

²⁹ Mecklin, op. cit., p. 41.

But its very secrecy and unholy mystery lost the Klan the support of the "better elements". The novelty of "night riding" and tar and feathering parties soon wore off. There must have been and probably still is something in the make-up of the American people which made them extremely susceptible to such a movement. Partially due to its racial and religious restrictions but mostly because of its appeal, the Klan was essentially made up of solid middle class American stock. Klan organization was most effective in the small town where immigration and industrialization had not yet become a recognized part of community life. Mecklin explains the Klan as a "defense mechanism", an escape from the drab, everyday existence of the small town. "Its cheap moral idealism (filled) a need not met by business or social and civic life."³⁰ In sum, then, the rise of the Klan

³⁰Mecklin, p. 104. This author also makes some interesting analyses of the psychological factors which influenced the growth of the Klan. *Ibid.*, pp. 107-8 "Here we have a curious side-light upon the psychology of the average man of native American stock who fills the ranks of the Klan. He is tossed about in the hurly-burly of our industrial and so-called democratic society. Under the stress and strain of social competition he is made to realize his essential mediocrity. Yet according to traditional democratic doctrine he is born free and the equal of his fellow who is outdistancing him in the race. Here is a large and powerful organization offering to solace his sense of defeat by dubbing him a knight of the Invisible Empire for the small sum of ten dollars. Surely knighthood was never offered at such a bargain! He joins. He becomes the chosen conservator of American ideals, the keeper of the morals of the community. He receives the

must be traced directly to "disturbed post-war conditions. The war, with its hymns of hate, its stories of poison gas and human carnage, its secret spyings upon fellow Americans, its accounts of Belgian atrocities, its imprisonment of radicals, its fearful tales of Bolshevist design upon American institutions, had opened up the fountains of the great deep of national feeling. After the armistice these hates kindled by the war and to which the nation had become habituated during years of bloodshed were suddenly set adrift because stripped of the objects and the ends around which they had been organized by the experience of the war. As a nation we had cultivated a taste for the cruel, the brutal, the intolerant, and the unchristian that demanded gratification. Here was an unparalleled opportunity for the Klan's salesmen of hate'. The Klan offered just what the war-torn distraught emotion of the nation demanded."³¹

The conclusion is obvious; that the American mass mind which has in the recent past accepted the dogmas of label of approved 'one hundred per cent Americanism'. The Klan slogan printed on the outside of its literature is "an urgent call for men." This flatters the pride of the man suffering from the sense of mediocrity and defeat. It stimulates his latent idealism. It offers fantastic possibilities for his dwarfed and starved personality. Membership in a vast mysterious empire that 'sees all and hears all' means a sort of mystic glorification of his petty self. It identifies his own weak incompetent will with the omnipotent and universal will of a great organization. The appeal is irresistible."

³¹Mecklin, pp. 121-2.

the Klan under certain given conditions would certainly repeat their attachment to a Klan-like fascist movement if such conditions were to reappear. In an era of "general unrest and dissatisfaction with both local and national conditions" when all men were greatly distressed by "the high cost of living, social injustice and inequality, mal-administration of justice, political corruption, hyphenism, disunity, unassimilated and conflicting ideals and standards"³² the Klan offered a solution.

What did the Klan mean for Muncie, Politically it meant a new and powerful force straddling both political parties and threatening to become a dictatorial government. Socially, it meant that an already disturbed community was to be divided again on a new issue. Such experiences were in no way peculiar to Muncie, They became a commonplace over most of the Mid-west and parts of the South and far West.

"Coming upon Middletown like a tornado, catching up many.... latent differences into a frenzy of activity, the Ku Klux Klan.... emphasized, during its brief career in Middletown, potential factors of disintegration. Brought to town originally, it is said, by a few of the city's leading business men as a vigilance committee to hold an invisible whip over the corrupt Democratic political administration and generally 'to clean up the town' its ranks were quickly thrown open under a

³² Frost, op. cit., pp. 170-1.

48

professional organizer, and by 1923 some 3,500 of the local citizens are said to have joined. As the organization developed, the business men withdrew, and the Klan became largely a working class movement. Thus relieved of the issue that prompted its original entry into Middletown, The Klan, lacking a local issue, took over from the larger national organization a militant Protestantism with which it set about dividing the city; the racial issue, though secondary, was hardly less ardently proclaimed. So high did the local tide of Klan feeling run that in 1924 a rebel group in Middletown set up a rival and 'purer' national body to supersede the old Klan. Tales against the Catholics ran like wildfire through the city.... Local Klansmen vowed they would unmask 'wh~~e~~n and not until the Catholics take the prison walls down from about their convents and nunneries,' and the 'confessions' of Helen Jackson, 'an escaped nun', were widely sold at local Klan rallies. Fed on such threatening rumors, Klan enrollment boomed.... To this Catholic hatred was added Negro and Jewish hatred fed by stories that the Negroes have a powder which they put on their arms which turns their bodies white, and that the Jews have all the money, but when the Klan gets into power, it will make a new kind of money, so that the Jew's money will be no good... Klan feeling was fanned to white heat by constant insistence in season and out that 'every method known to man has been used and is being used by the alien-minded and foreign influence to halt our growth.' Social clubs were broken up and church groups rocked to their foundations by the tense feeling all this engendered. The secret of this eruption of strife within the group probably lies in the fact that it blew off the cylinder head of the humdrum. It afforded an outlet for many of the constant frustrations of life, economic tensions and social insecurity, by providing a wealth of scape-goats against whom wrath might be vented; and two of the most powerful latent

emotional storm-centers of Middletown, religion and patriotism, were adroitly maneuvered out of their habitual uneventful status into a wild enthusiasm of utter devotion to a persecuted but noble cause. The high tide of bitterness was reached in 1923, and by 1925 the energy was mainly spent and the Klan disappeared as a local power, leaving in its wake wide areas of local bitterness.³³

Not until the summer of 1922 did Muncie papers begin to carry stories about Klan activities in other sections of the country. Although her citizens knew the Klan existed in Muncie, Saturday night Klan parades were the only obvious manifestation of such existence. Suddenly the city was made acutely aware of the Invisible Empire. There was a "shake-up" in the police department. The Chief of Police was accused of disregarding orders to keep the streets of the business section open during a Klan parade a week previously.³⁴

If the good people of Muncie were not aware of how much control the Klan wielded over their city they soon learned. Three days after the above mentioned incident local papers candidly admitted that Klan pressure had forced Mayor Quick to reinstate the Chief-of-Police and also ask for the resignation of the Board of Safety.

³³ Middletown, p. 481ff.

³⁴ Muncie Morning Star, and Muncie Evening Press, Oct. 4, 1922.

The Press carried the following news story on its front page:

✓ "Hundreds of members of the Ku Klux Klan gathered in the Campbell auditorium Friday evening in a protest meeting against the discharge of Van Benbow as chief of ✓ police and a number of fiery speeches were made on the subject. Then the members in scores of automobiles came up town and crowded the city streets with their vehicles from which bills were passed calling for an 'indignation meeting' in the courtyard Saturday night for the purpose of making further protest against the removal of Benbow. The handbills said the object of the proposed meeting was to 'Save Muncie'. It is understood, however, that the leaders of the project, now that their object has been accomplished in keeping Benbow in his job, have called off the meeting.

"The retention of Benbow....and the ending of the official careers of Rosenthal and Collins as members of the Board of Safety, all are regarded as constituting a complete and sweeping victory for the local Ku Klux Klan to which Mayor Quick has been bitterly opposed. The mayor became a member of the Klan soon after taking office, but later withdrew from it and denounced it after the Klan had demanded of him that he get rid of five³⁵ police officers objectionable to the Klan."

Such blunt reporting makes further elaboration upon political conditions in Muncie during this period unnecessary.

The extent to which the Klan controlled Muncie became legend all over the state of Indiana. And Muncie, in turn, became a hotbed of Klanism. The Kamelia, the

³⁵ Muncie Evening Press, Oct. 7, 1922.

female Klan auxiliary, was organized in March, 1923.³⁶

*Kluxing became a thriving and profitable business. But superfluouity of finances was bound to bring internal discontent and before 1923 was half over, there were rival Klans vieing for control in Muncie. In the mean-time, many good Muncie citizens succumbed to the lure of the night-shirt and a real 100% American "naturaliza-tion". Here it was, true "patriotism" dispensed for a mere \$10! The Klan was creating a monopoly on loyalty.

Then Muncie was subjected to its periodic illness - mayor trouble. The year 1924 was ushered in with the usual police department upheavel.³⁷ A few days later the mayor was indicted on charges of interfering with his Board of Safety.³⁸ The situation pointed to Klan interference but three days later the city council refused to sanction an attempted impeachment and dismissal of the mayor. Concluded the Press, "It has been evident that the attempt to 'get the Mayor at this time has had

³⁶Interesting to observe is the superficiality of ideologies when one considers the difficulty with which a Muncie woman of obvious Jewish origin convinced her housemaid, a proud Kamilia, that her employer was hardly a potential member of the new organization.

³⁷Muncie Morning Star, Jan. 1, 1924; Muncie Evening Press, Jan. 2, 1924.

³⁸Ibid., (in both papers) Jan. 5, 1924.

little popular sympathy, since it has not appealed to the public's sense of justice and fair play."³⁹

Rumors were persistent throughout the winter of new Klan organizations being formed. Muncie soon mothered the Klan of the North⁴⁰ and the Independent Klan of America⁴¹ which came to be the real powerful Klan in Muncie due to the genius of its local organizer. Then came the expected split. The Independent Klan held its first national convention in Muncie and began charging the parent organization with graft, corruption and all sorts of mismanagement.⁴² In June of the same year the old Knights of the Ku Klux Klan sued the upstart branch^h for damages charging that property had been illegally taken from the older group.⁴³ Several days later the old Klan asked for a receiver for its bankrupt organization.⁴⁴ The Klan issue was hardly dead over the nation. It almost wrecked the Democratic National Convention of 1924. But in Muncie it still remained powerful for some time.

³⁹ Muncie Evening Press, Jan. 8, 1924.

⁴⁰ Ibid., March 1, 1924.

⁴¹ Ibid., March 15, 1924.

⁴² Ibid., March 24, 1924 and following numbers.

⁴³ Ibid., June 13, 1924.

⁴⁴ Ibid., June 18, 1924.

The staggering blow to Klan dominion in Indiana and consequently in Muncie came with the trial and conviction of D. C. Stephenson, former Grand Dragon of the Indiana Klan, for having caused the death of a girl who took poison after he attacked her.⁴⁵ The moral sense of the whole state was shocked and disgusted. Even though the Klan repudiated the ex-Dragon and even passed resolutions bitterly condemning him⁴⁶ the public never separated his name from the organization.

In the meantime, the Independent Klan of America with national headquarters in Muncie, was struggling against great odds to maintain its former power. By court order it was forced to drop the name "Klan" because of prior use by the old Ku Klux Klan.⁴⁷ The new organization, now called the Knights of American Protestantism, came into a very weak and gradually disintegrating existence.⁴⁸ In a year it was bankrupt.⁴⁹ Two months later a rather sad remnant of the old Klan held a parade in Muncie for the sole

⁴⁵ Muncie Morning Star and Muncie Evening Press, April 4, 1925 and following numbers. For details see almost any American newspaper for these dates.

⁴⁶ Muncie Evening Press, April 28, 1925.

⁴⁷ Ibid., March 31, 1926.

⁴⁸ Ibid., June 14, 1927.

⁴⁹ Ibid., June 15, 1927.

purpose of showing that it still existed.⁵⁰ In a last feeble effort at regaining its former grandeur the national organization unmasked and changed its name to the Knights of the Great Forest.⁵¹ The Ku Klux Klan became a dead issue until 1937 when it was revived for a time by the appointment of Hugo Black to the United States Supreme Court. Muncie looked back upon her Klan history a little sheepishly.

⁵⁰Muncie Evening Press, August 27, 1927.

⁵¹Ibid., Feb. 22, 1928; also in the Muncie Morning Star.