

People Of Salisbury Are Severely Criticized By Educator For Lynching

Eastern Shore Town, Professor Of Political Economy At Johns Hopkins Says After Study, Has Given Proof Of Its Lack Of Civic Morality; Churches Come In For Sharp Rebuke.

Baltimore, Jan. 25 (AP)—The people of Salisbury were criticized for their attitude during and after the lynching December 4 of Matthew Williams, negro, in a report prepared for the Federal Council Churches of Christ in America by Professor Broadus Mitchell of the Department of Political Economy at Johns Hopkins University.

Williams was taken from the Peninsula General Hospital and hanged and his body burned after he had killed his white employer. Professor Mitchell at the request of the Federation Commission on race relations to make a report on the affair, two weeks after the lynching Professor Mitchell went to Salisbury and remained there from a Friday to the following Sunday.

"The most sorrowful reflection," the report said, "is not that some ignorant countrymen and townsmen gave way to violence but that no one from the intelligent fair-minded citizens exerted himself with spirit to stop the lynching."

"Credit should be given to two citizens who opposed the mob; one who tried to stop the lynching and one who attempted to prevent the barbarism of the burning." Professor Mitchell refused to reveal the names of the persons to whom he referred.

"The Chesapeake Bay, in a sense, contributed to the lynching in Salisbury. That is, the Eastern Shore is isolated geographically and has become backward in its spiritual and mental development," Professor Mitchell asserted.

Again attacking the attitude of the citizens of Salisbury he said: "Two weeks after the lynching the place was rife with excuses for the hanging, if not, indeed, full justification of it."

"This attitude of self-defense was stimulated by the criticism of Salisbury that came from other parts of the state. The sectional feeling was increased when a local newspaper stated that the Eastern Shore, on which Salisbury is located, feels 'that the greater part of the responsibility for it (the lynching) results from the interference of Baltimore city in the affairs of the Shore' The sectional feeling ran so high that several merchants in Salisbury even cancelled orders with Baltimors firms."

Continuing with the events leading up to the lynching, the report of the Johns Hopkins professor said "If it be said that it occurred too quickly, it is to be answered that there was probably knowledge in the town an hour or more beforehand that trouble was brewing. And if private citizens are to be excused the officers of the law have more excuse. It may fairly be concluded that the chief of police, his three patrolmen who were on duty and the sheriff and his deputies offered no resistance to the lynching.

"The impression was received by the inquirer that the public spirit of Salisbury is far below what is desirable.

"Those whom one would expect to be leaders in a crisis decided to fall in with the ignorant, prejudiced, the frightened, the sullenly boastful.

"Salisbury has given proof of its lack of civic morality . . . not only in the lynching and burning and even more pointedly in the childish defenses offered for the lynching afterward. One feels that the business organizations stand for nothing better than for mere town boosting, the churches have neglected the application of religion to life.

"The town of Salisbury needs an active local inter-racial committee," the report concluded.