

C O P Y

616 First National Annex  
Mobile, Alabama

May 26, 1943

Mr. John M. Griser  
Vice-President & General Manager  
Alabama Drydock & Shipbuilding Co.  
Mobile, Alabama

Dear Mr. Griser:

This office has received over Mr. Knerr's signature the announcement which follows. "We take pleasure in reporting to you that effective Monday, May 24, we are placing crews of negro welders, on the third shift, on Ways #1, 2, 3, & 4."

I did not know until after talking with you this morning, that Mr. Knerr's letter was intended as an answer to my letter to you of May 20th. The proposal which you discussed with Dr. Ashe and which we later reviewed and presented to you on May 3, was one which involved the segregation of negroes on one or two ways which were to be turned over to them in all occupations below supervisory grade. I now understand that you considered this impractical and have, entirely on your own initiative, adopted the plan indicated in Mr. Knerr's letter.

Since this office was not consulted at all in regard to the present proposal, I think it only fair to say that the responsibility for its adoption rests entirely with the Company. The plan we were discussing is, in my opinion, entirely different in character and scope from the procedure made effective on May 24. It is for this reason that I desire the record to show that this office was not a party to the adoption of the present plan.

Sincerely yours,

Burton R. Morley

cc  
Mr. D. R. Dunlap  
Dr. B. F. Ashe  
Mr. B. C. Knerr  
Mr. John Bouche



SF 53MB

NIGHT LEAD RIOTS

MOBILE, ALA., MAY 26 (AP)—THE HEAVILY PATROLLED WATERFRONT OF THIS SHIPBUILDING CENTER WAS QUIET TODAY AS SHIPYARD OFFICIALS AND CITY AUTHORITIES SOUGHT THE RETURN TO WORK OF THOUSANDS OF NEGRO WORKERS WHO HAVE BEEN IDLE SINCE RACIAL DISORDERS, IN WHICH EIGHT MEN WERE SLIGHTLY INJURED, BROKE OUT TUESDAY MORNING AT ONE YARD.

POLICE CHIEF BUDLEY MCFAYDEN SAID THE SITUATION TODAY HAD BEEN ALMOST WITHOUT INCIDENT, ALTHOUGH LESS THAN 200 NEGROES ENTERED THE YARD OF THE ALABAMA DRY DOCK & SHIPBUILDING CO., WHERE THE TROUBLE OCCURRED, ON THE REGULAR MORNING AND AFTERNOON SHIFTS.

TWO MEN, ONE WHITE AND ONE NEGRO, WERE FINED IN POLICE COURT DURING THE DAY FOR FAILURE TO OBSERVE THE CITY'S "KEEP MOVING" ORDINANCE, INVOKED WHEN THE RACIAL DISTURBANCE BEGAN. BOTH WERE ARRESTED NEAR THE ENTRANCE TO THE SHIPYARD, CHIEF MCFAYDEN SAID, AFTER THEY FAILED TO OBEY ORDERS TO KEEP MOVING.

U.S. TROOPS, STATE GUARDSMEN, STATE HIGHWAY PATROLMEN AND LOCAL OFFICERS CONTINUED ON DUTY IN THE SHIPYARD AREA.

MEANWHILE, A NEGRO MASS MEETING WAS HELD TODAY TO HEAR PLEAS FOR A RETURN TO WORK FROM COMPANY OFFICIALS AND FROM FELLOW NEGRO WORKERS IN THE ALABAMA DRY DOCKS YARD. TWO NEGRO WORKERS, BOTH EMPLOYEES AT THE YARD FOR MANY YEARS, TOLD THOSE ASSEMBLED THEY HAD WORKED THE MORNING SHIFT AND "FOUND EVERYTHING CALM." A COMPANY SOURCE ESTIMATED APPROXIMATELY 3,000 NEGROES WERE EMPLOYED IN THE YARD.

DR. BURTON E. MORLEY, AREA DIRECTOR FOR THE WAR MANPOWER COMMISSION, SAID TODAY HE HAD HAD RECEIVED "NUMEROUS REQUESTS" FROM NEGRO WORKERS FOR RELEASES FROM THEIR WAR-FROZEN JOBS HERE, BUT

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May 26  
A.M. May 27

release for  
papers



THAT HE WOULD TREAT SUCH APPLICATIONS "JUST AS WE WOULD HAVE LAST WEEK." THIS MEANS, HE EXPLAINED, THAT SUCH APPLICATIONS MUST HAVE THE APPROVAL OF THE EMPLOYER UNLESS THE WORKER IS WILLING TO GO THROUGH THE REGULAR APPEAL PROCESS.

E.F. DUNLAP, ALABAMA DRY DOCK PRESIDENT, SAID THE RACIAL DISORDERS RESULTED FROM THE SPREAD OF "FALSE RUMORS" IN THE YARD THAT NEGRO WELDING CREWS WERE TO BE PUT ON DUTY ALONGSIDE WHITE CREWS. DUNLAP SAID NEGRO CREWS WERE SENT INTO THE YARD MONDAY NIGHT, BUT THAT NO WHITE WELDERS WERE AT WORK AT THE TIME.

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Atlanta, May 26 -(AP) - Frank Constangy, Deputy Regional War Manpower Commission Director, today stated that Burton R. Morley, WMC Director for the Mobile Area, was keeping the Regional Office constantly informed on the status of the labor situation at the Alabama Dry Dock & Shipbuilding Co.

"Morley is fully authorized," Constangy said, "to act when and if the situation requires any action by the War Manpower Commission. The Regional Office, of course, is ready to give any necessary assistance to the Area Director."

Constangy continued, "The manpower situation created in Mobile by recent disturbances at Alabama Dry Dock & Shipbuilding Company is being handled by the War Manpower Commission in such a way as to expedite in as smooth a manner as possible, the return of the workers to their jobs of building urgently needed ships.

"The requests of some of the workers for referral from the WMC to enable them to get jobs in other localities are being handled by the Area Director of the WMC in Mobile in accordance with the stabilization plan in effect there. The normal procedures are being followed and indications are that there will be no considerable exodus of workers from Mobile because of incidents of the past few days.

"The policy of the War Manpower Commission is and will continue to be that of employing all people on war work at the highest skills of which they are capable.

"Any person who is not employed at his highest skill in the War effort will be entitled to a referral to a job on which he can be employed at such skill. Working out means of doing this most effectively is part of our job."

DH....WMC



add shipyards, mobile, ala x x x rumors."

Dr. Burton Morley, AREA WMC director, revealed he had asked the company several weeks ago to designate separate ships ~~ways~~ <sup>ways</sup> on which negro welders and ~~the~~ <sup>negro</sup> other workers would be employed exclusively, but that ~~had~~ <sup>it</sup> apparently there had been no action on his request.

There was no immediate estimate of the number of white welders, burners and other workers who had walked out, although Dunlap said that "a big majority of ~~which~~ <sup>which</sup> workers are on the job." The yards employ about 25,000 persons, of which an estimated 7,000 are negroes.

Charles Hanson, regional director of the cio-affiliated international union of marine shipbuilders of America, described the walkout as unauthorized and <sup>asked</sup> admonished the workers to return to their jobs immediately.

The situation apparently had settled down to <sup>the problem of</sup> ~~segregation~~ <sup>segregation</sup> of the white and negro workers, which Dunlap asserted was being carried out. However, white welders leaving the yards today contended that such action was not being taken.



add shipyards, mobile x x x taken.

Efforts were being made to arrange a conference between union and company officials to discuss the segregation question and it was indicated they might get together later today.

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with Mobile Negro shipyard workers

Atlanta, Ga., May 27--(UP)-- War Manpower Commission regional officials said here today that some 1,000 of the 7,000 Negro workers at the Alabama drydock and shipbuilding company, of Mobile, Alabama, who were sent home from work ~~to avoid race trouble Tuesday~~ <sup>as a precautionary measure</sup>, had applied for release from their jobs.

Mobile is in a labor shortage area with Burton R. Morley, area director, in full charge of employment changes. Regional WMC spokesman said Morley will give the Negroes permission to ~~leave their~~ <sup>transfer to other</sup> jobs, with or without the company's consent, if they are not taken back on the same ~~conditions~~ <sup>as before</sup>.

"We cannot hamper the war effort by having trained Negro welders put to work at a sweeping job," WMC said. <sup>Special</sup> There are not enough white or Negro workers in the area to man the yards without ~~workers of that race~~ <sup>Some</sup> 32,000 persons work at the Pinto Island yards. <sup>Negroes</sup> "Our policy had been to work the ~~Negroes~~ <sup>Negroes</sup> on separate ways of ships from the white," the spokesmen said.

WMC officials said they did not care to comment on the company's action Tuesday of placing Negro workers alongside ~~whites~~ whites, which <sup>more</sup>



1st Add Mobile Negroes x x x which

*(fighting)*  
started the trouble Tuesday. *in which several persons*  
*were injured.*

*[Signature]*



~~Editor~~

*Editor*

Sub for last paragraph, shipyards, Mobile, pgh starting  
The trouble etc., ~~xxx~~

~~The~~

Shipyard company President D.R. Dunlap blamed the trouble  
on "false rumors" concerning federal instructions to up-grade  
negro workers.

"There were troublesome reports that negro helpers of white  
work gangs would receive equal pay as trained white workers,"  
Dunlap said. "False rumors also spread around the plant that negro  
gang workers would be placed in white gangs. Up-grading does not  
mean a negro worker will work in white gangs except as helpers."

EWL

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## FIRST LEAD

Mobile, Ala., May 27 - (AP) - A number of white shipyard workers left their jobs today when a "substantial" number of Negroes returned to posts they left Tuesday after an outbreak of racial disorders, the sheriff's office reported.

In announcing it had been informed of this development, the sheriff's office said all seven companies of Alabama State Guardsmen had been ordered on the alert to prevent possible new outbreaks.

John Bouche, Regional Representative of the Industrial Union of Marine Shipbuilders (CIO), said today's walkout, staged peacefully at 10 A. M., was unauthorized by the union and was not a union move.

A company source which could not be quoted by name said "A substantial number" of Negro workers reported for duty at the Pinto Island yard of the Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company on the 7 A. M. shift.

Dr. Burton Morley, Area Director for the War Manpower Commission, went to the yard to investigate the walkout. He announced that if a walkout had occurred the WMC would declare a labor dispute and stop all clearance to U. S. Employment Service offices elsewhere from the Mobile District.

Two warrants charging disorderly conduct were sworn out today at the Sheriff's office but there was no announcement as to the incident involved.

Soldiers still were on guard inside the yard and at the company gates.

"Negro workers" ETC., Picking up previous at fourth graf

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Mobile, Ala., May 27—(UP)—A general walkout of white welders at the Pinto Island Shipyards of Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company threatened today as an aftermath of a disturbance Monday between white and Negro workers at the plant.

According to release reports coming from the island, members of the CIO Welders' Union began walking off the job during the morning in what was judged a protest against the return of Negroes to work on the morning shift.

Several thousand Negro workers were sent home from the yard following Monday's outbreak and very few returned before last night when they began to show up in larger numbers. An undetermined number appeared for work on the day shift this morning.

The welders—who could virtually halt the company's shipbuilding program if they strike—were said to be laying down their tools and leaving singly and in small groups.

Meanwhile company officials and local law enforcement authorities were taking every precaution to prevent the tense situation from flaring into open violence between the whites and Negroes.

The shipyard was described as being "full of civilian police of every description" and a number of soldiers from nearby Brookley Field were standing guard duty within the plant.

Shipyard company President D. R. Dunlap, blamed the trouble on "false rumors" concerning federal instructions to up-grade Negro workers.



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Mobile is in a labor shortage area with Burton R. Morley, Area Director, in full charge of employment changes. Regional WMC spokesmen said Morley will give the Negroes permission to transfer to other jobs, with or without the company's consent, if they are not taken back on the same jobs.

"We cannot hamper the war effort by having trained Negro welders put to work at a sweeping job," a WMC official said. "There are not enough white or Negro workers in the area to man the yards without  
Some 32,000 persons work at the Pinto Island yards.

"The policy had been to work the Negroes on separate ships from the white," the spokesmen said.

WMC officials said they did not care to comment on the company's action Tuesday of placing <sup>more</sup> Negro workers alongside whites, which started the trouble Tuesday, in which several workers were injured.

Dr. Burton Morley, Area WMC Director, revealed he had asked the company several weeks ago to designate separate ways on which Negro welders and other Negro workers would be employed exclusively, but that apparently there had been no action on his request.

There was no immediate estimate of the number of white welders, burners and other workers who had walked out, although Dunlap said that "a big majority of workers are on the job." The yards employ about 25,000 persons, of which an estimated 7,000 are Negroes.

Charles Hanson, regional director of the CIO Affiliated International Union of Marine Shipbuilders of America, described the walkout as unauthorized and asked



the workers to return to their jobs immediately.

The situation apparently had settled down to the problem of segregating white and Negro workers, which Dunlap asserted was being carried out. However, white welders leaving the yards today contended that such action was not being taken.

Efforts were being made to arrange a conference between union and company officials to discuss the segregation question and it was indicated they might get together later today.



SF53MB  
Night Lead Riots

Mobile, Ala., May 26 (AP)-The Heavily patrolled waterfront of this shipbuilding center was quiet today as shipyard officials and city authorities sought the return to work of thousands of Negro workers who have been idle since racial disorders, in which eight men were slightly injured, broke out Tuesday morning at one yard.

Police chief Dudley McFayden said the situation today had been almost without incident, although less than 200 negroes entered the yard of the Alabama Dry Dock & Shipbuilding Co., where the trouble occurred, on the regular morning and afternoon shifts.

Two men, one white and one negro, were fined in police court during the day for failure to observe the city's "Keep Moving" ordinance, invoked when the racial disturbance began. Both were arrested near the entrance to the shipyard, Chief McFayden said, after they failed to obey orders to keep moving.

U. S. Troops, State Guardsmen, State Highway Patrollmen and local officers continued on duty in the shipyard area.

Meanwhile, a negro mass meeting was held today to hear pleas for a return to work from company officials and from fellow negro workers in the Alabama Dry Docks Yard. Two negro workers, both employees at the yard for many years, told those assembled they had worked the morning shift and "found everything calm." A company source estimated approximately 3,000 negroes were employed in the yard.



Dr. Burton R. Morley, Area Director for the War Manpower Commission, said today he had had received "Numerous Requests" from negro workers for releases from their war-frozen jobs here, but that he would treat such applications "just as we would have last week." This means, he explained, that such applications must have the approval of the employer unless the worker is willing to go through the regular appeal process.

D. R. Dunlap, Alabama Dry Dock President, said the racial disorders resulted from the spread of "false rumors" in the yard that negro welding crews were to be put on duty alongside white crews. Dunlap said negro crews were sent into the yard Monday night, but that no white welders were at work at the time.

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#### FOLLOW MOBILE SHIPYARDS

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"The Manpower situation created in Mobile by recent disturbances at Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company is being handled by the War Manpower Commission in such a way as to expedite, in as smooth a manner as possible, the return of the workers to their jobs of building



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