

Sunday, November 18, 1962
504 South Madison Street
Albany, Georgia

Hi Folks:

This has been a week of wonder. The Albany Movement has had its "Anniversary Week" and now the slow pace of the great spokesman makes its mark felt as men sit on their ideas and cheer the young vagabonds onward. It was somewhat corrupted; from paying canvassers "per head", to paying the jailed, to "Anniversary." Well, really it doesn't leave us guiltless as no matter how hard we tried, if we don't succeed, we should have tried harder.

Slater King's wife, Marion, who was knocked down by an officer from behind earlier in the summer while she was with child, lost her baby. We have lost so much of our blood. It causes me a great deal of pain to internalize this frustration. I only hope that Almighty God will grant release. Marion was always close to us.

The mass meetings in the counties are really beginning to swing. Here's a brief outline of those we've held in the last week or so -- Faith.

We held our FIRST meeting in SUMTER COUNTY! on November eighth, at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Cobbs. There were twenty-three people from Sumter there, none registered. One man, Mr. Bobby Lee Robertson, told me after the meeting, that he had applied to register. He failed the test because he couldn't ask one question -- "When was God born?" No wonder.

Sherrod led the meeting, instructing and exhorting. Starting with the sit-ins, he showed the need and effect of sticking together. He told of the protection available to those who stick together in the fight for the ballot. He spoke of teaching ourselves to say no to white men.

The night following the meeting we received two phone calls in reference to Sumter. The first one told us that the caller was gonna blow the sons a bitches up. The second phone call, made almost immediately after the first, merely elaborated on the "gonna blow the sons a bitches integrationists" theme, although this time the man calling said that he was calling because we had moved into Sumter.

James Mays says that the Voter's League of Americus in Sumter has had to discontinue its meetings because the insurance company that insured the building where they met had cancelled the policy. This is in spite of the fact that Conrad Brown, of Koinonia, said that Sheriff Chapel, of Sumter, has said that voter registration meetings can be held, but they better not be integrated meetings. Both our meetings have been integrated.

The night after the Sumter meeting, the home of one of the men who attended the meeting was shot at, he thinks with a pistol. This man has also attended meetings in Lee off and on. He is afraid that if it's reported he's afraid he'll lose his job.

TERRELL, NOVEMBER 14

This was a big night in the Sasser tent. Forty people came. Lucius Holloway was back; his baby crying in the audience. Mr. Henderson came. Deacon Greene came. There were stories of intimidation to tell.

Lucius Hollway's first story was about his baby. One night when the baby was sick, his wife called a doctor who said he'd come. A few minutes later the doctor called back, asked if she was Holloway's wife, and when she replied yes, said, "uh, uh, you'll have to get you another doctor." The baby was about six weeks old at the time, and was due for a check up. Holloway has had difficulty getting service at Stevens's Chevrolet. He has had his gas tank "filled" with the tank hooked so that the price registered on the meter but the tank wasn't filled. He thinks he is one of the two cars that Stevens Chevrolet is rumored to be refusing to serve. He assumes Carolyn Daniels is the other one.

Mr. Henderson, who finally arrived at a meeting, after much encouragement and strong talk from SNCC, said a white man, probably Calvin Lee, told him "If I knowed you to go to that meeting, I'd follow you. You won't get your corn sold next year". This man has followed Mr. Henderson to his field two or three times.

Rev. Wells, whom those of you who were in Albany will remember as one who is fearless when it comes to voicing his opinions, said that some major on Marine Base where Rev. Wells works as a welder, told him "look out for your job. We aren't going to have it." Rev. Wells represents his floor at the employees council and doesn't pull any punches, even with the guys at Marine Base. At the time of the Chatmon election which occurred during the Cuban crisis, Rev. Wells was spoken to sharply about patriotism, because he took the half hour granted all men to go into town and vote.

A Negro mortician, Mr. Cooper, came to this meeting, and urged all who weren't registered to do so now, when they pay their taxes. Taxation without representation, a war was fought over that, the American Revolution, he remarked. Because of his practicality, and his broader sense of perspective (he spoke of events in Mississippi, Alabama, and in the same vein, the fall of the Roman Empire) he gave a new sense of belonging to something that was making it, and making it on a big, movement scale.

One of the last remarks of the meetings was Mr. Henderson's nervous, "The hardest day's work id done on the day when you don't want to do it." As Jack says, poor Mr. Henderson. Bit he was looking pretty happy as we stood talking in the tent after taking a collection to prepare for an economic "squeeze" by our white brothers. The stories told were unhappy ones, having welcomed Deacon Green and Mr. Henderson into the trouble, the tent came alive with shared problems, with the knowledge that Sumter, Lee and TERRELL are all moving.

LEE COUNTY MEETING, NOVEMBER 17

Thirty-seven people attended. I'm telling you the meetings are really picking up! There were a lot of people from Albany. The kids here in town have been protesting all week and their spirits are high. Thirteen of those from Lee were registered, and one man said he'd register this week.

The PTA at the Lee County Training School had been discontinued by the Superintendent and the Board of Education since the election of James Mays to the office of President. Apparently the last meeting of the group was jam packed with teachers, who pressured for another election after Mr. Mays's election. Mr. Mays' name was the only one presented in the second election. So the meetings were discontinued.

Jack told of his experiences in Pritchett's Cross Bar Hotel, the City jail in Albany. The most depressing thing about jail, all alone in the white section was the lack of purpose of his cellmates. Rolling cigarettes was their only joint activity. Jack started in on the power of men with ideas, bringing in

Thomas More and the Caucasians. He finished by saying that here in Southwest Georgia it is not the lunch counter or hotel that's important, but the idea that makes one sit-in, register, etc. When Jack sat down, Agnew James rose to say "I'm proud of Jack, and I want him to stay in one of them hotels."

Chico told of how a Mr. Johnson, whom he met in the Dawson jail, and who had promised to register, had had his mind changed by the visit of Interested White Citizens. It seems that Chico visited Mr. Johnson and got him to promise to attend a Terrell meeting with his two sons. Chico went to pick them up before the meeting and found a very scared Mr. Johnson who said, "The white folks been talking." Chico asked what they'd been saying and Johnson replied "I don't know, but they been talking." No one from the Johnson family went to the Terrell meeting that night (November 14).

During the week of the Albany Movement's glorious Anniversary Celebration, protests were held. Penny and I organized them, and had an average of about twenty-five students each day, although William Porter and other members of that august circle had told us we wouldn't get more than ten or so. The protests consisted only of kids strolling in twos through the downtown shopping district with t-shirts on that had "don't buy downtown or midtown" printed on them. The police showed their usual interest, and members of the white community contributed the expected unpleasant remarks, but there were no real incidents, except for a man who threatened to pull a pistol on Willie C. Lovett and Jack's arrest. Jack's arrest was based on his refusal to give identification to Chief Pritchett accosted him on Broad street. There were other implications in the arrest, as the charge reads that Jack was asked for his ID while he was "stopping Negro women in the streets." The Negro women concerned were the pickets, ranging in age from 13-16. All twenty-three of the girls involved have been subpoenaed by CB KING to appear at Jack's hearing. I'd love to see those girls, so young and right and spirited swing into the court room.

There was frequent pestering by a man who became known as the "Crazyman" by the end of the week. This man, white, followed the kids around each afternoon, hunching his shoulders exaggeratedly and cracking his knuckles. The remarks he made ranged from the obscene to the grossly obscene. Speaking to Dorothy Swischelm, of Koinonia, I found out that the "Crazyman" is indeed not too sharp mentally. He has plagued the Koinonia people for years when they go into Americus, with obscenities and allusions to the White Citizens Council for whom he says he works. He has been in and out of the State Mental Hospital. His name is Linton Leonard Slappey. His exaggerated shoulder hunching and knuckles' cracking, not to mention his language are known all over Sumter.

Perhaps the most distressing aspect of the protests was not Slappey, but the Negroes the kids found downtown shopping. They even met one of their teachers, who told them they should be home doing their homework.