

February 10, 1965

Dear Friends:

It has been an extremely busy week, and I know that if I don't write tonight to try and bring this letter up to date, I won't get another chance until after the weekend. Starting on Monday there has been a meeting every night - these are meetings of COPA broken down into 4 and 5 county areas, meeting in the center of each - with Wasserman, Mrs. Pauley, and Thomas Delton coming to each to talk about the Poverty Bill - but more of that later in the letter.

Before we left for New York a very old lady, who lives across the street, came over to visit Wendy during the day. She brought her some home-made soap, which turns out to be made with lye. It came in big wedges which we put on a wooden table to harden, as they were still fairly soft. The next morning I thought maybe we should put them on cardboard first, so I left them up to discover they left big discolorations of the table. I put some cardboard that comes out of shirts when you get them back from the cleaners - the next day I found that the soap had eaten big wedge shaped holes into the cardboard and was back on the wood. So I picked up what was left of the cardboard and put a thick magazine under them. When we got back from New York we discovered that half of the magazine had been gone through. I'm really afraid to leave that soap alone in the house.

On the trip up to NY, or maybe if it was after we got to NY, Harris told a great story about SNCC fund-raising activities. It seems that one of the fairly large contributors, a northern white woman, is supposed to have called Atlanta and told them that unless a certain favorite field secretary of hers was sent up north to visit her they wouldn't be able to count on her annual check. Which is a hell of a way to run a revolution. New York itself was a whole lot of running around, trying to take care of things, but mostly to do things about Wendy's nursery school project, which didn't really leave any time to see friends. Things went very well for her as she talked to quite a few professional n/s people about the training session idea which met with large measures of enthusiasm, but also quite a big bit of money was raised after she spoke with various people.

I left Thursday morning to attend a Civil Rights Commission conference in Washington, as that was the purpose of my trip north. It was a terrible waste of time and money, the usual crap being given out by the federal people who either don't understand the problems, or really don't want to know about them. But at this Conference there was quite a bit of impatience being shown by the audience, and a lot of very critical questions aimed not so much at obtaining information, as at proving to the federal people that what they say is just so much nonsense. Like the Dept. of Education people kept talking about the universities in Mississippi who have signed promises to comply with the Civil Rights Act and how this is taken as an act of good faith. The Law Students Civil Rights Research Council Conference, which was held on the weekend, was considerably better than that, and much better than I had expected. The conference was on law and indigency, and the speakers were very straight about what they said, and talked about all the shortcomings of various programs of legal assistance for the poor, which really come down to having the government finance one agency for the purpose of attacking another government financed agency, and somehow this just doesn't seem to make it. The best thing about the conference was that it proved that there were a considerable number of people who are in law school now who are concerned with things like this. We also went to a party Saturday night - the guy at whose house the party was headed up the local chapter of the White Citizens Council - actually it was the chapter in Prince Edward County or some other county in Virginia. He and a whole lot of his friends had infiltrated the chapter - had gotten a whole lot of praise for being very militant guys, etc., and then voted to merge with Washington CORE, which confused a lot of the people in Jackson, Miss. I flew to Atlanta and then took a bus back to Albany on Sunday night. Wendy only came in the next night as she had to see some people in Washington on Monday.

Roy Shields is now director of the project here in SWGa. He is a very big, very handsome guy from Dallas, but went to school in Michigan. I was really afraid that he wouldnt be up to the resopnsibility of taking over when Harris left, as he seemed very unsure of himself, but after watching him operate I have no problems. He, along with Herman Kitchens, have done beautiful work in Moultrie with the student school boycott. He has also seen to it that the office is functioning, by bringing down ~~some~~ a white kid, who had worked in Miss., and was in the Atlanta office when Roy came throggh town. But the best example of how his mind is working is the fact that he has brought down ~~two~~ two girls who were working in the Atlanta office, and who are girlfriends of some of the top leadership, as he figured that this would guarantee having them come into the SWGA project from time to time, like no amount of ~~me~~ pleading on his part would ever do.

The same day that I got back from Washington, Pete deLissovoy arrived in town. He is trying to do some writing about Albany, so ~~some~~ came to stay for a few days. He had been living in New Orleans for a while before this. The next day, Danny Lyon, who used to do most of SNCC's photography work, but is now working on a book, or rather a proposed book, about cities, also showed up. So both of them stayed in the other room in our house. This morning there were two notes on the kitchen table - one from Pete saying something about leaving because of fantastic experiences but that he would be back; and another from Danny saying if he could find Pete he was leaving too - so I guess they are back in New Orleans. It was really a nice thing to have them in the house as the kind of things they are now into with writing and photography are very exciting, but I missed alot of it because I couldnt make it until 4 ~~xxxx~~ a.m. and still get to work the next day.

I cant remember if I mentioned that we had written to the County Commissioners demanding that the Court House signs designating race for the drinking fountains and also the toilets be taken down. So they took them down, and then locked up all the toilets and you can only get the key from the Sheriff's office; and fixed the fountains so you cant f drink from them by putting your ~~xxxx~~ mouth to the spigot, but now need to use the paper cup nossle.

Meanwhile, what is happening this week is Moultrie - a town of maybe ~~20,000~~ 15,000; it prides itself on being "progressive" in race relations. They have one, maybe two Negro cops, (who only have authority to arrest on the Negro side of twon) but they have had them for a while now. They also have a Negro highschool which is absolutely ~~xxxx~~ deplorable - windows broken out, 5 buildings condemned as unsafe, absolutely no equiptment, very few books (I dont think any class had enough to go amund to each student) and more like that. They finally lost their accreditation by the Southern States Association and the State Association. SNCC had one guy wokking down there, and he was someone I was never too impressed with. He does a lot of gambling and I always felt that it was really a waste for them to keep him on. But I was completely wrong. He got the kids in that town to pull off a school boycott that was 100% successful - pulling over 700 kids from the Negro highschool, and they have been out for three days now. The local kids down ~~eh~~ there are really amazing as they are among the strongest I have met in the area, especially one 15 year old girl. I really dont know which way things are going to go from here - the school board says privately that they are \$100000. in debt and cant do anything about fixing up the highschool; their public statement is that they ~~id~~ wont deal with anyone about anything. Anyhow, the kids have been out three days now, and have gotten noticds to go bakk or their parents face arrest under a compulsory school attendance law. We will probably be bringing a desegregation suit there in a few days. If they do go back to school they will probably take on public accomodations next. CB and I went into the ~~xxxx~~ "best" restuarant in twon and sat down. A guy sitting behind us threw a cup ~~in~~ of coffee at us. I thought CB was going to have a fit - he yelled out "what is that man's name" in his deep, booming voice. The manager came over very shook up, hussled the cracker

who threw the coffee, outside, and then ~~talked~~ apologized for the incident and asked us if we would please leave and told us this long involved story about how all the restaurant owners had got together after the passage of the civil rights bill and agreed to comply and how they had met with the Negro leadership (which contains some of the worst Toms I have ever seen) and it was agreed that all the restaurants would be desegregated at the same time, and there was this elaborate time table, and he went on and on about how it would be local adult Negroes and not outsiders who would do this, and finally CB told him that all of this was very interesting but that we were attorneys, on our way through town, who were interested in obtaining some food, and if he had any problems with the local Negro leadership this was certainly no concern of ours. I guess the business about being attorneys got to him as he told us he would serve us - so we ate a shitty hamburger. Meanwhile a whole lot of crackers gathered outside and looked in at us which made me considerably nervous; but CB just methodically ate his hamburger and occasionally patted his mouth with his napkin - this is only funny if you have ever seen CB eat, anywhere, as it is a very long involved process with lots of mouthwiping, etc. Then a couple of Negro women passed by and glanced in, did a huge movie-type doubletake, walked on, then walked back and looked in again. Meanwhile a cop came in and had a few words with the managers who looked like he was going to be sick any minute. After a while the crowd outside disappeared and just as we were getting up to pay the bill I noticed some cracker bend down next to the car by the front tire, so I jumped up and ran outside. I walked over to the car and two cops who were standing next to it, whom I couldn't see from the restaurant, walked over to me. I figured it was all over but one said something about, "we took care of it" and when I looked at the ground under the tires I saw that there was nothing there. I guess what I saw was the cops making this cracker pick up whatever he had put under the tires. They seemed very interested in getting us out of there as quickly as possible. Our other experiences with whites in Moultrie were funny. We went up to the Court House and also to see the Superintendent of Schools to get the names of the school boards. Everyone was at least civil and the one woman official was actually very pleasant. When these towns have their first experience along this line they really don't know what to expect (neither do we) but very often they will be very cooperative as they are too unsure of themselves to be nasty. By the time we got around to the City Courthouse CB was feeling very sure of himself. He parked the car at a meter in front of two cops and didn't put any money in it. There is a kind of local courtesy extended to out of town visitors that you don't put money into the meter when visiting the Court House - and when we came out they hadn't put a ticket on the car. He also pulled one of his funny bits in the Court House. He walked up to the Clerk and said "how do you do, I am C. B. King" and put out his hand. From reflex the Clerk stuck his hand out and shook hands and then turned purple. But he was also very helpful; ran around lugging heavy record books into the office for us to look at, etc.

The biggest problem (well, this isn't accurate, but a large problem the local movement faces) in Moultrie, is the presence of the two white peace walkers. They had come to Albany after having spent some time in jail here on the CNVA march from Montreal to Florida, and their intended purpose was to "work in the white community". The project has been rather unsuccessful to state it in the kindest possible way. I mean they managed to have tea with some old ladies and ministers and to join a church (whose members are constantly talking about throwing them out) but that's about the extent of it. But for as much suspicion and dislike as they have met in the white community, they are equally unsuccessful in the white community. They have come to spend more and more time hanging around Frank's Restaurant in Harlem, usually sitting in a center table, talking very loud, dressed in grubby sweatshirts, and making the middle class schoolteachers and Albany State College people who come in very uncomfortable. There is a good deal of speculation about their nightlife as they very frequently leave

the place at closing with one of the local poolhall guys. One of them also has the unpleasant habit of touching everyone she talks to, or putting her arm around them and this adds to the annoyance with them. Slater has put them down several times, especially for their habit of showing up at Albany Movement board meetings and writing down everything that is said in a little notebook. But anyhow, when news of what was happening in Moultrie got out they disappeared from Albany and are next heard from down there. Roy came into the office in an absolute fit, complaining that they are trying to take over the project down there, having marched in with their portable mimeo machine, cranking out their own press releases without consulting anyone, looking at the ~~same~~ demands the kids have written up and re-writing them, etc. This wouldnt be so bad if it were an established movement, but things are just starting there and for alot of Negroes in Moultrie it is the first experiende they have ever had with doing something by themselves in terms of a recognition that they, together, can make their strength felt by the whites down town - and here come these dopey chicks to run things for them. Roy ~~is~~ asked them to leave several times, but as they are not under SNCC direction there is very little he can do, other than use physical force which ~~is~~ he is seriously considering. Anyhow, I am thoroughly disgusted with them and avoid them as much as possible. This is the biggest problem with whites in the Movement - some of them never understand when to shut up and let others talk, or that it is terribly important for Negroes to be able to discover ~~their~~ their own strength and not have whites go on taking on leadership ~~and~~ roles. I forgot to ~~menth~~ mention before that there was a meeting with the County School Board last night. They just ~~wax~~ wanted to talk to "responsible adult leadership" but the kids demanded and got representation at the meeting. When it was over they came back to the mass meeting where they told everyone exactly what happened at the meeting, includi how some of their elders fell into the time honored role of the "responsible Negro leadership" when that leadership is handpicked by whites - and they had a taperecorder smuggled into the meeting - it was sufficiently embarrassing so that one of these guys resigned from the Movement board. As hard as it is for Negroes to make the whites hear them, it is equally difficult for the kids to make the adults respect them, and their ideas, and in Moultrie the kids are carrying on this fight at the same time that they are all fighting the power & structure down town.

On Monday ~~xx~~ night we went to our first meeting which COPA has had which was broken down into smaller units of 4 or 5 counties each. This one was in Tifton. There was an amazingly large turnout - maybe 300 people, mostly farmers, unemployed, domestics, and very little ~~and~~ middle class people. Jac Wasserman from the National Sharecroppers Fund, and Tom Delton who works with Rural Areas Developmant (Federal) explained the ~~f~~ workings of the Poverty Bill. I find these things terribly depressing because the people who attend these meetings really believe that the Federal government is going to do something to change their lives and they just arent sophisticated enough to undertsand all the crap that is goigg on in Washington and Atlanta. The people believe, they want to believe, it is writtan all over their faces. I get the feeling that I am ~~part~~ helping to perpetrate a large hoax on them and it makes me a little bit sick. But there are also some lighter moments at these things - like when the local minister cant disguise his greed and blurts out a question about how ~~he~~ can he get out of paying the .25 cents daily for his child's federal lunch program at school and everyone laughs at this. Also, I was very wrong about CB being out of touch sometimes as he really made it beautifully at this meeting. He talked about the need to exercise rights acquired under the civil rights act, ~~xxxx~~ put it in terms of drawing parallels ~~wi~~ with the bible, and quoting spirituals. He was really on top of it and the people loved him. There was another meeting Tuesday night in Bainbridge but we were both too exhausted to attend. The night before we sat up until 3 a.m. talking to Roy about the situation in

Moultrie, and then went to Moultrie on Tuesday and spent all day there, so we were too exhausted to attend. Wasserman told us the meeting in Bainbridge was even better attended than the one in Tifton; about 500 people packed a church there. He and Delton spoke at that meeting. Mrs. Pauley from the Georgia Commission on Human Relations was supposed to get to it but she had also spent the day in Moultrie and didnt show up. She is a lovely old woman, born in Georgia, and quite a woman. The first time I met her, her southern accent really put me off, but she is not at all the paternalist I expected, but a really dedicated person who has put up with alot of crap being directed towards her from ex-friends because of the work she is doing, because she believes in it. She is trying to use her influence to help Wendy's nursery school project get off the ground and not be squelched by local whites.

Also, sometime during the time we were in New York, the case of State v. Charlie Ware, ~~was~~ came to a very undramatic conclusion. He had been sentenced to 2-5 years for assault with intent to murder. Briefly what happened was that in July of 1961 the Sheriff of Baker County arrested him, and shot him through the neck and shoulder three times. By some miracle he lived and brought suit against the Sheriff in Federal court. The Sheriff won (this suit, by the way, ultimately gave rise to the Federal indictments against the leadership of the ~~Anti~~ Albany Movement as one of the jurors in the case was the grocer whose store was picketed). Anyhow ~~he~~ was then tried in Baker County for "assaulting" the good Sheriff, and ~~was~~ convicted. The sheriff, by the way, has troubles of his own. Georgia Sheriffs are being taken ~~f~~ off the fee system of pay (which netted some of them upwards of \$20,000 a year on money extorted in fines, generally from Negroes) and are being put ~~an~~ salary. The sheriff isnt terribly happy about this and we have heard that Negroes are being "asked" to sign a petition to put him back on the fee system. Anyhow, Charlie Ware was convicted ~~was~~ and was out on bond pending appeal. Meanwhile the County knew damn well that the conviction would be reversed on the grounds of systematic exclusion of Negroes from the jury, so the judge mailed up a copy of an order he signed ~~granting~~ sustaining our motion to quash the indictment in the case. Which, legally, makes no sense as he doesnt have the power to do this after the trial, but there doesnt seem to be any point to making an issue about this as they really dont want to try him again and there isnt much point in forcing them to do it.

There were two meetings in Albany ~~tonight~~ tonight, Wednesday - one of the COPA meetings which CB went to (I went for a while, but came back to the office to get this finished up) and another of the Dougherty County Resources Development Association, Inc., the Corporation which I helped bring into existnece. I had been asked to draw up by-laws, which I did, and if I must say so myself they were damn good by-laws. Then one of the ministers and also a school principal got hold of ~~k~~ the by-laws, and added on another page which incorporated two provisions of the by-laws of the National Education Association, a white teachers association. The two provisions they copied were one that made it a membership association with cards for the members which is totally ridiculous, and the other was the NEA communist disclaimer oath. A couple of the Movement ~~people~~ people, who are a good deal more sophisticated about civil liberties than many northern "liberals" I have met, had a fit. I didnt get to the ~~meeting~~ meeting but I heard that the by-laws were passed as ammended, which really pisses me off. It's a damn shame that these people cant see the connection being civil liberties and civil rights, or the mentality in this country that is behind communist disclaimer oaths and the like.

Well, this brings the letter up, finally, so I can have a clean conscience about letting it go unwritten for another couple of weeks.