

Dear Friends:

Its Sunday, later afternoon, and tho I had every good intention of writing this at about noon, when I was still fresh, and had a whole lot in my head that I wanted to get down on paper, things came up which interrupted this. John Lewis, Cleve Sellers & Tyronne Jackson arrived from Mississippi by way of Selma to talk about Moultrie and the entire SWGa project. Sherrod is down from NY for "a while" whatever that means and he was there, also Joyce just got back to town. So there was a very long discussion of things in our office (we have a heater which works) and as Roy asked me to sit in on this I didn't get free to do the letter until now. But let me go back to last week and the Moultrie situation. At the very beginning of the week we got a call that Willie Ricks was in jail in Moultrie for defacing public property. It seems that he went into the court house at about 1 a.m. and pulled a "white only" sign off the drinking fountain, but there was a cop who saw the whole thing. Ricks is a really interesting guy - a ministry student from Tennessee who has been in SWGa a very long time, who has a lot of problems. He really cannot function as an "organizer" and spends a great deal of the time in jail on various traffic offenses (which he is generally guilty of) but once a group has been organized he has a fantastic ability to get to people emotionally, and this is especially true with teenagers - he can go into a mass meeting and get every person in that church to march downtown even if they were sure they werent going anywhere when they came to the meeting. But this kind of skill is a very limited one in that he can only fit into already existing situations. But the thing with pulling off the sign is typical Ricks. Anyo else on the project would have done it and gotten away clean, but Ricks is bound to get caught. Anyhow, the next day local people signed a property bond for him and he got out - but not for a very long.

On Saturday night Wendy and I went up to Atlanta. SNCC was having a big conference there, but the Moultrie situation had kept me too busy to attend, but then a girl from N.J. ~~was~~ arrived at the conference with a stationwagon ~~for~~ full of equipment for the nursery school, so we had to drive up to get the things. The conference went on until about Wednesday, but we couldnt stay as I had to work on the school desegregation suit on Sunday to file it Monday. So we drove to Atlanta and get there about midnight, stay a couple of hours listening to an endless debate about structure and various proposals like the executive committee should be limited to those who are black, Mississippi reared, and no more than a highschool degree - which proposal made a whole lot of the "intellectuals" start to think things threw a lot more seriously. So we left Atlanta at about 2:30. We somehow got onto the Macon highway by mistake and didnt get back to Albany until about 7 am.

When I finally recovered enough to be able to see I went into the office and started working on the school suit. Then we drove down to Moultrie to talk to some of the parents who are interested in being plaintiffs. During the entire boycott which started about Feb. 11, there have never been more than 40 kids out of 744 in the high school who have g not honored the boycott. We were taken over to see the highschool. It is set up like a college campus, with a kind of quadrangle, brick buildings, including one very new looking building. Its not the typical kind of one building high school. But the outside looks are very deceptive. The first thing you notice after your initial reaction to a ~~very~~ quasi-college collection of buildings which look very pleasant, is the fact that most of the windows are smashed. Then you see the "campus" itself which is surrounded by unpaved streets and that the quadrangle is a sea of mud when it rains, not having any lawn, and unpaved. There are huge gullies cut through it from the rains. But then we went inside and it became much more clear. Several classrooms are burns out shells from fires they had, and nothing has been done to repair them. Banisters are falling over, plaster is peeling off the walls, the heat doesn't work, etc. And when you start to ask questions you find that there is no class in which the students have their own books to take home as there arent enough to go around, so you share one with three or four other students. There are no chemicals for

the chem lab, or any other equipment either; most classes dont have enough desks so students have to sit in straight chairs and take notes in their laps; and every room you walk into the problems, and the lack is very apparant. This is what the students of Moultrie are protesting. Having to go to a school ~~whax~~ which is a fire trap, located in the middle of a mud lake, with a pupil teacher ratiom of over 44:1 in some instances and no one will listen to the complaints that have been made for years. But nww the white folks down town are starting to listen and now they know ~~xxxx~~ there is a problem and they might ~~hwx~~ even be forced into doing some-things about it.

After looking a~~r~~ound the school we went to a meeting at the church where the parents of some of the students interest~~ed~~ in bringing a deseg suit were. One of the women there was goigg through a whoel lot of conflict - she is the daughter of the wealthiest man in the ghetto, the funeral director, and she has a job as a schoolteacher (which she really doesnt need for income) - she and a couple of other schoolteachers submitted applications for their children to the white school a few months ago, and this was done very quietly. Now she is having alot of trouble trying to resplve whether she wants to become a plaintiff in this suit and risk all the attendant harrassment, etc., or to wait out ~~of~~ the "good faith" of the shhool board which would just benefit her child and a coup~~le~~ of others. She invited us to come to her ~~a~~ house, but we wanted to get back to Albany so we didn't. CB pointed it out on the way out of town. A fantastic brick, huge ranch style house which takes up about half a block, surrounded by an unpaved street, and with horrible shacks leaning up against it. With all his money he is still forced to live in the ghetto. Late that night we got a call from John Due that he was passing through town and would like to see us. He is a graduate of Florida A.M.U. law school and a member of the Florida bar. A young guy, married, he has been working with CORE in Mississippi, but has now come back to Fla to open an office in ~~Ma~~ Tallahassee. We will probably be seeing ~~wx~~ quite a bit of him as northeqn Florida is closer than Atlanta.

On Monday we continued working on the school suit. We are asking not only for a desegregation plan doing away with dual boundries but also that Bryant H.S. be closed and all its pupils absorbed into the white high schools - and this part by way of a preliminary injuncti~~on~~ which will be heard Feb. 25 in Thomasville. That night a guy came into the office. CB had taken his kids to the movie and he phoned CB's house in the evening telling Carol that he had come up from Thomasville (about 50 miles) to see about a ~~hm~~ law suit, so Carol called to ask if I could~~g~~ go down and take the necessary infomation. I met him at the office, along with his wife and inlaws. It was another one of these fantastically depressing cases - he had been arrested for being drunk, on a Saturday night. ~~H~~ He works in a laundry for about \$30/week and on that kind of salary there isnt~~a~~ a hell~~a~~ of a lot to do other than to get drunk and stay drunk every weekend, but the put him in jail in the tank with a dozen other guys. Two of them were fighting and he tried to break it up. One of the guys stabbed him for his trouble - the cops didnt bother to search him before the put him in the drunk tank as they really couldnt care less if eveyone in there killed each other. So this guy is all cut up, stabbed in the chest and kidneys, taken to the hospital, sewed up and released. And now the hospital is billing him \$70 and the dockor wants \$25 and they are threatening to sue him and garnish his salary, and he wants to know if he can sue the police. What can you tell him, sure you can sue the police and it will costs you a couple hundred dollars for the trasncript and costs, not to mentinn lawyers fees, and when you get done you know damn well that no white man in southwest Georgia is going to give a Negro ~~hwx~~ damages, especially against the police, and you know that there hasn't been a Negro on the juries in these countier since Reconstruction, so there just isnt a whole lot the man can do. I mean forget the suit, he cant even get the city to pay his hopsital bills. The whole legal process is so remote and removed from people

this guy. I mean what can the system of redress of claims through the courts possibly do for him when he hasn't got \$10 to file the suit. And he is the same guy who when he gets arrested cannot hire a lawyer and they dont bother giving him one because they know there isnt a damn thing he will be in a position to do about it, and if they give him one he pleads him guilty anyhow. I know I've said all this before, and you all know it anyhow but somehow it helps me to be able to remind myself over and over again what a god damn joke all of this is, what a miserable sick joke that society constantly perpetrates, with all the noble talk about law and justice, its just dont mean shit to a guy making \$30 a week in Thomas County. And maybe the idea of the Poverty Bill and legal aid clinics just makes the joke a little uglier, because they establish one of these clinics and staff it with two lawyers and that will serve all of Harlem, a million people. And the furthest one south is probably in Washington, DC so I guess that one is for the guy in Thomas County, but nobody figured out that he doesnt have the bus fare to get the free legal advice anyhow.

The next day was a frantic race to Thomasville (the division of the USDist Ct, Middle Dist of Ga, in whcih Moultrie sits) to get the suit filed before 5 oclock. CB drove at about 80 mph and we got there with about 15 mniutes to kill. On the way back we drove through Moultrie tho its a little outx of the way. When we got there we discovered that 250 kids had marched down to the Courthouse to presetrn their demands to the Board of Education office there, and they were arrested for disorderly conduct. We came back down the next day to get to the jails and start the long process of getting names, but when we got there we learned that 125 more were arrested including Herman and the rest of the SNCC staff. So there were 375 people scattered between the city jail, county jail, county prisoners work camp, and in jail in two other counties. We got around to the people in jail in that county. At the work camp they had about 200 teenage boys caged in a pen with a concrete floor, no mattresses or blankets, and not enough room for everyone to lie down on the floor to sleep. The county jail was a little better - that's where the girls were housed, as there were a few mattresses between them all. But everyone was in excellent spirits, there had been no brutality on the part of the police, aside from a lot of cursing and gxxx a guard who threw a cup of water at some of the kids - but none of the grotesque stuff that marked Americus and places like that. It looks like the City and County structure would really like to be shut f of this whole thing as quickly as possible and they dont seem anywhere near as unyielding as the Albany power structure.

The next day a guy came into the office to see CB to have him write a letter to his Congressman. It seems they are trying to give him ~~xxxx~~ an undesirable discharge from the air force. His problem is apparent immediately. He won't Tom, so his supervisor hates him and is using the fact that he has been arrested several times on traffic charges (also because he won't Tom) as grounds for the courtmartial. He was arrested for the first time about 3 years ago. He was stopped, waiting for a funeral to pass, when a cop came over to him and asked him why he didnt take off his hat as the funeral was for some old cracker whose parents founded Albany or something like that. Anyhow he refused to take off his hat and was arrested for disorderly conduct. And the cop has since given him several traffic tickets for things he swears never happened. This guy is so screwed because the service is about the only thing for him - at least it provides him with a home, clothes, and food which he couldnt really mka make on the outside, but at the same time some cracker who hates him because he's black and won't put up with alot of crap is trying to get him out.

We also learned that same day that Carl Smith is suing the Federal government for \$200,000. which is beautiful. Smith was the grocer who claimed the Albany Movement put him out of business because he voted against a verdict for a guy suing the Sheriff in a x civil rights damage suit. This is the case which lead to the perjury ~~xxx~~ convictions of the leader-ship of the Albany Movement. Anyhow, the governments whole case lay in

the testimony of Cheek, the FBI head man in Albany, who claimed that the sole reason that Smith's store was picketed by the Movement was because of the verdict he rendered as a Federal juror. Now Smith has turned around and sued the federal government for failure to protect him in his role as a federal juror, tho they were warned that the Movement would try to put him out of business. The only defense the government has is that the Movement didn't try to put him out of business because of his vote as a federal juror, but because he wouldn't upgrade and hire Negroes - but of course in the last case they ~~proved that this was true~~ built their case around proving that this was true.

~~Yesterday~~ The kids got out of jail on Friday. Things have really come a long way for Moultrie. Briefly what happened is that the City officials have agreed to all the demands for improving the school in terms of supplies and building repairs. They also agreed not to prosecute anyone for the boycott, and dropped charges against all the kids on the disorderly charges and let them come out of jail without any cost. Meanwhile the desegregation suit will still be heard and they will have to come up with a plan. But the wonderful thing is ~~that~~ that the kids themselves formulated their demands, worked out a method of presentation in which the demands would be heard (the boycott), and had their demands met. Its hard to tell which way the Movement there will go now. A lot of people want to make Moultrie an open city in terms of public facilities and accommodations, but others want to work on the more difficult areas like employment. One of the biggest problems that is developing is that of building indigenous leadership. Roy has two adults, both great in their ~~own~~ own ways, but Herman boxes them out. Herman is a very strange guy and the whole future success of the Moultrie movement will depend on how ~~much~~ much he can grow and how quickly. He is from Terrell County, Georgia, and just looking at him you can see that now one has ever taken him seriously in his entire life, nor listened to him or paid any attention to ~~him~~ him. And now he is the leader, he build the Movement, and everyone recognizes him for it. But at the moment he seems unable to let anyone else have any responsibility, or even to talk to someone else before he makes decisions. The local Negro leadership, that element of it that is handpicked by the powerstructure, is completely discredited in the eyes of the people. But there is leadership potential in some other people - like a woman who is independent of the white folks as she owns her own beauty parlor and is very articulate, but also very impatient with people. And there is a guy with a union job who will be hard to touch, but tho he has some really great ideas - I think that his union experience has probably given ~~him~~ him the realization of strength through numbers and organization - like he talks about putting pressure on the merchants to hire Negroes, but not starting out by going downtown and picketing the whole shopping area, which is never successful, but by putting pressure on the white owned businesses in the Negro neighborhood, one at a time, and closing them up if they don't go along with it - and then using this as a lesson for the downtown merchants. Roy is excellent in this situation as he senses all this and spends most of his time talking with these two people and trying to bring them out, but its going to be very hard making Herman see the necessity of sharing some of the power with local people - and if Roy doesn't succeed in this then Moultrie will become a very bad situation very quickly.

I completely forgot one very important thing that happened this week. The Dougherty County Resources Development Association had a meeting - I think I told you about the last meeting where they changed the bylaws all around and added ~~xx~~ a communist exclusion oath - well CB and I went to the next meeting and studied the bylaws carefully. The egomaniac school principal who is trying to take over the group screwed the bylaws up completely and so took power to make rules away from a completely Board of Directors group, which the articles of incorporation do now allow. We pointed this out to him and had a huge argument - which made him look like

an ass to a lot of people at the meeting. I mean instead of just acknowledging his ~~mx~~ mistake he tried to argue with CB which wasn't very smart of him as CB just cut him to shreds. Anyhow he was put into such a box that he had to agree to rescind everything that had been done (which meant throwing out his slate of Board of Directors that had been elected as the election was illegal because of the screwed up bylaws) and set ~~x~~ up another by-law ~~x~~committee on which he put Goldie, an old guy named Jefferson Davis and I. We had a meeting which lasted about 4 hours. After completely changing the by-laws back to the way we had them set up originally, I decided to go after the anti-communist oath, and gave a long civil liberties speech. Goldie was beautiful, telling him how a thing like ~~k~~ that "makes us look cheap and petty" and it's just the kind of thing the Crackers like to force us to do. We finally got him to admit that it wasn't necessary to include to get under the Poverty Bill - it is very obvious that he put it in to please the white folks downtown - but he still insisted. Finally the old man, Mr. Davis said that he didn't like it because "we want to get the Poverty Bill to help po' folks and that means any kind of po' folks, po' Negroes and po' whites and it means helping po' communists, too" - so the clause isn't in the proposed by-laws. Now we have to see what the next meeting brings.

Dennis

Dear Phil: The rest of this is for you alone. First of all every so often I remember that you still didn't tell me how much money I owe you. Please don't piss me off about stuff like this - just tell me how much it is so I can send you a check and get it off my mind.

The meeting with Lewis and Sellers was very very interesting. I'm not terribly impressed with Lewis who really doesn't have much to say and it becomes more and more obvious why SNCC made him President - as he is not a very forceful guy and they don't want any ~~kx~~ kind of rulers so if you have to have a president make damn sure you get one who won't try to do anything the way presidents tend to do. But Sellers is a genius - the same kind of guy as Ivanhoe and Cox and Cobb - a product of Mississippi I believe - big handsome guy with immediate insights into people and an ability to draw answers out of people tho they didn't know they had it in them. Most of the discussion was about Herman in Moultrie and what can be done about him becoming too much of an egomaniac and stifling local leadership from developing. It was finally decided to put a couple of the sharpest people SNCC has, into the situation and neutralize ~~hm~~ him. And the beautiful thing is that this isn't done through a committee which recommends this line of action and then it's passed onto the executive committee to study the recommendation and then people are arbitrarily moved, but instead Sellers will phone Charlie Cobb in Mississippi and maybe Courtland in Selma or wherever he is and explain the situation and suggest that they go to Moultrie, or really he won't have to suggest it - they'll just go.

I'm off for another long talk with Roy - this time with Wendy and about the nursery school.

Take care,

Dennis