

From Friday Evening, Feb 28 (Freedom Day)
Thru Sunday, March 8, 1964
Field Report

March 9, 1964
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CORE Field Secretary

CANTON, MISSISSIPPI

On the evening of Freedom Day (Friday, February 28) Milton Esco, 17 of Canton, was arrested outside the Freedom House at 7:15 PM. By being around the Freedom House he had, apparently, violated a juvenile court order directing him not to be involved in civil rights activities. Esco had been arrested on Jan. 23 for violating ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ an ordinance hastily passed by the city on Jan. 21 requiring a permit to distribute leaflets. Unlike his first arrest when he was not held in jail, this time he was kept in the county jail all week until his juvenile court hearing on Friday, March 6. The staff in Canton thinks he is out but no one has gotten the details of what happened at the hearing. Also, no one has yet verified reports that he was roughed up in jail the night he was arrested.

On the evening of Freedom Day there was a mass meeting of over 200 at Asbury Methodist Church on Cameron Street.

On Saturday, Feb. 29, about 50 people stood in line at the courthouse to register; only two were admitted to take the test. On Saturdays the courthouse closes at noon. During the afternoon a police car cruised through the Negro areas (don't know about the white areas) announcing over a loudspeaker that Canton Mayor L. Stanley Matthews had called a 10 PM curfew for all citizens and that anyone on the streets after that time would be picked up for questioning. During the week leading up to Freedom Day the state legislature passed a bill, among others that seemed related to the Canton situation, authorizing municipalities to restrict the movement of any and all citizens to protect the public safety. It is not known whether the Mayor was acting under the new statute. The curfew has continued through the present (Sunday, March 8, this being written March 9). On Friday, March 6, George Raymond, CORE Task Force worker, called the police station and was told that the curfew was on indefinitely. In its first nine days there are no known arrests for violations.

On Sunday, March 1, between 7:30 and 8:00 PM a young man phoned the Freedom House and said in a slow, almost sing-song voice, "in about an hour we're going to throw a bomb up there." Lenora Thurmond, CORE Task Force worker, who took the call acknowledged the message with something like "Oh yeah" and the caller hung up.

On Monday, March 2, the students at Rogers Junior-Senior High School staged a boycott. Monday's attendance figures for Canton Negro schools, as given by D.M. Allen, Superintendent of Canton Public Schools, were: 2,625 absent and 915 present. At the Rogers school 1,396 were absent and 915 present, these figures obtained by James Anderson, a student there, who called the school. The students, who organized the boycott almost completely by themselves, gave 13 reasons for it.

1. Books in poor repair and not enough of them
2. Not enough chemicals and equipment for the chemistry laboratory
3. Typewriters in poor condition and not enough of them
4. Home economics laboratory poorly equipped
5. No physical education for high school students
6. No foreign languages taught

7. Insufficient first aid equipment
8. Insufficient library
9. Inadequate shop facilities
10. Overcrowded and broken busses
11. Overcrowded classes
12. Building in poor repair
13. No lockers for students

During the boycott about 115 students participated in a Freedom School held at the Pleasant Green Holiness Church. In the morning they discussed nonviolence, what was wrong with their school and why they were participating in the boycott. After lunch they organized themselves, set up committees and ~~xxxx~~ discussed plans for the future. Nothing has come of their request to meet with a representative of the Board of Education on Friday, March 6.

On Tuesday, March 3, all the students who were absent were given letters to take home to their parents, addressed to "Negro School Patrons of the Canton Schools," it was signed by D.M. Allen. There was a form on the bottom of the letter for parents to explain why their children were absent on Monday. Students unable to provide excused absences would receive zeroes for their work, the letter admonished.

On Monday, March 2, Sheriff Jack S. Cauthen stopped James Collier, SNCC field worker, two white ministers and two other field workers from canvassing in the sawmill quarters. With the Sheriff were about a dozen other men, mostly in pickup trucks, one of whom claimed to be the owner of the land who said he wouldn't let the canvassers on his property. Sheriff Cauthen also told Collier that he "had heard all about" him and that up to now he had been protecting him but ~~xxxx~~ now that Collier was playing with dynamite (apparently canvassing with white ministers in Negro areas) he would have to leave town. Cauthen told Collier that something would have happened to him long ago were it not for the protection he had received.

Tuesday about 10 AM the Sheriff stopped Collier as he was going up the steps to the courthouse grounds, leading some people to register. Cauthen told Collier that apparently he hadn't gotten the message the previous day but that he had really meant it. He gave Collier 30 seconds to get off the steps and told him not to come back again. Later in the day Collier talked with city attorney Robert Goza about the possible lifting of the curfew. After that Cauthen told Collier that if it were lifted, he'd see that it was put back on, adding something to the effect that he thought Collier might try something like that.

On Tuesday evening about 7:30 PM Collier was stopped by about 6 white men in two pickup trucks (one red, one blue and white) while he was walking on Hickory Street with Joe Lee Watts, Marcellus Byrd and Henry Lee Chinn. They told him that there were people ~~xxx~~ in the community who would rather kill him than Medgar Evers.

On Tuesday a Negro teacher, Tom Summers was arrested for driving with a revoked license (which is true). He paid his fine and was released on Wednesday.

On Tuesday night there was a mass meeting on the Pleasant Green Church of about 80 people.

At about noon on Monday, March 2, George Raymond was arrested for driving a faulty car (bad brakes). Raymond says that the owner of the car is a mechanic and that he says there was nothing wrong with the brakes. He was released from the city jail on Tuesday, about 12:30 PM after paying a \$16 fine and \$2 jail costs. In the jail Sheriff Jack Cauthen told Raymond to shave his beard off or he would do it for him. George did it himself.

On Tuesday, March 3, about noon the owner of the car and Matt Suarez, CORE Task Force worker, went to pick up the car which was in the custody of Campbell's Wrecker Service. They went first to his house where the car was parked, but Campbell (Charles E.) was having lunch and told them to go to his place of business. They went there about 1:30 and paid \$30.00. They went back to Campbell's house, got the car keys from his wife and got into the car which was still outside his house. They discovered that the brakes had been removed and that a hole had been punched in the muffler. They had driven about two blocks when stopped by police and given a ticket for improper brakes. Suarez explained that they had turned the motor off before the police had come close enough to ~~xxxx~~ have heard the faulty muffler.

On Monday night there was a mass meeting of about 140 people at the Pleasant Green Church.

On Wednesday morning, March 4, at least several hundred students were turned away from Rogers High School because they didn't have their absence excuse slips for Monday. It is also reported that on Wednesday morning James Jones, Jr. principal of Rogers, made a complaint to police as a result of a discussion he had with Scott Smith (identified below).

About 10:30 Wednesday morning nearly the entire city and county police forces raided the Freedom House. Most waited outside while Sheriff Cauthen, Deputy Billy Noble and five or six Canton police came inside. Asked for a warrant, the police said they didn't need one as they walked into the building. They sent the local adults and children who were there at the time home and arrested everyone else for "investigation," a total of 12.

James Collier, SNCC field worker, Negro, 28, from Jackson, Miss.
 George Raymond, CORE Task Force, Negro, 21, from New Orleans
 Mattheo Suarez, CORE Task Force, Negro, 26, from New Orleans
 C. O. Chinn, CORE Task Force, Negro, 42, from Canton
 Joe Lee Watts, CORE Task Force, Negro, 20, from Canton
 Theodis Hewitt, CORE Task Force, Negro, 25, from Canton
 Richard Jewett, CORE Task Force, white, 30, from New York City
 Andrew Lee Green, SNCC field worker, Negro, 29, from Hattiesburg, Miss.
 Marcellus Byrd, Canton volunteer, Negro, c. 21
 John Newman, white, 20, from Kalamazoo, Mich, with the National Conference of Methodist Youth Fellowship
 Stanford Brown, volunteer from Chicago, Negro, 20 (back in Chi. now)
 Scott B. Smith, Jr., volunteer from Chicago, Negro, 29
 arrested 5 minutes after the others, at Plsnt. Grn.Ch.

Lenora Thurmond was not at the Freedom House at the time. The rest of the staff were either in the rural areas or outside the county at the time of the arrests.

In the county jail everyone was questioned about whether they had ~~xxxxxx~~ been on school property that morning. They also received lectures on the error of their ways (that the students should be in school, that the higher the school's average daily attendance, the larger their budget, etc.). They were told that they could be charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor, aiding and abetting disorderly conduct, and disturbing the peace.

of Cincinnati

Also at about 10:30 AM Rev. Frank Gibson was asked to come to the Sheriff's office for questioning which he did.

Between 4 and 5:30 PM all but two were released. CO Chinn was held for disturbing the peace and carrying a concealed weapon and Scott Smith for disturbing the peace. They appeared before Justice of the Peace Milton Hs Sandidge on Tuesday, March 5. No ~~xxx~~ staff attended and they haven't checked to ~~xxx~~ find out just what happened at the trial. What they think is that Smith was sentenced to \$500 and 6 months and that Chinn, for some reason, wasn't tried. Chinn's bond is reportedly \$1,000, Smith's, \$500, both required to be property or surety bond.

On Wednesday night, March 4, there was a mass meeting at the Pleasant Green Church of about 100 people.

Property was secured in Canton for Chinn's and Smith's bond. James Collier went to the sheriff's office on Friday, March 6, to get the two out. The deputy in the sheriff's office was filling out the papers when Billy Noble came in and asked Collier if he were a lawyer. When Collier said no, Noble told Collier to get out, that they wouldn't give him the time of day. George Raymond went down and was told that he would have to get a lawyer's seal on the papers. On Saturday George went again and this time Noble told him, "You have our registrar in Jackson, we have these niggers in jail. Come back Monday."

On Wednesday afternoon March 4, three boys were arrested in the town of Madison, Madison County. They are Floyd Bouldin, 19, ~~xxx~~ trespassing and resisting arrest; Ernest Bouldin, 16, trespassing and resisting arrest; and Arthur Lee Bouldin, 18, trespassing, resisting arrest and carrying a concealed weapon. The story which came to us third hand is this. The three, plus a brother Samuel (who was driving) and a sister Benny Lou, were driving in Madison. They pulled out onto a street behind a highway patrol car and in front of the car of Constable Bruno Holley. All three cars happened to stop at a store a little way down the road. Constable Holley gave the Bouldins a hard time, claiming they had pulled out too close in front of him. They highway patrolmen left without saying anything, indicating that they hadn't done anything wrong. The Bouldins and Holley then went to their respective homes, but the Bouldins decided to go to Holley's house and apologize to him (one of them had mowed his lawn and knew him to some degree). When Holley ~~xxx~~ saw them walking toward his house he must have thought he was being attacked for he came out of his house and fired a pistol to the side of them. He had another man hold a rifle on them while he handcuffed the three brothers. Benny Lou and maybe Samuel watched this from their car. The three were taken to the county jail in Canton. Their father was at the sheriff's office ~~xxxxxx~~ arranging to post bond when someone there said that he had been seen on Freedom Day trying to register and they wouldn't let his sons out. The brothers were tried on Friday but no one knows the results yet.

On Thursday, March 5, the US Justice Department ~~xxxxxxx~~ filed a suit in US District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi charging Madison County registrar L. F. Campbell with discrimination and asking the Court to issue a preliminary ~~in~~ injunction against him and the State of Mississippi, named as a codefendant in the suit. A closed hearing was held Saturday, March 7, in Judge Harold Cox's office. He has asked for briefs to be submitted by Tuesday, March 10. His decision is expected Wednesday.

On Friday night, March 6, about 9 PM Andrew Lee Green was arrested in Sharon, Madison County. He was arrested while sitting in the Pleasant Green Church by Billy Noble at the request of Forrest County (Hattiesburg) Sheriff. The charges against him ~~xxx~~ were speeding, driving without a license (which is true) and an unpaid traffic ticket. He was taken to Hattiesburg on Saturday morning and was being held for \$40 or 40 days. The staff in Canton sent money to get him out but they don't know if he is out.

There are not very accurate records of the people going to the courthouse. The staff is trying to improve on this. The best available for last week are:

	Went to Courthouse	Took test
Monday, March 2	15	5
Tuesday, March 3	12	9
Wednesday, March 4	5	3
Thursday, March 5	11	10
Friday, March 6	12	8
Saturday, March 7	unknown as the staff was in Jackson, hoping to xxx be present (with some Madison Co. locals) at the hearing of the Justice Department's suit	

During the week the following incidents were reported to the staff; none has been really checked on.

1. Lank Williams (40, a truck driver) and his family live and work on a plantation owned by Joe Smith and Billy Leadbelly, northeast of Sharon in Madison County. He has lived in Madison County all his life. On February 27 Smith told all his employees that anyone who went to try to register on Friday (Freedom Day) would be fired and would have to leave their homes on the plantation. Lank Williams' two sons had already decided they would go and they did. On the afternoon of the 28th Leadbelly told Lank that he had seen his sons at the courthouse and that they (the sons) would have to get off the place. They did immediately and a week later Lank and his wife (no information about any other members of the family) moved off to keep the family together.

2. Lilly Mae Murphy worked in a clothing store in "downtown" Canton. Her boss told her that if she tried to register she would be fired. She tried to register on Freedom Day and was fired.

3. It is reported that on Friday, Feb. 28, the "boss" of the county maintenance department order space cleared in the large truck shed, saying it was for demonstrators if the jails didn't have enough room. He told his employees that if they tried to register they would be fired. Apparently addressing his employees, he told all of them who were "with

me" to come over to the side of the shed where he was standing. It is reported that less than half of the ~~fr~~ 50-75 employees went over, but as far as is known none tried to register.

The staff has heard that the ~~the~~ ~~gasoline~~ gasoline pumps of a man named Otto Williams have been taken out, but there are ~~no~~ no details at all on this.

Miscellaneous notes:

The front springs on Dave Dennis' car were apparently stolen in Canton. They were discovered missing after the car returned from several days there.

The Madison County Movement (Negro) ~~has~~ put out the first issue of a mimeographed newsletter, the Madison County Citizen on Sunday, March 8.

The ministers left on Saturday, Feb. 29 but another group came on Monday, March 2. All of them had left by Thursday morning March 5.

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