

Mardh 21, 1965

Dear Phil,

One more thing re Selma which is the comments by Minis in "Life in Lyndon's Great Society". I assume you are getting them but in case you aren't he points out Martins speech re: "I would rather be murdered on the highway than brutalize my conscience..." and then notes Leroy Collins statement that the deal was worked out in advance with Col. Al Lingo and Martin.

Take Julie Rice off the list and hold her copies aside. If I hear from her I will put her back on - but I have this a paranoid vision of the FBI checking her mailbox daily and gathering me up. I know that if she is in Italy they dont forward the mail. If you hear from her let me know.

Roy is starting to branch out into Camilla (Mitchell County) and also BAKER County (the most notorious in southwest Georgia). He is now carrying a pistol.

Dear Friends:

The following is a report from a Freedom School in Cordele set up by one of the SNCC staff. It gives a pretty good idea of what the freedom schhols are all about and what they can ~~accomplish~~ accomplish - and how they have moved beyond the idea of simply serving as vehicles for building a sense of identity, eg. the teaching of Negro history and modern African events:

"The high school kids are more or less organized and usually about 50 or so attend every mass meeting. For the past two Wednesdays we've held what I call a Freedom Discussion Group. About a dozen or more high school kids get together and talk about whatever they feel like talking about. The first meeting we discussed citizenship. Most of the kids felt that they were citizens. I asked if they had freedom of speech since that was guaranteed them as citizens and they said yes. We talked about that for a while and I asked whether the 3 guys killed in Miss had freedom of speech & since they were killed for talking about voter registration. Most said, "in a way yes, in a way no". Then I asked if part of the freedom was in the protection of that freedom and they agreed that it was. We talked about that and a couple then said that the 3 guys really didnt have freedom of speech. They also felt that they didnt have freedom of speech because the same thing could happen to them. Some of the others just kind of looked like they had to think about it ~~some~~ some more which is really the purpose of the Discussion Group anyway. Talked about violence and ~~the~~ I asked if they thought we could get our freedom the way they did in Africa by armed revelation. Talked about that for a while and about one guy's idea that we could get the roads paved if we kidnapped the city managers daughter and held her hostage. Some thought it would work because they thought white people would be too stupid to find them if they really hid out well. Others thought it wouldnt work because there would always be some stupid Negro dumb enough to tell where they were hiding. Talked about some other things kind of jumping from subject to subject according to the interest of the kids.

The second meeting we subject hopped again starting off with teenage drinking and what causes it. We talked about that for a while and one of the kids said kids drank to be part of the crowd. I asked if they though white poeple were segregationists to be part of the crowd. We threw that around some and talked about why some white people become involved in the Movement and some reasons why some black ~~sp~~ people dont. Talked about why adults in Cordele havent gotten together. Couple of kids started yawning so we broke up till the next meeting."

(PHIL: Just heard a very intersting thing, BUT CONFIDENTIAL - seems that SCLC is bringing money into Selma and other places to buy out the white

In 1943 the Sheriff of Baker County, Georgia, and a couple of his friends dragged a young Negro named Bobby Hall from his house down the main street of Newton, Ga tied to their car, and then beat him to death for 45 minutes in the Court House square. In 1961 the Sheriff of Baker County shot another Negro, Charlie Were through the neck three times. By some miracle he lived. These were only two of the more publicized attacks by whites on Negroes in Baker County - attacks that go unpunished and generally unnoticed. Last week another Negro paid the price of being black in Baker County. Hosea Miller, the youngest brother in a Negro family which is fairly prosperous by Baker County standards (they own their own farm), was shot by a white man named Cal Hall. Hall had come to Miller's farm to claim a cow that he had left on Millers land for the last three years. An argument ensued and Hall pulled a gun and shot Miller as he was walking away. At last report he was near death and paralyzed from the waist down. Hall, by the way, is a relative of Bobby Hall. In Baker you have white and Negro Halls and white and Negro Millers - the Negro side being descendents from the Plantation owners and those women who were in virtual slavery on their plantations.

In the Spring of 1963 Sherrod who was then project director of SNCC in Southwest Georgia was planning to go into Baker County to start a voter registration project. The Justice Department knew how extremely dangerous this would be - the Sheriff is re-elected term after term - one of his boasts is the number of Negroes he has murdered. They convinced Sherrod that it would be much better if they, the Justice Department, would go in and try to work out a deal with the power structure in the County to get some Negroes registered. And this is what happened - they convinced the registrar to put something like 300 or 400 Negroes on the voter roles. This was by way of a compromise to avoid a voter reg law suit which would force them to open up the books and let every Negro who wanted to come in and register. But because it was done like this, instead of through an intensive voter drive with all the resulting hardships like in ~~xxxxx~~ Terrell County, no real local leadership grew up there. In Terrell though there are no where the number of Negroes registered as in Baker, you have very strong people like Carolyn Daniels and the Edwards family - and having local leadership like this is much more important than an arbitrary number of registered Negroes who are afraid to exercise their right to vote and who, when they do vote, do what the Sheriff tells them. Now Roy has decided to go into Baker and neighboring Mitchell County - to try and work with people to develop the feeling of heving done things for themselves.

We just got a decision on our petition for writ of habeas corpus in the Burkes case. That was the case of the Negro farmer from Terrell County who was convicted of possessing moonshine and his white lawyer pleaded him guilty against his will and didn't explain what he was doing (Burkes is completely illiterate) or what he was putting his "X" on. The petition was argued at the end of last year but we only got a decision last week. It was denied. Now I am preparing a bill of exceptions to appeal the decision to

the Georgia Supreme Court. The NAACP Inc. Fund has agreed to pay for the costs in this habeas because of the interesting questions that are raised - Burkes has absolutely no money.

Cobb was traveling around the Macon area for a while, with the idea of expanding operations across the 3rd Congressional District and the Georgia BlackBelt counties to the South Carolina border. He came back to Albany for a few days and has now gone up to Washington for a Freedom School conference. While he was here he told us the story of his encounter with the U.S. Army physical exam and why he was found "unacceptable for military service". When he got there about three hours late he found that they were rather annoyed. He walked into the room smoking a cigarette. His attention was called to a large "NO SMOKING" sign on the wall by a sergeant - and he was ready to put it out until he noticed a cigar burning on the sergeant's desk. So Cobb said, "Unless you are prepared to put the cigar out I will have to assume that the sign doesn't really mean what it would seem to say". The reply was, "I got stripes". The first part of the physical involved filling out a long form with dozens of little boxes which must be checked, and questions to answer. Since he was healthy he just took his pencil and wrote "HEALTHY" across the form. So they directed him into an office, and on his way in he noticed that it was the psychiatrist's office. The first question was whether he was homosexual which netted the psychiatrist a long discourse on love and non-violence. To the question of whether he was trying to avoid going into the Army Cobb replied that this was not the case, as he didn't know much about the Army and really wanted some information so that he could make an intelligent decision. He went on to tell the Doctor that he understood that Local Draft Board 6 of NY was made up of a group of his neighbors and that they had written him telling him they wanted him to come into the Army. He now proposed calling a meeting of the people who make up Local Board 6 where they could tell him all about the Army and then he would be able to ask them questions and have a basis for making an intelligent decision as to whether it was or was not a good thing. That concluded the interview and he was sent out to see two old ladies who asked him his address - he listed all the SNCC projects in Miss, Ala, and Georgia and told them that he could be reached by writing to any of the addresses and that sooner or later he would get to where the letter was. He also completed a form for them on which he filled in "Principal Occupation" by writing "keeping alive". The ladies read this, one turned to the other and said, "I don't think we should process this", gave him a ticket to get a free lunch, and by the time he got back to Atlanta there was a 4-F waiting for him.

I haven't heard of any SNCC field secretaries who have been drafted. It would seem as if the Army is a bit afraid that if they ever got in, the same basic questions about rights and dignity that SNCC asks in the Black Belt would be asked in the barracks and no one would want to go to Viet Nam. One of the SNCC workers here was sent a questionnaire by his draft board to be filled in before takin

the pre-induction physical. They wanted to know his present occupation which was "outside agitator" and any skills he had "organizing protest demonstrations, picketing, etc."

Cobb was one of the initiators of the Freedom School concept and is a master at engaging people in conversations where he gets them to articulate exactly what they think and feel. He can go into a room of sullen, silent people and in a little while have them talking and explaining themselves in a very excited way. At one point SNCC decided to use him to do some fund raising in the North - no, this isn't accurate - the National Council of Churches wanted him to do this and SNCC owed them an obligation so he went. He got very tired of talking to groups of churchpeople and Rotarians in Northern Illinois and Wisconsin. One day he decided that instead of his little talk about how many times he was arrested and how many times he was threatened, etc., he would engage these people in a dialogue, just as he does among Southern Negroes, only he would ask them about things to which the audience could relate. Since this particular meeting was with a group of doctors he started to talk about socialized medicine and how this could help to fill people's needs; half of the audience walked out. He tried this another time at a smorgasboard dinner and the host kept up a constant stage whisper - "tell them about the beatings". And at one group meeting he appeared wearing ~~xxxxxxx~~ wool pants and a nice sweater. Someone in the audience asked him why he didn't have on jeans and a denim jacket - there was a general feeling that he was an imposter. So Cobb doesn't do fund raising any more.

On Tuesday and Wednesday C.B. didn't come into the office. He was very sick with a kind of virus. This is one of the few times since he has started practicing that he missed a day from the office. It's a damn frightening responsibility that he has, being the only lawyer in the area who can take civil rights cases, and never knowing when something will develop which requires his immediate attention. It's the same way with vacations. In the summer of '63 when I was here, Liz (the other law clerk) and I convinced him to take a week's vacation in Florida. His wife told us that he was so tense he couldn't even lie down and he called the office at least twice a day. I'm hoping ~~at~~ that at some point he will be able to get a way for a while with his family but every time we start to talk about it something comes up that requires him to drop his plans.

The Union won the NLRB election at Bob's Candy. The election was extremely close, 96 to 93. Last night Bob Hoguet (a friend from California who is now at NYU Law and who came to Albany on his vacation) and I went to the meeting. People spoke about the excitement and nervousness during the ballot counting; how Mr. Bobby cried when the vote was announced. He is a notorious paternalist and can't understand how his children could do him this way. The victory was very important for the Negroes in Albany because this will be the beginning of unionization for them. There are laundry workers here earning 65 cents an hour and they now want to organize.

On Thursday night we drove to Tallahassee, Florida, 90 miles away. C.B. had been invited to speak on "The Administration of Justice in Georgia" at their annual legal conference. Florida A & M University is a Negro state college. Their law school was started a few years before Brown v. Board of Education, "conceived in iniquity" CB says, to avoid integrating the U. of Fla Law School. Today they have seven professors (to keep their accreditation) and sixteen students. Tobias Simon the ACLU lawyer ~~rf~~ from Miami has brought a law ~~school~~^{suit} to close it down charging that it costs a couple hundred thousand dollars per student to educate these guys and most of them fail the Florida Bar. The faculty is very pushed out of shape by talk like this. The Legal Conference was a very novel one - no one attended except the speakers on the panel and maybe one or two students. But I guess the state gives them a certain amount of money in the budget to have a conference every year, because the white law school has a conference every year, so they have the conference and no one attends. Since it would be very impolite to have a conference where the speakers talk to empty chairs, a couple of undergraduate classes are rounded up and the students herded into the auditorium. However, the timing was bad and every speaker started talking to an audience of about a half-dozen (most of whom ~~were~~ were those who had already talked or were about to) and then 50 ~~xxxx~~ students would march in and sit down. The height of folly came when a teacher who accompanied one of these groups stood up with her attendance book and ~~as~~ started calling roll. But C.B.'s speech was great - completely impromptu, he lashed into the "administration of injustice" which might have proved embarrassing to the school officials. Another speaker was Hemphill Pride, a graduate of FAMU now practicing in Columbia, South Carolina who said similar things about his state. Another lawyer who participated was Arthur Shorex of Birmingham - we just heard they tried to ~~blow~~ blow up his house again tonight - its already been bombed twice. The Negro lawyers from Florida who attended were an extremely conservative lot. Florida is considerably more civilized than the other deep south states - there is comparatively little civil rights activity - and most of these guys are like their white counterparts across the country, hustling for money and very reactionary about most things. Because of this the Movement has real problems in terms of legal aid. Not only are there very few Negro lawyers, with most of them gathered in the very largest cities (eg. Georgia has 38 Negro lawyers with 30 in Atlanta) but most of them are extremely conservative and do not handle civil rights cases except an occasional "safe" thing like a school desegregation suit.