

May 25, 1962

Committee of Inquiry
38 Park Row, New York 38, N.Y.
COrtlandt 7-6270

Att: Marvin Rich

James Farmer, National Director of the Congress of Racial Equality.

A year ago, on May 24, 27 of us in two buses arrived at Jackson, Mississippi, the first in Jackson to test the Boynton decision of the U. S. Supreme Court desegregating terminal facilities in interstate commerce. We were met by about 50 police, with 3 police dogs. Almost immediately, we were all arrested -- some of us before we reached the door of the restaurant. The charge was breach of the peace. We went first to the local jail, then before the local court where we were found guilty, fined \$200 and given suspended sentences of 2 months. We went to jail to work off our fines at the rate of \$3 a day.

We were next in the Hinds County Jail, then the county prison farm, then the maximum security unit of the state prison at Parchman, the first of the 325 Freedom Riders to make this tour of Mississippi jails. Our being arrested was not extraordinary. Since the sit-ins in Greensboro, N. C., in February, 1960, more than 5,000 civil rights demonstrators have been arrested.

Parchman is a flat one-story building surrounded by a high chain-link fence topped with rolls of barbed wire. In the cell block our clothes were taken from us; we were given ill-fitted shorts; mattresses were taken away; we slept on the floor; in very hot weather, windows were closed and fans turned off. Most of the 325 riders were 39 days in jail, chiefly in Parchman.

Sentences reached 6 months for other riders. We decided to appeal; appeal bonds were first set at \$500 for each of us, for many bond later reached \$1,500, and for one, \$2,000. We have all appeared before the county court for arraignment and most of us again for trial. Trials are still going on at the rate of 2 a day, 10 a week, and will continue for another month. This despite the Supreme Court ruling of last February 26: "We have settled beyond question that no state may require racial segregation of interstate and intrastate transportation facilities."

To pay bonds, and riders' travel costs to and from Hinds County court, CORE has spent privately more than \$350,000. No bonding company was found that would give bond. In the best possible estimate -- there are no exact figures -- since the Greensboro sit-ins total cost for bonds of all kinds, cash and other, in civil rights cases, exceeded 2 million dollars.