

## HARASSMENTS, BOYCOTTS, SHOOTINGS

Three representatives of Operation Freedom recently returned from a visit to the area in Mississippi where voter registration is going on. They brought back the following report.

The mayor of Ruleville recently told a Negro whose wife had registered: "You might as well go ahead and register 'cause you got to go through this suffering like the rest of 'em." He continued: "I'm gonna shut this town down. I'm gonna close it down, 'specially on a Sunday." He did close it down - that is, for businesses owned by Negroes.

Two days later a mass meeting of white citizens was held in Ruleville. The following morning a Negro who worked for the city was laid off, two Negro cleaning establishments were closed, allegedly for violating city ordinances, and a group of Negroes were turned away from the fields because they were "from Ruleville."

A lady returning to the plantation where she worked after attempting to register was met by the plantation owner. He told her to withdraw her registration application. She did not withdraw it. She did not stay on the plantation. Two others have been thrown off plantations. Five others have lost jobs.

Windows of a drug store which is owned by an active worker in the movement have been broken out. Wife of the owner cannot teach because her contract was not renewed. A police officer told one active registration worker, "We gonna see how tight we can make it - gonna make it just as tight as we can - gonna be rougher, rougher than you think."

The mayor has now notified Williams Chapel, where voter registration classes have been held: "It has been brought to our attention that you are using the building located on the north half of lot 8 block 6 of Finley's addition to the town of Ruleville, Mississippi for purposes other than worship services. This property has heretofore been exempt from taxes and we have furnished you free water. You are hereby notified that you are no longer furnished free water, and your exemption as religious property will be cancelled."

Intimidations and arrests on concocted charges are many. Open threats have been made to shoot the key people in the registration movement. Recently two girls were hit by bullets fired into a house at night. One was seriously hurt. The other suffered a dangerous head wound. Bullets have been fired into two other homes. Instead of looking up the possible perpetrators of such doings, police search homes of Negro neighbors for firearms, accusing them of doing the shooting. When one movement leader went to the hospital to find out what had happened to the two girls, he was arrested. "He looks like the type of person who would do this," said the mayor. The next morning, after a night in jail, he was taken before the mayor again. "I think you all shot at those houses, you were disappointed at the lack of violence here; and you need the publicity to get money from the north." However, he dismissed the fellow without charge.

All these things have happened in Ruleville, a town where only 30 Negroes have so far registered to vote. Ruleville is in Sunflower County, a county where so far only 161 Negroes have registered. There are 13,524 Negroes of voting age in this county, so this means there are so far only 1.2% registered. Sunflower county is 67.8% Negro.