

Therefore, the police argued, the owner had to get a warrant from a judge before they would arrest anyone. This made the owner liable for false arrest and greatly decreased the number of arrests, which helped to preserve the city's image. All this is going on in the first two weeks of Jan. (the dates may be off). Right in the middle of these, 14 out of the 60 hotels in town announce -- or I should say the mayor's office announced -- that they were desegregating. Right away the KKK announced a campaign against them. Then on a Saturday (the date I forget) we got a call that while the kids had been picketing at one of the hamburger joints about 15 members of the KKK walked in and the door was locked behind them. Everyone from the office went down to picket (the Klansmen by the way were in full dress -- the first time I had ever seen them live) and we got there about 4:30 on a Sat. afternoon. It was just as people were going home and a large crowd gathered of just ordinary people.

We carried ~~on~~ on, the Klan said they were afraid to come out and the police by and large let us continue after they had roped off the area. Then a new officer appeared and went inside to talk to the Klan; this was about 7:15, and we cleared a path for them to come out. They did come out -- led by the Grand Dragon, who is a guy about 5'5" tall and 5' around in a dark pink silk robe. The crowd started to chant "freedom, freedom;" they turned around and went back inside, but the crowd kept chanting "freedom, freedom" and the cop decided to clear the area. Well, the crowd was pretty well "up" and evidently didn't move fast enough and they arrested one small high school boy (you may have seen the picture of the cop with his arms around the kid and the kid's arms up in the air). Everyone went over in to the paddy wagons and crowded around -- some people lying in front of it. Well, they arrested a few more but the wagon finally got away and all went back to the restaurant where John Lewis got arrested (his 30th). He did not kick the cop [as reported in the NYT], but was roughed up while he was dragged to the wagon. A whole bunch of people got arrested that night.

It was really the fault of the police who tried to clear the area. Later that night some 40 kids from the local college marched through town to protest the arrests and were singing at the jail when a police officer invited them to go into the parking lot which is adjacent to the jail so the people upstairs could hear them better (he testified to this in court yesterday); along came another officer who arrested them. By this time the college kids were finished with exams and two weeks ago we had another march downtown to Leys, the real symbol of segregation, where a lot of people were arrested last summer. That night and the following week was when all the business with the Klan erupted. The Mayor had had enough by this time, and so had the police and that weekend some 150 people were arrested.

Atlanta has probably the most well-defined Negro middle class of any Southern city, and the Mayor set them to work. Earlier in the year (Oct.) a Negro summit leadership conference was formed, bringing together all the local groups in Atlanta. This group originally was formed by the old liners to curb demonstrations and to build a machine for Leroy Johnston, the Negro state senator here in Georgia. The group had originally adopted a deadline for desegregation here in Atlanta but the leadership had always managed to shunt it to committee or issue independent statements in the name of the group, and so nothing was done.

Tillow -- Feb. 8 -- page 3

Because the original 17 arrests in December were SNCC people, and because none of the groups supposedly had given up their right to independent action, SNCC went ahead with the demonstrations. But the Mayor enlisted the Uncle Toms, as they are usually referred to, in his aid while the Atlanta Constitution launched an attack on SNCC culminating in a red-baiting attack. [See next three pages for clippings and alderman's resolution].

Right now things are fairly quiet. We are sort of regrouping. It was very difficult to run the office and the local movement, so we have now two full-time people working here in Atlanta in their own office. We are, this present week, holding a series of mass meetings all over town and while there is a little picketing going on, I imagine that we may go back to mass picketing soon.

Two additional things: One is that the entire affair brought out a lot of white students from some of the local white colleges which is a very, very healthy thing.

The other is the way in which the papers, especially the Times, wrote the whole thing. Sitton in the Times was extremely biased; the reasons behind it I don't know. One, I suspect that living here in Atlanta he has been captured by the city. By that I mean that it is alright for him to go to Ala. or Miss and write about things, but not in the city where he lives, which, except for lunch counters and movies, is just about as segregated as any other southern city. The other reason that has been suggested is that many of the people who demonstrated downtown were out of the pool halls and bars, etc., and being a well-dressed newsman standing on the scene, it doesn't take much to imagine what would happen to him personally if a race riot should break out. Except for the presence of Jim Forman, SNCC Executive Secretary, we just might have had one of those nights.

This whole last explanation is subject for another letter and that it will have to be. I should say that I don't think too much of it as an explanation. I just think that Sitton is a bit over-rated as are most of the other newsmen in the South. I do think that the red baiting is serious, (I think that as an organization we have taken it too lightly) and should be watched. I should be noted that a three judge court has upheld the La. witch hunt law, and while the judge originally threw it out, the two SCEF officers, Smith and Drombowski, and Smith's law partner, Waltzer have all been indicted.

SN CC is in financial straits, we could use all the help (monetary) we can get. !!

P.S. from the editor: Enclosed is a pamphlet which we are using in the Fayette Co. project. Already Gabriner, Kotelchuck, Haynie and Griffith are raising money and recruiting people for the project to begin in June and culminate on Aug. 6. We hope this will be a big thing next summer -- THE first big political breakthrough in the delta. If you want lots of copies for talks or if you can help raise money or if anyone wants to participate -- let me know. I can send more information and more leaflets.

P.G.

The following is copied verbatim from The Atlanta Constitution

Tuesday, February 4, 1964

ALDERMEN ASKS U.S. PROBE INTO ANY REDS HERE

The House Committee on Un-American Activities was asked by the Atlanta Aldermanic board Monday to launch an investigation here so "that any local Communist activities may be exposed and legitimate organizations cleared of any suspicions of disloyalty."

The aldermen specifically called on the U.S. House committee to examine "the subject matter" of an article written by Bill Shipp, Atlanta Constitution state news editor, which appeared in Sunday's Atlanta Journal-Constitution. The article said several supporters of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee have been linked to Communist activities.

The federal action was requested in a resolution authored by Alderman Ed Gilliam and approved without debate by voice vote of the board.

Gilliam's resolution noted that "there have been lately various racial demonstrations in the public streets and in business houses, calculated to injure the good name and image of Atlanta throughout the nation; Atlanta -- a city which has been a leader in the South in the field of better race relations."

"Some of these demonstrations," it continued, "would indicate a desire to injure not only Atlanta but the entire nation by its international relations."

The resolution then cited Shipp's article "indicating that a number of professional agitators have come to Atlanta lately and aligned themselves with certain organizations, which said persons are either Communists or belong to Communist-front organizations."

The House Committee on Un-American Activities "is hereby requested," the resolution said, "to investigate the subject matter contained in said article, to the end that any local Communist activities may be exposed and legitimate organizations cleared of any suspicion of disloyalty."