

April 1, 1964

URGENT

ACTION MEMO: GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI

We desperately need your help: As Southern Senators filibuster the 1964 Civil Rights bill in Washington D.C., and as Senator Eastland (D. Miss.) plays a leading role in lobbying against bill, police officials in Greenwood, Mississippi, some 50 miles from Eastland's home town, continue to harrass and intimidate SNCC workers there. A complete fact sheet on events is enclosed.

The legal significance of the events in Greenwood is threefold: the denial of the right to picket on city streets is in direct opposition to 1st amendment guarantees; civil rights statutes make it illegal to interfere with legitimate voter registration activity; the Federal Government initiated a voting suit in Greenwood on March 30, 1963 asking for a temporary restraining order enjoining intimidation of voters and further detention and prosecution of those arrested on March 27, 1963 AND then on April 4 withdrew its request for a temporary restraining order and for the release of those in jail. In addition a federal suit was initiated asking for a permanent injunction against Greenwood officials. That suit was to have been heard in September 1963 but is still pending in federal court.

IT IS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL THAT WE FOCUS NATIONAL ATTENTION ON THE PRESENT HARRASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND DENIAL OF CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS TO THE CITIZENS OF LEFLORE COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI, as one example of the continual harrassment, intimidation and brutality that occurs in the Southern States.

WE NEED YOU TO:

1. Organize a demonstration or sympathy picket at federal buildings all over the nation protesting the federal government's inaction when it clearly has the right to intervene to protect persons in the process of registering to vote or peaceful picketing.

Pickets may take place at any federal post office, FBI office, any branch of the Justice Department (US Attorney's office) or any federal building. Leaflets should be prepared in advance to inform the press and passers-by of the reasons for your effort.

2. Arrange to send a delegation of local lawyers to speak personally with the US Attorney in your city, asking that he telephone a list of demands directly to Robert Kennedy in Washington. SPECIFICALLY WE ARE ASKING THAT THE GREENWOOD OFFICIALS BE ARRESTED under Section 594, Title 18 of the U.S. Code (1948) which reads as follows:

"Whoever intimidates, threatens, coerces, or attempts to intimidate, threaten, or coerce, any other person for the purpose of interfering with the right of such other person to vote.....shall be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned not more than one year, or both."

In addition, Section 3052, Title 18 of the US Code (1951) gives the FBI power to make any arrests which are called for because of violation of the laws of the US.

It is clear that injunctions are no longer effective for when they are obtained, as in the case of Registrar Theron Lynd of Forrest County, Mississippi, intimidation and brutality continued.

3. Organize your friends and associates to write and telegram the Justice Department, the Attorney General, the President and the Civil Rights Commission demanding that the Greenwood officials be arrested under this section of the US Code and that those now in jail be released. You should get important people in the community to send night letters immediately and have others write if they cannot afford to wire.
4. Consistently pressure your local newspapers for adequate coverage of news. Continually keep wire services on their toes by your pressure. Call the local UPI and AP desks and ask for the Greenwood story if local papers say that nothing is coming over the wires for UPI and AP are required to send out the story if subscribers ask for it; often the Southern offices of UPI and AP hold-up civil rights news until such requests come from the North.
5. Keep your Congressmen informed, and especially urge your legislators to speak for the floors of their respective bodies denouncing the use of intimidation and repression to keep people from registering to vote.
6. Recognize that a new political weapon has been developed by Mississippi officials: arresting people on trumped up traffic violations for which fines ranging from \$50 to \$150 are levied. Because we have a responsibility to our staff to get them out of jail, there is a constant drain on our financial resources. In addition, families in the Delta are in continual need of food and clothing and our field offices must be staffed and funded. Use this opportunity to raise some funds so that we can continue the struggle...

Note: We are planning some action at the Justice Department offices in Washington; this makes it doubly important for you to plan something in your local area AS SOON AS POSSIBLE,

Will you help to ensure that Negroes trying to register to vote (the overwhelming majority for the first time in their lives) will be guaranteed this essential right, without fear of violence, loss of jobs and other intimidation?

For Further Questions Contact:

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