

COFO CONTACTS WITH NESHOPA COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

IN THE SCHWERNER \* CHENEY \* COODMAN CASE

SUNDAY, JUNE 21

5:30 PM: The Jackson COFO office called the following jails and cities in an attempt to locate the three missing workers: the Philadelphia City Jail, Neshoba County Jail, Meridian City Jail, Decatur City Jail, Suqualens, and Collinsville. The calls to the last two cities were referred to the Neshoba, Meridian, and Philadelphia jails. At these jails all knowledge of the party was denied. In particular, the Philadelphia police said that they knew nothing at all about the case. The Neshoba County sheriff was in Meridian at the time (Sheriff Rainey).

MONDAY, JUNE 22

1:00 AM The Philadelphia and Meridian jails were called again. They again denied any knowledge of the case.

6:55 AM Jackson COFO called the Philadelphia jail again. We spoke to the wife of the jailkeeper, Mrs. Herring. Contrary to what we had been told the preceding night, she now said that the three had been arrested the previous afternoon for speeding and were released after paying a \$20 fine. She said the three had been released at about 6:00 PM, just after eating dinner.

7:15 AM All other jails as well as hospitals between Philadelphia and Meridian were then contacted again. The Decatur jail was called and Deputy A. L. Johnston said he knew nothing further on the case. Deputy Bill Jackson at the Lauderdale County jail said the same.

10:50 AM We received information from some white people in Philadelphia that the workers were still in jail as of 9:00 PM last night: that the workers appeared to have been beaten, though not seriously; that it was believed that the workers were still in jail in the morning. As the sources did not want their names revealed to us, we had no means of checking out these unconfirmed reports; but the information was given to the FBI.

1:00 PM A UPI story reported that Philadelphia police said that the three workers were released at 10:30 PM. Another report reached reporters that they had been released at 6:00 AM. It was also learned that the arresting officer was sheriff Deputy Cecil Price, that the Justice of the Peace who passed sentence was Mr. Len Warren, and that Sheriff Rainey held to the story that the trio were released at 6:00 PM.

MONDAY, JUNE 22 (Continued)

- 1:40 PM: Meridian reported that workers who searched the highway between Philadelphia and Meridian saw no evidence of a search being carried on. They claimed they saw idle Highway Patrol cars.
- 2:55 PM It was reported that reporters had been permitted to go through the Philadelphia jail and were satisfied that the three workers were not there. While returning to Meridian, the reporters also checked out the jails along the way.

TUESDAYK JUNE 23

- 5:00 AM: CORE workers Landy McNair and George Raymond left Meridian for Philadelphia as a search party investigating the Schwerner case.
- 8:00 PM: McNair and Raymond reported back that they were followed closely by local police during the day - - only after they (McNair and Raymond ) had contacted the FBI. When they went to the sheriff's office to investigate, the sheriff of Neshoba County refused to see them. They were held for half an hour and questioned rudely by officers in the office.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24

- 6:00 PM: Meridian reported that John Lewis, James Farmer, Dick Gregory, and George Raymond returned from Philadelphia after an unsuccessful attempt to inspect the area in which the burned car was found and the area where the church had been burned. Police stopped all but two cars at the border of county. The four met with Philadelphia officials and presented their request to go into those areas. They were told that the FBI, the Mississippi State Investigators, and the Highway Patrol had their own searching and investigating system worked out. Furthe more, they were told, these areas are private property and search warrants would be needed to enter and search. Entry would involve the risk of jailing or of being shot. They were, in short, refused permission to look at either spot. They returned to Meridian with their convoy of 35 people.

Another car, traveling alone with Dona Moses, Matteo Suares, and others, was stopped by the Highway Patrol in Neshoba County on the way back to Meridian. The officer told Dona Moses she had better address him as "Yes Sir." His whole demeanor was aggressive and intimidating. When told that they had come to find out about the missing trio, he replied, "There's nothing to investigate."