

ACTION MEMO

February 5, 1965

To: Friends of SNCC
From: Betty Garman, Northern Coordinator

Re: Selma and Marion, Alabama

Enclosed is a special background report on Alabama.

1. Use the information to further publicize the situation in Alabama. Note particularly the last three pages of the report which summarize the events of the past few weeks. The voter registration campaign this year has been marked particularly by mass arrests and intolerable jail conditions.
2. Plan demonstrations of support in your community...and work to get the widest possible press and radio coverage of things happening daily.
 - a. Press and other media -- have people call the papers daily to ask what is happening, what is new, indicate to your local papers and radio stations that people are vitally concerned that they continually report on events in Alabama. Newspapers (and particularly radio stations) can be encouraged to call us in Atlanta for up to date news. Several spot radio tapes will be available, too.

Wire services should also be called to insure that they are carrying the full story on the wires.

Pictures of events as they happen can be obtained by calling Atlanta for the SNCC photo department which has a photographer on the scene.

Network outlets should be encouraged to encourage the central office to send camera crews into the Alabama black belt. At various times all three networks, ABC, NBC and CBS, have had crews there but they should not be allowed to cease covering the situation.

b. DEMONSTRATIONS OF SUPPORT

We suggest some kind of protest around federal buildings in your area -- possibly a sit in at a US Attorney's office or sending a delegation of lawyers to the US Attorney's office. Usually you can demand that the US Attorney call Washington to speak with John Doar or Nicholas Katzenbach and that he read to the Justice Department the list of demands that you have prepared and brought with you.

Rallies can be held on campuses, leaflets should be circulated in town areas as widely as possible. Funds might also be raised around the Alabama SNCC expansion.

DEMANDS THAT CAN BE MADE ON THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT, for use in demonstrations, in telegrams to Washington, press statements, etc.

1. Federal protection for those attempting to register to vote.
2. Federal action against the registrar's of Dallas and Perry counties. Note that Federal Judge Thomas has already issued an injunction against Dallas County officials forbidding the use of lengthy literacy tests and requiring them to provide personnel to speed up the registration process. (There is a state law that allows the registrar's office to open only on the first and third Mondays of the month; In Selma a special extra amount of time was set aside in January to process the large number of registration

applicants. Now we are asking that the Dallas County officials and Perry County officials make provisions to completely extend the time allowed for registration since it would take a good decade to allow all those wishing to apply to take the test). (In Dallas County where Negroes comprise 57% of the population, registration stands at 0.7%. In neighboring Perry County where Negroes comprise 66% of the population, registration stands at 5.1%).

3. Call for a Congressional investigation of jail conditions in these Alabama areas.
4. Request that additional Congressmen and public officials (than those who went today, Feb. 5 to Selma) visit these central Alabama areas to obtain first hand information and to lend support to the fight for constitutional rights being waged there.
5. Ask, too, that the Justice Department file in Federal Court a bill of information asking that the police and county officials who have arrested voter registration workers and prospective applicants be prosecuted for a misdemeanor under Section 241, Title 18 of the US Code (that section which makes it a crime to intimidate or coerce people in their attempt to exercise the right to vote).

This procedure -- filing for prosecution by bill of information -- is one that the Justice Department has used in cases (not necessarily civil rights cases) to get around the need to call a Federal Grand Jury for an indictment. Convening a grand jury in this case would be probably meaningless since the construction of Southern juries is well known).

6. Ask that a Federal investigation be made into the lack of compliance with the public accommodations section of the civil rights bill in both Selma and Marion, Alabama.
7. Ask that the Federal Government take appropriate action to have the thousands now in jail released.
8. Demand that FBI agents stationed in Alabama begin to exercise their right, under Sections 3052 and 3053 of the US Administrative codes (Title 18), to arrest, on the spot, those law enforcement officials and private citizens doing the intimidation and harrassment of VR workers and applicants. This section reads that both US marshalls and agents of the FBI can make arrests without warrants and on the spot for any offense against the US committed in their presence. This is one way that the FBI might use its powers effectively to better cope with the problem of Southern officials defying US law..at any rate you can stress the ineffectiveness of the FBI to this point and urge that their power under this section be utilized.

-----There are many other things which can be demanded ----
try to center your demands around two or three main issues and push hard on them. In lieu of demonstrations it would be helpful for prominent people in your community -- ministers, local officials, doctors, etc. etc. to send telegrams of protest to the Justice Department and for the text of those wires to be released to the local press.

Other suggestions: telephone chains in your community attempting to solicit help for support work; letters to newspapers...use your own ideas, too. But most important is to build support for the work in Alabama, inform the community and pressure the federal government.