

June 17, 1965

To: Friends of SNCC, SNCC offices and other people...

Re: Jackson situation and MFDP challenge.

Since Monday there have been over 700 arrests in Jackson. At noon Monday 30 picketers were arrested at the State Capitol in Jackson as they stepped out of cars to man a line in front of the statehouse. Shortly thereafter 450 people were arrested marching toward the capitol building. On Tuesday some 175 people were arrested marching the same route toward the capitol. Others were arrested late afternoon Tuesday as they picketed the federal building in Jackson. These picketers were pushed off the federal steps onto city property by federal marshalls (ABC news carried a full telecast on this) and then were arrested by city police. 75 others were arrested Wednesday marching to the capitol. The charges are: parading without a permit and for those who went limp during arrest, resisting arrest. Bond is \$100 on each charge and people are jailed at the Jackson State Fair Grounds. Among those arrested: Lawrence Guyot, MFDP Executive Committee Chairman, John Lewis, SNCC Chairman, nurses from Medical Committee on Human Rights, summer volunteers for the FDP project and hundreds of local people who came from all over the state to participate. Also arrested are 100 plus striking members of the Mississippi Freedom Labor Union.

WHY DID THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY MARCH?

WHY DO PEOPLE KEEP MARCHING?

The special session of the Mississippi State Legislature opened Monday. The MFDP contends that the Legislature is illegally constituted because all people in Mississippi were not allowed to vote for their representatives. The MFDP contends that the legislature has no right to hold sessions. The MFDP is also concerned that the federal voting bill, now before the House, has no provision for free elections in Mississippi.

In addition, the entire protest is very importantly linked with the MFDP challenge to the seating of the regular Mississippi Democrats in the House of Representatives. As the last stages of the challenge (by statutory law) are reached in Washington, the brutality in Jackson and the denial of 1st amendment rights by an illegally elected government, indicate even more the necessity for the Congress of the United States to recognize the validity of the challenge and the need for a change from racist to democratic government in Mississippi.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? WE NEED YOUR HELP BADLY.

We have learned that only when the Northern part of the country gets aroused are steps taken in Washington to try to correct Southern injustices. And, the success of the challenge also depends on Northern support. People in Mississippi are in motion but they do not have political power.

The following are things that you can do to help:

1. Write or wire Congressmen; call your friends, others active in SNCC and MFDP support work to do the same. Congressmen should be urged to ask the Justice Department for immediate action to secure the release of those in jail, to file suit enjoining local and state police from brutal tactics and the denial of constitutional rights. Also point out to Congressmen the need for their vote (positive) on the MFDP challenge --

FLASH NEWS BULLETIN

Clerk of the House, Ralph R. Roberts, is holding up the printing of the MFDP challenge deposition evidence. It is even more essential now that you get people to write to their Congressmen and to the Clerk for copies of the evidence. In addition -- and emphasis for the next few days -- should be asking newsmen to request copies and to inquire as to when the information will be available. MORE ON THIS IN NEXT MAILING.

2. Write and wire the President and the Justice Department of the US directly asking that they use their power to secure the release from jail of those arrested.
3. Raise bail money. Although all people going to jail are ~~pledging~~ pledging not to accept bail, we still need funds for those who become ill or for those who are beaten in jail. Bail loans of \$100 or over should be sent to:

Mississippi Bail Loan Fund
100 Fifth Avenue #803
New York, New York 10011

Bail donations (not loans) of under \$100 should be sent to: SNCC Bail Fund, 360 Nelson St., SW, Atlanta 13, Georgia.

4. The FDP has asked that Northerners come to Jackson to participate with them in their demonstrations. Friday, June 18 is the first day of large scale Northern participation. Since most of you will receive this after it is too late to mobilize people for Friday, calls should be placed to Jackson, the FDP office, (601) 948-4038 to inquire if northern participation is desired after Friday.
5. Generally request that newspapers in your area carry full stories of what is happening in Jackson. Also, devise ways of getting the information about the need for telegrams and letters to as large a group as possible in your community. WE KNOW THAT TELEGRAMS ARE EFFECTIVE. Battles have been won in the past on the strength of telegrams which indicate widespread public support for a particular issue.
6. Call a demonstration in your community at a federal building or other appropriate place. Remember, too, that this weekend marks the 1st year mark after Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner were killed last summer. (They disappeared and were killed on June 21). Memorial services are being held around the country on Sunday and Monday, June 20 and 21. Encourage your area churches to include a memorial for these three workers in their Sunday services.

BRUTALITY IN JACKSON.

During the last three days there have been many instances of brutality. Three workers were beaten badly enough to be hospitalized on Monday during the first series of arrests. Two others were hospitalized Monday night after being beaten in the jail at the fair grounds. At a press conference yesterday, youths who were released from jail in the custody of their parents, reported on jail conditions. William Lee Griffin, 17, from Philadelphia, Miss has this to say:

"It is really hot in there. Most of the people are sleeping on the floor without blankets or mattresses. Some are trying to sleep by leaning against the walls rather than lie on the floor. Others are just piled on each other because it is so crowded.

I was arrested on Monday, June 14 about 1:30 pm and we weren't fed until 6:00 that evening. That meal consisted of one sandwich and a cup of milk. Tuesday, the first meal was molasses, grits and two pieces of white bread and for the evening meal we had pork and beans, two pieces of white bread and one cup of milk. I was released last night, Tuesday, at 11:00 pm. The judge told me to go home and not come back. I'll be going back this afternoon.

He also reported that the young kids kept getting beaten -- "If they tell you to do something and you do it they beat you and you don't do it you still get beat."

Affidavits on brutality have been taken by lawyers in Jackson and are being released to the press and will also be presented to Congressmen for speeches on the floor of the House.

keep on pushing....freedom...

betty, shirley, margaret, esther,
atlanta northern support