

Camden Academy
Camden, Alabama
July 6, 1965

Report

Mr. Junius Griffin, Public Relations Director
Southern Christian Leadership Conference
331 Auburn Ave. N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Mr. Griffin,

File

I have been appointed Director of Public Relations for the S.C.L.C. Summer Community Organization and Political Education project (S.C.O.P.E.) here in Wilcox County, Alabama. I have been here on the field since Saturday, June 26, working directly with the leadership of the civil rights movement in our headquarters in Camden. Since that time I have maintained close contact with the Rev. Daniel Harrell, project director for this area, with the Rev. Major Johns, project director of Wilcox County, and with Mr. Junius Griffin, Public Relations Director of the S.C.L.C. located at the home office of this organization in Atlanta, Georgia. I have also had contact with the Justice Department representatives located in Selma, Alabama, Mr. George Rayburn and Mr. Morton Sklar.

Since my arrival in Wilcox County, several events have taken place which I feel compelled to inform you about by mail. We have reason to believe that these actions may in some way have violated either state or federal statutes. The following is the sequence of events, and the names of reliable witnesses who are either living in, or located in Wilcox County at this time.

On Monday, June 28, at approximately 12:30 p.m., Mayor F.R. (Reg) Albritton entered Antioch Baptist Church, the office and headquarters of the SCOPE project in this county. He had with him deputies and policemen who were armed. After being asked to show a search warrant, and showing none, they arrested 18 persons (see list below) leaving some others who were in the church at this time, (i.e. not arrested). One youth, Don Green, in the church at this time, was roughed up by one of the deputies. We have witnesses to this occurrence. Those arrested were booked on charges of "possession and distribution of boycott materials". Within thirty minutes of the arrest, the bail was set at \$1000 per person. At about 1:45 p.m., I was allowed to visit the jail - in the colored section - with Mrs. Albert Gordon, and Mr. James Eprain. Soon after that visit, the bail was arranged for Mr. Gordon and he was released in the late afternoon of the same day. While the three of us were in the jail visiting, there was noise from the White section of the jail. It was at this time that Mike Farley, was allegedly beaten by the other occupant of the cell - a man who had been there when Farley was jailed. Only a few who were in the Negro section were able to witness this beating. I have a statement from John Davis, who is now working in Clark County, who witnessed this. On Tuesday, June 29, after being held approximately 23 hours, 7 persons were released due to "insufficient evidence for arrest" - of this group three were out of town Negro workers. On Thursday, July 1, two 14 year-old boys were released to their mothers, one George Shamburger was fined \$25 for carrying a concealed weapon, allegedly. Then on Friday, July 2, the remainder of those jailed were released. Rev. Harrell arranged this release by pleading guilty for all of them and paying their fines. Now only two of them, Judy Harmon and Ashley Stalworth signed any papers - and now we understand that these were bonds. The trial has been turned over to Wilcox County Court and the trial set for August 7. So far as I now know the only charges that remain are those on Mr. Gordon, although there is some question in my mind as to the two above mentioned, Harmon and Stalworth, who supposedly signed bonds for their release.

There have been three instances of action on the part of the sheriff, P.C. "Lummy" Jenkins that have resulted in the closing of buildings to the use or patronage of the SCOPE workers here. On Sunday, June 27, Sheriff Jenkins told Mr. Bob Reynolds, owner of a cafe near the SCOPE headquarters, that it would be "smart" for him not to continue serving the White workers at his place of business, because there was a group of men from up town who would come down to "tear up" his cafe. So on Monday, a regular day of business, Mr. Reynolds stayed closed "rather than stop serving all the people" who patronized him. I have received this story directly from Mr. Reynolds. On Tuesday he opened again for business having been assured that for the time being the white workers would not go into the cafe. On Wednesday, following the beating of Tuesday night (see below) the Mayor informed us through one of our group here at the Academy, Mr. John Williams, that if anyone was at the church after dark they would be arrested for being a "public nuisance" or "for protective custody." Then on Thursday morning, July 1, Sheriff Jenkins came to the church at about 8:30 and told Mr. Gordon that he was going to close the church that day. At 3:20 p.m. he came again to the church, ordered people out of the building and locked the doors. At 3:45, I contacted Mr. Nathaniel Hill, chairman of the Board of Deacons of the Antioch Baptist Church, asking whether or not he had given the Sheriff permission to close the church. Mr. Hill reported that at no time has he or any other member of the Board asked, or signed an order, to have the church closed to SCOPE use. He has said that at an earlier meeting with the Sheriff on Monday, June 28, the Deacons informed him that they would not close the church until they could bring it to a vote of the congregation at their next regular meeting (July 11). The following morning after the closing of the church, on Friday, July 2, the Sheriff approached a Mr. Nettles asking if his son, Charles, an SCLC staff worker, had a key to the church and that if he did he would have to turn it over to the Sheriff. At this time he also said that Mr. Nettles would have to keep the girls who were workers in the SCOPE project out of his house. The house does not belong to Mr. Nettles, but to a Rev. Kimball of Selma, from whom both the Nettles' and the girls are renting. Mr. Nettles reported that the Sheriff said that if the girls were not out of the house, "the same thing would happen as happened the other night at the church". He also said that if he caught any people down at the church he would arrest them on charges of burglary, because he had orders to close it. At the present time, the church remains closed at the orders of the Sheriff, and those who were living at the house where Mr. Nettles lives, have made arrangements to live in other homes in the county.

On Tuesday night, June 29, there were eight local Negro youth at the church. All the SCOPE workers had left the church. These persons (list of names attached) had planned to remain at the church during the night. At approximately 10:00 p.m. five white men entered the church building, breaking down the inside door to the meeting hall. All of the youth with the exception of two, were able to flee without being hurt. Two shotgun blasts were fired after the fleeing persons - none of them were hit by these blasts, one of which went through the outer wall of the church. I drove into the Negro quarter with the local Presbyterian minister who lives here at the Academy. At that time, about 10:30 we found several people at one of the houses, gathered by one of the boys who had been beaten. He was immediately taken to the hospital in Selma, suffering from a gash on the head and a badly bruised jaw. He was kept in the hospital for approximately three days. This was Frank Connors. The following morning it was found that another of the youth had been hurt, suffering internal injuries to the chest. He was taken to the hospital then, i.e. at about 6:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 30. This person's name is Emmanuel Hardley.

The most recent intimidating move on the part of the local law enforcement agents was the arrest of Don Green, mentioned above as the youth who was roughed up by the arrest-officers at the time of the arrest of the 18. On Sunday, July 4, he was arrested at about 9:00 a.m. by four officers - deputies McGraw and Rogers, and policemen Norman and Saunders. He was picked up in his father's car and the officers claim to have found boot-leg liquor in his glove compartment. There was about 2 oz. of liquid in an empty instant coffee container. He was questioned by the deputies McGraw and Rogers concerning the F.B.I.'s source of information in regard to his beating during the earlier arrests. At about 7:00 p.m. he was released, his father having signed a \$100 property bond. Apparently he was not properly booked or charged at the time of the arrest, for he was instructed to speak to the Mayor on the following day regarding the nature of the charges brought against the boy.

The two Justice Department men who are located in Selma have spent this time interviewing those who were witnesses to the events that I have described. This also has been the case with the F.B.I. agents stationed in this area.

We here have had some reason to believe that our telephone connections have been tampered with in some way. Our service has been hindered by not being able to get the operator in some cases, and at other times by a high pitched whine when trying to make connections. There have been cases of conversations having been broken completely. Of course, this is probably no news to you. We have also had some reason to suspect that our mail has been opened upon mailing from Camden. For this reason I would appreciate very much your phoning us when you receive this report. I will send it by registered mail, hoping thereby to insure safe delivery - If I do not hear from you within a couple of days, I will assume that it has not been delivered.

Released on Monday, June 28

Mr. Albert Gordon - paid his own bail

Released on Tuesday, June 29 Due to insufficient evidence

Joyce Brians	Mike Farley
Connie Turner	Roosevelt Washington
Ann Hebbitt	Paul Ford
Lester Core	Johnny Jackson
John Davis	

Released on Thursday, July 1, to their mothers

Colister Wright
George Shanburger

Released on Friday, July 2,

Rev. Major Johns
Elmo Jones
Harris Knight
Sherry Thurber

--Did not sign

Judy Harmon
Ashley Stalworth

--Signed papers
(Rev. Harrell
plead guilty
for all)

Witnesses to Church Closing

Ethel Brooks
Joe Anderson
Clarence Harper, Deacon, Antioch Baptist Church

Local People in the Church during the Beating

Frank Connors, 17 years, (hospitalized)
Emmanuel Hardley, 16 years, (hospitalized)
Robert Rease, 15
James Turner, 15
Henry Robinson, 16
Jerry McCall, 16
K.C. Jones, 19
James Paul Kolsaw, 16

Sincerely,



Rev. John Worcester

JW:cb

cc. Mr. Junius Griffin
cc. Mr. Peter Hall

Camden Academy
Camden, Alabama
July 18, 1965

Editor:

Regarding the article written by Paul Good of the Times - Post service which appeared in the July 12 issue of the San Francisco Chronicle and other leading papers which use your services: his story, entitled "A Rights Army on Garrison Duty," contained many phrases (e.g. "the sensation of release...", "Nice Nelly rules", "circumspect image", "frustration is widespread," "simple acts of Negroes' registering...", etc.) which make it obvious that Mr. Good sought to write an article of literary distinction rather than an article which was factually correct and objectively reported. We appreciate Mr. Good's attempt to capture something of the dynamics of the work of voter registration and political education, and the problems encountered by a SCOPE team working at the grass-roots level. But we are appalled by the fact that in his short 24 hour stay in Wilcox County, he gathered what material he wanted to hear and wrote an article that is quite misleading. Our objection is that Mr. Good has taken quotations out of context in some cases, and in others has misquoted persons so as to structure the article to his viewpoint. In what factual reporting he does, there is a good presentation of the background and objectives of the SCOPE project. It is in his interpretation of the work in and around Camden that he seems to suffer from near-sightedness. The context of Mr. Williams' statement regarding white girls living in the Negro community was that this situation resulted in danger to the girls and the families with whom they lived. The one sentence attributed to Williams was in fact two sentences on quite different subjects. Once again, had he spoken to either Mr. Williams or Miss Brooks concerning their respective activities, Mr. Good would surely have discovered that no such thing as a polarity of views exists. Each hold the greatest respect for the work the other is engaged in for the civil rights movement in Wilcox County, and Ethel Brooks has hope (as does Williams) in mediation as a means of easing racial tension. In Summary, we feel that Mr. Good has done injustice to those of us working in the SCOPE project here, by his general inclusion of quotes which misinterpret the situation and analyses which are so unrelated that they preclude any objective interpretation of the movement in Wilcox County.

We address this letter to you with hopes that it will be printed. The article has caused a great deal of alarm to the people who have read it.

Sincerely,

Mr. John Williams
Student
San Francisco Theological Seminary

Miss Ethel Brooks
Voter Registration Coordinator
Wilcox County SCOPE Project

Rev. John Worcester
Public Relations Director
Wilcox County SCOPE Project