

October 6, 1965

MEMO to Friends of SNCC:

Last Saturday, 300 people were arrested in Natchez and charged with parading without a permit. Several people who were standing on the sidewalk watching the demonstration were arrested along with the demonstrators.

The next day, Sunday, 100 people were arrested during another demonstration.

Bond for each of these people was set at \$200.00. This makes a total of \$80,000.00.

All the people over 12 years of age were transferred from the Natchez City Jail to the Parchman Penitentiary, where they have been constantly abused and mistreated. Although most of the people have been bonded out by now, the treatment they received has been the same old story of degradation and dehumanization which anyone who goes to jail in Mississippi, and particularly Parchman, suffers at the hands of prison officials. Here is one report from Phil Lapsansky, 24 year old worker from Seattle, Washington. He was arrested while observing the demonstration and was denied five times the right to call a lawyer.

"I was taken to Parchman from Natchez City Jail in one of three busses carrying many of the demonstrators arrested that day. At Parchman we were lined up and told to keep still and remain silent on the lawn in front of the security building. When we were admitted to the building we were stripped of all our clothing and each of us forced to swallow approximately eight ounces of laxatives. Naked, we were herded into 2-man cells, concrete floors with steel bunks (bare bunks). The windows directly opposite our cells were wide open and airconditioning fans were on, circulating a cold wind throughout the cell block. According to weather reports for the area, the temperatures dropped into the low 40's during the evenings. We were kept in this condition for approximately 39 hours at which time a prison official closed the windows and turned off the fans and told us that if there was any talking among us the windows would be opened, the fan would be turned on and we would be hosed.

Several hours later we were given out underwear, the only clothing any of us had throughout our stay. The law officials tending us were always insulting and always threatening brutality (constantly). Several people were unable to bear the intense cold and broke down into intense fits of screaming and crying. The prison doctor treated them rudely and discourteously, arriving several hours after the victims were stricken. In spite of the fact that we were all given heavy doses of laxatives, we were given only sparse supplies of toilet paper. The only reason in sending us to Parchman was the obviously sadistic one of degrading and dehumanizing us. We were constantly shivering from the intense cold. We never had any relief from the cold, neither adequate clothing nor blankets. We tried exercises and such to keep warm but all we had to stand on was the cold concrete floor and all we had to sit on were the frigid steel bunks. In my cell water had leaked all over the floor. It was like an icy lake right below us. It's a wonder more of us didn't crack under the strain."

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There have been eyewitness reports that Rev. Henry Russell, local minister from Natchez, was whipped, and Rev. Sampson, of SCLC, was slapped by prison officials. Professor Samael Carter, 33, a high school coach at St. Catherine's High School in Natchez, was taken to Parchman and made to stand at attention. He was slapped very hard in the face by a highway patrolman and accused of moving. He was forced to disrobe for examination of his genitals. Other people were also subjected to similar treatment.

You can help by:

1. Writing your Congressman about conditions at Parchman and ask him to call for an investigation of brutality.
2. Writing to John D<sup>o</sup>ar at the Justice D<sup>e</sup>partment and ask him to put pressure directly on the state officials who maintain Parchman.
3. Making sure that the news media know about what Parchman is really like.
4. Raising bail money so that when people are arrested they can be bonded out before they can be too seriously hurt by prison officials. Contributions less than \$100.00 should be sent to the SNCC Bail Loan Fund, 360 Nelson St., SW, Atlanta, Ga. Contributions of more than \$100.00 should be sent to the Mississippi Bail Loan Fund, c/o New York SNCC, 100 5th Avenue, New York, New York.

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In Baker County, Ga., Intimidation and harrassment of local people active in the movement continues unchecked. Last Sunday night at about 9:30 PM five carloads of white men drove up in front of the home of Mrs. Gracie Miller who lives 18 miles south of Newton, Ga., They piled out of their cars and started a bonfire, making wisecracks about "having a barbeque," and saying, "The sheriff and deputies gonna let the niggers take over; we're gonna have a big barbeque tonight; gonna bargeque us some niggers. We're gonna kill Walt Miller." Walt Miller is the brother-in-law of Mrs. Miller.

Mrs. Miller has been one of the most active people in the movement in Baker County. Last March her husband was shot and killed by a white man who claimed that a cow in Miller's pasture belonged to him (the white man). The killer has never had his trial.

When the bonfire began to blaze, Mrs. Miller called her neighbors who came to help her. The white men opened fire upon the neighbors and they fell back, regrouped and began firing upon the white mob in self defense. The whites, some of whom were recognized, jumped in their cars and left as fast as they could. Mrs. Miller called the Highway Patrol, the FBI and the sheriff, all of whom came to "investigate" after an hour's delay. The FBI found 5 shotgun shells and took notes.

The Sheriff took down the license numbers of the cars and said that the only thing these people could be charged with is "disturbing the peace."

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