

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
360 Nelson St., SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

for the week preceding
March 23, 1966

NEWS OF THE FIELD #5

Note to staff: if you have any news to report, PLEASE call person-to-person collect for Bottie Zellner, Bill Mahoney or Gren Whitman. If it is an emergency tell the operator and we'll call you right back, (otherwise we'll call the next day). If you want information about research, call John Perdue or Jack Minnis. If you want information on money, cars, printings, etc., etc., call Freddie Greene or Laura Strong who will be working on the switchboard and they will connect you with the person you want.

ALABAMA

A celebration will be held Sunday, March 27 in Lowndes County to commemorate the year's anniversary of the formation of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, the so-called Black Panther's Party. Rosa Parks and Julian Bond will speak. Mrs. Parks is, of course, the lady whose arrest on a Montgomery bus sparked the bus boycott in 1956. All SNCC staff are invited to attend.

In nearby Greene County tents are now set up to house some 20-odd sharecroppers who have been evicted.

Picketing continues in Tuskegee to obtain fair employment pledges from downtown merchants. On March 18, a white woman hit one of the picketers, Patricia Bailey, a Tuskegee student who was not hurt. The picketing has been continuing for the last two weeks. Ten people from Lowndes County attended church meetings on March 20 in Macon County, talking about their work forming independent political organizations on the county level. (People from Lowndes County also visited several other counties as a part of the "Freedom Sunday" program instituted recently, where Lowndes County people visit and talk with other black people about the possibilities of independent political organization.) Scott B. Smith also reported in Tuskegee that three calves had been donated to SNCC named George Wallace, Ladybird and Lynda.

ARKANSAS

Staff members are still trying to get a satisfactory hearing conducted by the Civil Rights Commission on vote fraud. They object to the latest suggestion by the CRC to conduct hearings on employment, education and vote fraud in Forrest City, (the staff say that the inclusion of too many topics will cloud their original demand to investigate wide-spread vote fraud.) The CRC has notified the staff that they will limit the number of witnesses to eight people from three communities and will ask them to appear at the main bank building at Forrest City. Staff are demanding that the locale of the hearings also be changed to a more "neutral" spot. Letters have been written to congressmen informing them of the unsatisfactory nature of the hearings.

Bill Hansen was arrested the evening of March 21 standing in front of the office in Little Rock by a cop who wanted to know what he was doing in the (black) neighborhood. He answered, "I work here" and was subsequently arrested for being drunk. Bill spent the night in jail (police insisted that Arkansas law provides that drunks must be kept in jail for six hours, but no sobriety test was performed) and was finally released on \$19.75 bond.

Myrtle Glascoe reports that books are needed for a new library being set up in Helena (especially books by Negroes, about Negroes, and also general education material). She says that the community poverty committee in Marvel is considering refusing poverty grants under protest that it is too small -- and that they would rather have nothing than help only a few people. Though the school boycott at Turner school in Phillips County has ended, parents and children are still talking about what needs to be done to improve school conditions; they plan to present a detailed program to the county school board. A library is also being set up in W. Helena (a community which has consistently rejected civil rights workers in the past). Myrtle is teaching a weekly class in Negro history in the Turner community.

GEORGIA

Despite complaints by SNCC staff and local people in Southwest Georgia, the Department of Justice has refused to send voting registrars into any Georgia county. Complaints were made by residents of Naker, Dougherty, Taliferro and Sumter Counties. The Department maintains that the low incidence of Negro registration here is not due to discrimination.

In Atlanta, a resident of the newly-established tent city in Markham St., the site of several evictions, charged that someone had tried to kill him March 23.

Willie B. Williams said that someone cut a hole in the tent above his head and he saw a hand holding a knife come through the canvas. When he grabbed the hand, the assailant ran away. This tent city, which may be the first of its kind set up in a large city, was established two weeks ago. Two families live in two tents on a vacant lot in the slums of the 136th District (from which Julian Bond was expelled in the Georgia legislature).

MISSISSIPPI

Mrs. Victoria Gray of the MFDP has requested that federal registrars be sent immediately to Sunflower County after the historic decision handed down March 11 by the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals setting aside municipal elections. Mrs. Gray said "Immediate assignment of federal registrars is imperative to effectuate the court's decision." (Note News of the Field #2 which shows the leap in registrations in those counties where a federal registrar has been sent in.) The Sunflower decision sets a very important precedent for other counties throughout the south where voting rights have been consistently denied.

In Gulfport, Mrs. Yother Keyes is still protesting the systematic exclusion of poor people from jobs with the Headstart Program. Mrs. Keyes charges that Rev. Coles, chairman of the local headstart program is also threatening to exclude members of the NAACP and MFDP. John Mudd, head of the statewide headstart program says that the state board will set up a committee to hear complaints. He added that local committees set policy for local headstart programs, and that in some areas poor people are working as aides and resource people.

Jesse Morris of the Poor People's Corporation reports that five new cooperatives have been allocated funds: a dress shop in McComb, a jewelry group in West Point, two co-ops in Aberdeen and a wood-working group in McComb (there are now four cooperatives in McComb.) He said that within two weeks a staff person will be sent out to work with the new cooperatives and help set them up. The main problem still is sales of the various items which the PPC coops make. Northern supporters should be on the lookout for stores which will sell PPC goods.

The federal government has accepted a proposal offered by the FDP in West Point, reports John Buffington, a SNCC staffer who works with the Clay County FDP group, to build 60 homes for poor people in Una, a small community in the county. The proposed plan will enable poor people to receive \$30 a week while they build their own homes; they will receive materials and be trained for future construction jobs. The grant, which will come from the Office of Economic Opportunities, sets a limit of \$2500 per house. John said, that farm laborers and tenant farmers will be able to benefit from the program, and that he is going to propose that other such plans be offered by other county FDPs. A boycott is planned in West Point for job opportunities, and is being supported by members of ILGWU and boilermakers union locals (to the extent that they have agreed not to cross the picket lines). Buffington reports that some contact has also been made with white students at the Mississippi State College for Women in Columbus, and Mississippi State in Starkville.

Patricia Thomas, a student at Mississippi State College for Women in Columbus, reports that 20 girls are trying to get a chapter of the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC -- a primarily white-Southern student group) set up on campus. Though she is from Chattanooga, she says that most of the girls are native Mississippians, and that the reception on campus has been much more favorable than expected.

A Prayer Meeting to end the war in Vietnam will be held in Sidon, a small rural community on Saturday, March 26. Liz Fusco says that members of the Mississippi Freedom Labor Union decided to hold such a meeting after discussions were held about the war. The leaflet being handed around in the community states that new jobs and homes will mean nothing if "our sons go off to war". It urges people to come and pray for peace in Vietnam.

Fifteen students were expelled from Alcorn A & M March 12 for organizing students to demand better conditions on campus, reports Bob Smith. One of them, Clifton McFarlin, hopes to carry the case to court. When McFarlin's lawyer called President J.D. Boyd, he was told that McFarlin broke the law by calling a lawyer, then Boyd hung up. A week after being expelled, McFarlin got a letter from the draft board. The Student Movement at Alcorn A & M is demanding: improved meals; lower prices; longer hours in the library; later curfew hours for the women; better educated instructors; better facilities in the classroom,

A number of crosses were burned in Holmes County March 12 in front of six peoples' homes. A card was found in front of one home which said: "Get out of here by the 30th."

FDP Congressional and Senatorial candidates will attempt to run in the Democratic Primaries. A meeting held on March 12 in Jackson discussed the strategy involved when these candidates are faced with signing affidavits swearing allegiance to the principles of the Mississippi Democratic Party (segregation, States' Rights, and so on). Lawyers for the Lawyers Constitutional Defense Committee (LCDC) plan to go to federal court to get names of the candidates on regular ballots.

The Atlanta Research Department issued a report of the press that Negroes make one-fifth the income of whites in Washington County, got to school three years less and are more likely to work as farm laborers or domestic workers. The median income for whites was \$5,600 and \$1597 for Negro families. While 14% of the Negro labor force is unemployed, only 3.8% of the whites are out of work.

NORTH CAROLINA

SNCC staff are planning large-scale voter registration and community organization campaigns in Scotland and Craven Counties. SNCC-related student groups at St. Andrews Presbyterian College are concentrating on ending token integration in local schools. They plan to file complaints with the U.S. Department of Education challenging a local "freedom of choice" plan which has resulted in the enrollment of only 75 youngsters in formerly all-white schools. Other students are attempting to document intimidation of Negro families in Wagram. They charge that Negroes have been told by employers and landlords not to send their children to all-white schools. The Negro community in Laurinburg has demanded that Negroes be named to the election board; that Negro poll watchers and registrars be named; that registration books remain open twelve months a year. Over 100 complaints charging discrimination in hiring and promotion were filed here during 1965. The local movement charges that the worst offender is the Bell Telephone Company.

Larry Fox, SNCC staffer, reports that in Weldon registration books are only open six Saturdays a week (!): three before the primary, and three before the election. Only 100 counties in the state have registration offices open every day; these are in the large cities. A registration program is planned for Halifax County.

NEW YORK

James Forman, John Lewis, Bill Hall, Cleve Sellers, and Willie Ricks were arrested here March 21 in the offices of the South African Consulate. They sat in for seven hours on the sixth anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, when over 150 black people were killed or wounded during a protest against the law requiring them to carry pass-books. The five SNCCers were bonded out by Harry Belafonte.

OHIO

Ivanhoe Donaldson reports that the Columbus East Central Citizens Organization (ECCO), the community foundation he has been working with, is continuing to develop programs on urban renewal, job training, and other problems affecting this black ghetto. We hope to get a detailed report of this program soon.

something more to Mississippi:

A staff meeting of civil rights workers is taking place now in Mt. Beulah. More than 30 people are discussing specific programs such as the proposal to build a sawmill in Amite County, housing proposals, the Holmes County Community Action Program (CAP), radio stations able to transmit over power lines, filmstrips, etc.. Charlie Cobb PROMISES to do a detailed report of this meeting soon.