

STATEMENT BY JAMES FORMAN, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF
THE STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON
APRIL 29, 1966 AT THE OVERSEAS PRESS CLUB IN
NEW YORK

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee strongly protests the gross distortions carried in the New York press and other media of its current Alabama program.

Its program is not a "boycott" of the Democratic primary on May 3; its program is to help Negroes in certain counties form independent county political organizations and elect representatives to county offices. These counties are among those in which registered Negroes outnumber registered whites: Lowndes, Wilcox, Perry, Hale, Greene, Bullock and Macon.

SNCC workers in those counties where independent parties are being formed have, however, advised Negroes not to vote in the Democratic primary because under the Alabama Code, Title 17, Section 347, participation in the primary would probably invalidate the independent nominating conventions scheduled for the same date, May 3.

Negroes in Lowndes County, where they form over 80% of the population, were first to form an independent political organization; they did so because they felt they could not have their voice heard and their needs met within the Democratic Party. Chairman of the Lowndes County Democratic Committee, for example, is Robert Dickson, who has been charged by the federal government with evicting Negro tenant farmers from his land because they registered to vote. Earlier this year, Mr. Dickson also raised the qualifying fee for candidates in the Democratic primary from \$50 to \$500, thus effectively preventing most Negroes in that county -- average annual income \$935 -- from running.

The Lowndes County Freedom Organization plans to hold its nominating convention on May 3. The county sheriff has refused to permit them to hold it in an area adjacent to the courthouse, as specified for such conventions. The organization announced earlier this week that it intended to hold the meeting there nevertheless. A letter was sent to John Doar of the Department of Justice requesting federal protection for the meeting, and stating that if the government did not provide such protection, "we shall be forced to look to such resources as we can muster on our own."