

October 13, 1965

MEMO to Friends of SN CC:

In Mississippi more than 850 people are on strike during this cotton-picking season. As the winter gets colder, food and fuel and shelter get scarcer for Negroes all over the south. For those on strike in the Delta this winter will be especially severe. Here is a letter from one of the leaders of the MFLU:

Dear Sir:

In the Mississippi Delta there is more cotton grown than any other part of America. There has been no minimum wage law established in regarding farm labor, especially in the Mississippi Delta in a small town name Shaw, Miss.

These people feel very strongly about doing something regarding the wages they are getting for chopping cotton \$2.50 to \$3.50 for ten hour a day. So in May, 1965, a group of people who have been working in civil rights movement decided that they would form a labor union. They called all the cotton choppers, truck drivers together to ask them if they would be willing to join the union and go on strike for higher wages.

The Mississippi Freedom Labor Union has approximately 886 members on strike in five cities in the state; their demands are basic: \$1.25 minimum per hour, in eight hour a day with time and half over time, sick pay, health and accident insurance and equal employment practices in wages, hiring and working conditions.

The cities involved are: Tribett, 138 strikers; Cleveland, 150; Shaw, 230; Sidon, 43; and Rosedale, 115. Since working in the cotton fields is the chief source of income for Negroes in these areas in the summer and fall of the year, the striking members are in need of money, food and clothing. Therefore, we will need the support of our many friends in the north who are deeply concerned with the wages problem who are confronted with what we need most which is money, but food and clothing are also needed for the strikers and their families.

Please send your contributions to the Community Relief Fund, in care of Mrs. Mary Hawkins, PO Box 176, Shaw, Miss.

Yours for Freedom,
Mrs. Mary Hawkins

A more detailed report on the labor union will follow next week together with the names and addresses of more union contacts. But SNCC IS ASKING FRIENDS IN THE NORTH TO BEGIN PLANNING NOW FOR FOOD AND SUPPLY DRIVES THAT WILL HELP THE PEOPLE ON STRIKE ENDURE THE HARSH WINTER.