

SPECIAL REPORT ON ALABAMA

	White Residents	Registered White Voters	Negro Residents	Registered Negro Voters
Dallas County	23,952	9,463	32,687	20
Lowndes County	2,987	2,314	12,438	0
Perry County	5,943	3,006	11,415	289
Wilcox County	4,143	2,974	14,598	0

The counties listed above (N. Y. Herald Tribune statistics) are among 19 located in Alabama's Black Belt, an almost exclusively rural area which remains one of the most poverty-stricken in the nation. Negroes, however, are held in poverty by job discrimination and lack of education. 65% of the Negroes living in this area hold farm or unskilled jobs; 67% have less than a sixth grade education.

SNCC began its work in this area in Selma, the seat of Dallas County, during the fall of 1962. On October 8, 1963, SNCC held a "Freedom Day" (mass attempt to register to vote) in Selma. FBI agents took notes while Sheriff Jim Clark's men beat and arrested two SNCC workers taking food and drink to Negroes waiting in line to register. This was one of many incidents during the summer and fall of 1963 in which SNCC voter registration workers were arrested or beaten. Yet there are ample statutes and laws which provide that abridging the right to vote or intimidating those who seek it is a crime, and that immediate arrests may be made (under Sections 3052 and 3053 of Title 18, U. S. Codes) when a violation occurs in the presence of a federal officer. To date (February 10, 1965), no such arrests have been made.

The government has attacked discrimination and intimidation in Dallas County with individual county voting suits. In April 1961 a suit was filed against the Dallas County registrar. In June 1963 a suit was filed against Sheriff Clark and other county officials. On January 15, 1965, the Justice Department filed suit against the state, charging that its new voter registration test was too difficult and discriminated against would-be Negro voters. In nearby Perry County the Justice Department has been successful in obtaining a federal voting "referee." However, between November 3 and December 18, 1964, the referee registered only 2 of the 61 Negroes who applied. The Justice Department has challenged his rulings.

The events of January-February 1965 in Selma and Marion (Perry County) illustrate the need for speedier federal action. On January 17, SNCC Chairman John Lewis initiated an intensified voter registration drive at a mass meeting. Dr. Martin Luther King (SCLC) and his staff arrived on January 18. That day, 500 Negroes marched to the courthouse led by Dr. King and John Lewis. In the following days, over 3500 arrests took place as hundreds of Negroes, including students, teachers and businessmen, demonstrated for the vote. Those arrested include John Lewis, SNCC Alabama Project Director John Love, and other SNCC workers, both white and Negro. Jail conditions at Camp Selma have been reported as atrocious: over 350 men crowded into a cell approximately 18' by 50'; prisoners given one meal a day consisting of bread and a few peas; a large number of women prisoners compelled to drink out of the same tub of water; many ill from sleeping on damp concrete floors. During this period SNCC and SCLC workers, as well as local people, were also attacked and beaten.

On February 9, SNCC's Executive Secretary, James Forman, and Dr. King met with Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach and Vice-President Hubert Humphrey; Dr. King also saw President Johnson. New federal legislation was promised.

The next day approximately 165 Negro youngsters conducting a silent protest demonstration were driven on a forced march out into the countryside around Selma by Sheriff Clark's posse, wielding night sticks and using electric cattle prodders repeatedly. John Lewis issued a statement which concluded: "This is but one more example of the inhuman, animal-like treatment of the Negro people of Selma, Alabama. This nation has always come to the aid of people in foreign lands who are gripped in a reign of tyranny. Can it do less now for the people of Selma?"

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1) Express your concern and convey demands for action to your Congressman. Work with active political clubs in your community on this issue. Request that additional Congressmen and public officials visit the Alabama areas to obtain first-hand information and lend support. Ask for a federal investigation into the lack of compliance with the public accommodations section of the Civil Rights Act. Call for a Congressional investigation of jail conditions. Demand that FBI agents stationed in Alabama exercise their right of arrest under statutes indicated above.

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2) Plan demonstrations or rallies, possibly around federal buildings in your area. Get delegations of prominent people in the community to send telegrams of protest, and release text to press; get them to call upon federal officials personally.

3) Have people call the papers and TV stations daily to ask about events in Alabama, so as to insure continued coverage.

4) Circulate the information contained in this report to your organizations and clubs, by word-of-mouth or by issuing your own leaflet. Photos of events in Alabama can be obtained from SNCC headquarters (6 Raymond Street, Atlanta 14, Ga.)

SNCC DEMONSTRATIONS AT THE FEDERAL BUILDING, N.Y.C. ON FEB. 4-5 AND 8, 1965

On Thursday, February 4, at 3 p.m., a delegation of 9 SNCC staff workers met by appointment with V. L. Broderick, Assistant U. S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York. They conveyed a prepared statement requesting federal action in Alabama as follows: (1) Dropping of charges against and immediate release of prisoners arrested for voter registration activity; (2) Dispatch of non-segregationist federal registrars to Alabama; (3) Federal prosecution of Sheriff Jim Clark; (4) Filing of additional federal suits, under the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The delegation asked that Mr. Broderick, as chief federal representative in New York City, transmit its concern and demands to the President. He refused to do so until the group had left. The group remained sitting in the outer office until approximately 4:40 p.m. when Mr. Broderick returned and said he had transmitted the statement to a Mr. Murphy in the Department of Justice. Mr. Broderick referred to the President's statement of that afternoon that all Americans should be "indignant" and that he intended to see that voting rights were secured for all citizens. Mr. Broderick also referred to several existing federal injunctions and court orders. The delegation declared that they wanted assurance of more concrete and more immediate federal action. No further assurances were forthcoming and the group was asked to leave. They refused and were dragged from the office and ejected from the building by federal marshalls who struck and kicked members of the group, bounced them off the floor, stepped deliberately on hands and necks.

On Friday, February 5, at 4 p.m., a picket line was formed outside the Federal Building, sponsored by SNCC, together with the Harlem Parents Committee and the City-Wide Committee for Integrated Schools, who wished to demonstrate their support of the Alabama struggle. At about 4:45 p.m., a group of SNCC staff members and supporters walked up the central staircase to the Federal Building (all other steps had been iced) at a normal pace in single file -- not "a flying wedge" -- with a new statement reiterating the demand for assurances of prompt and specific federal action. The group was refused entry. They were driven back down the stairs, but some managed to regain the top. While standing there, Marion Barry of the New York Office was struck with a closed fist by one marshall. The marshalls wore no badges and refused to show identification.

At approximately 5:15, another group of 7 walked from the picket line in single file halfway up the steps. A marshall shouted, "Let's get them," and the group was charged by marshalls who dragged, shoved, and kicked the group down the stairs. The SNCC group hung on to the rails and resisted being driven down the stairs, but did not strike the marshalls. SNCC staffer Cliff Vaughn shouted reminders that no one should raise a hand against the marshalls. The marshalls used hammerlocks, tried to gouge eyes, delivered kicks in the kidneys, and used finger-bending. There was a melee of flailing arms and falling bodies as people tried to maintain their balance on the steps -- but in no sense a "battle."

Eight marshalls seized NYU student Larry Shields and dragged him inside the Federal Building. They took him to a room in the basement and later released him. Shields states that he was beaten and kicked; he now has five stitches in his head, a broken nose and ear-drum.

When SNCC learned of distorted reports of the incident by AP and other media, it immediately issued a corrective statement which was not published. SNCC also sent a protest against the marshalls' brutality to Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach.

On Monday, February 8, two delegations of SNCC supporters called upon the U. S. Attorney to protest the marshalls' conduct and demand action in Alabama. One consisted of representatives of the legal and medical professions and the clergy; the other of members of the Mississippi Project Parents Committee. They were courteously received by the Attorney and his colleagues.