

PHILADELPHIA STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE

521 South 16 Street
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19146

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CALL KI 5-8518

PHILADELPHIA SNCC WORKER BEATEN UNCONSCIOUS BY WHITES IN PARK

Philadelphia, August 11 - Barry Dawson, coordinator of the action committee of the Philadelphia Student NonViolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), was beaten unconscious by a group of white men at approximately 10:30 last night. Dawson who had been given a ride by friends as far as 33rd and Poplar Streets, had just gotten out of the car when he heard someone call out, "Hey Dawson". As he turned, he met a white fist in his face. Three of the four white men who had followed him, moved in, while a fourth waited in the car. After first knocking off his glasses so that he couldn't see, they beat Dawson on the sidewalk. Then, they dragged him further into the park, cut at his fingers with a knife and kicked him into unconsciousness. When he regained consciousness several hours later, he immediately went to Saint Joseph's Hospital. At approximately 1:00 AM he was treated there. The entire right side of his face was swollen, his lip was bursted, and he had cuts and bruises all over his body.

At 2:00 A.M. HE WENT TO REPORT THE BEATING TO POLICE. When he arrived at the station at 17th and Montgomery Avenue, he was told that this was beyond the jurisdiction of the Philadelphia Police Department since the beating had occurred in Fairmount Park. After some discussion an officer agreed to take Dawson to the Park Guard Headquarters. Enroute there, at about 3:00, the police car in which he was riding collided with another car at 15th and Stiles Streets. In the crash, Dawson was again injured; this time his elbow was badly cut. He returned to Saint Joseph's Hospital at approximately 3:30 and stayed there until 6:00. Then he again went with the police to the Park Guard Headquarters. The park guards informed him that they could do nothing to help since he was unable to give positive identification of his attackers or give the license number of the car which they drove.

Dawson, 23, has been with SNCC for three years. He has been arrested many times in connection with movement activities -- most recently at the demonstrations at the Philadelphia General Post Office, 30th and Market Streets. He had been tailed most of yesterday by whites who he believed to be plainclothes policemen, but had been unable to get close enough to see their faces. He stated later, "The only whites who know my name are policemen..."

We of SNCC feel that this beating documents clearly that black people are not safe from white racists in the urban North, despite all the pronouncements from City Hall and its Negro and white liberal apologists. It has also shown that the police are not there to protect us; therefore, we must protect ourselves. Philadelphia SNCC calls upon the black community to take whatever action is necessary to put an end to white harrasment and police brutality.