

NEWS RELEASE

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
6 Reimond Street, North West
Atlanta, Georgia, 30314

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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TOPICS: NEGRO NEG. 107

McCOMB, MISSISSIPPI, JANUARY 10: Armed night riders last night shot into Negro businesses, fired on two Negro homes, and wounded a young Negro boy.

Two civil rights groups have asked the federal government to send troops and marshalls to Mississippi "to protect Negroes who want to exercise their constitutional rights."

In Atlanta, John Lewis, Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) asked Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy to "take all steps possible to insure that future acts of violence aimed at intimidating Mississippi Negroes are halted before they begin. If this means Federal Marshalls and federal troops in Mississippi, then you must be prepared to send them there before others are shot."

In Jackson, the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) asked President Lyndon B. Johnson to immediately "dispatch federal troops to the McComb area to protect Negro constitutional rights." In a telegram to Johnson, Robert Moses, head of SNCC's Mississippi vote drive and program director for COFO said "white violence has again erupted in McComb, in a renewed attempt to stifle Negroes in their drive to register to vote."

McArthur Cotton, the SNCC worker who directs voting activity in McComb, said four young white men in a white car fired shots into a Negro cafe, two grocery stores, a shoe repair shop, and two Negro homes. Cotton said a young Negro boy in Summit, a suburb of McComb, was wounded by gunfire in his leg. One of the same homes had been fired into on Wednesday night.

Cotton said voter registration workshops had begun here in early January. The vote worker said more than 50 Negroes had tried to register since early November, 1963.

McComb police chief George Guy - who arrested SNCC workers here in the past - said four young white men, students at South West Junior College in Summit, were arrested in connexion with the shooting.

Guy said the Negro youth reported shot by the riders was not seriously hurt, and only "blistered his tail a little bit."

Guy said the shootings Wednesday and Thursday nights had no connexion with the SNCC-sponsored vote drive.

McComb was the site of the first SNCC vote project in Mississippi in August 1961. SNCC worker Moses and four other workers set up workshops here and encouraged local Negroes to register to vote.

Their early efforts were met with violence and intimidation. Moses was arrested on August 15, 1961 in nearby Liberty in Amite County, while taking three Negroes to register. On August 29, 1961, the son of a local law enforcement officer beat him on a McComb street while he tried to take two more Negroes to the registrar's office. One vote worker was pistol-whipped by a registrar in Walthall County and then arrested for "inciting to riot." Attempts by local Negro students to integrate facilities in McComb resulted in the arrests of 109 - including 5 SNCC workers - and one girl, 14-year-old Brenda Travis, spent four months in a reform school because of her integration efforts.

There are 15,408 Negroes in Pike County, where McComb is the county seat. Only 3% of the voting age Negroes are registered voters, according to the 1961 Civil Rights Commission Report on Voting. Negroes are 43% of the county's population.

"One Man - One Vote!"