

March 20, 1964

GREENWOOD FREEDOM DAY SET

GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI - Greenwood Negroes will try to register to vote in large numbers during a March 25 "Freedom Day" here.

Negroes will make attempts at mass registration and will picket the Leflore County Courthouse March 25, according to Dick Frey, a field secretary from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

The SNCC staffer, who works on voter registration here under the auspices of the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), a coalition of local and national civil rights groups, said over 2500 Negroes had made registration attempts in the county since last year.

SNCC began a vote drive here in August, 1962. Since then, Greenwood and Leflore County have been the scene of repeated violence aimed at halting the vote drive.

On August 26, 1962, four SNCC staffers were forced to jump from a second story window to escape a mob of white men armed with ropes and guns.

In October, 1962, the Leflore County Board of Supervisors voted to drop a surplus food program which helped to sustain some 22,000 Negroes, mostly seasonal workers and sharecroppers.

On February 20, 1963, three Negro businesses near the SNCC office burned to the ground. SNCC worker Sam Block said he thought the fires were "an attempt to burn us out."

On February 22, 1963, Block was arrested and charged with "making statements calculated to breach the peace."

On February 28, 1963, SNCC worker James Travis was machinegunned by three white men seven miles from Greenwood.

On March 6, 1963, three SNCC workers were shot at while sitting in a car outside the SNCC office. No one was hurt.

On March 24, 1963, the SNCC office was burned down.

On March 26, 1963, two shotgun blasts were fired into the home of SNCC worker George Greene. No one was hurt.

On March 27, 1963, ten SNCC workers - including SNCC Executive Secretary James Forman - were arrested for "inciting to riot" while they escorted 100 Negroes to the courthouse to register.

On April 2, 1963, Greenwood police arrested a SNCC worker and forcibly ejected comedian Dick Gregory from the courthouse lawn.

On May 17, 1963, SNCC worker Milton Hancock was held under "technical arrest" after he was beaten by a policeman.

On June 18, in nearby Itta Bena, 45 Negroes were arrested after a voter registration meeting in a church was smoke bombed.

On June 25 and 26, 1963, 22 Negroes were arrested inside the Leflore County Courthouse as they tried to register to vote.

On July 7, 1963 a tear gas grenade was thrown at a Negro cafe.

On October 25, 1963, police arrested ten Negroes on the courthouse steps. The ten had been waiting to register to vote.

Although Negroes are 64.6% of the county's population, only 472 Negroes were registered voters in 1960, according to the United States Civil Rights Commission.