

SNCC WORKER REPORTS REIGN OF TERROR IN MISSISSIPPI

NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI - The director of the Mississippi project for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) testified May 6 that 5 Negroes had been killed in southeast Mississippi in recent months, and called for investigation by the United States Department of Justice.

Robert Moses, 28, told a meeting of the State Advisory Committee to the United States Civil Rights Commission that no one had been arrested or indicted for the mysterious slayings.

Moses reported the shotgun killing of 44-year-old Louis Allen in Liberty, Mississippi last January 31. Allen was a witness at the 1961 murder of 52-year-old Negro Herbert Lee, who was gunned down outside a Liberty cotton gin by a member of the Mississippi state legislature. Allen later admitted to SNCC workers he had been forced to lie at a coroner's jury investigation into the slaying which set free E. H. Hurst.

In 1962 Allen signed an affidavit that Hurst killed Lee "without provocation." He was warned that local whites were out to "get him". In August, 1962, he was arrested and beaten by a Liberty deputy sheriff who hit him with a flashlight, breaking his jaw. "If you give me protection, I'll let the hide fall with the hair," Allen said in 1963. This, and other calls for protection from the U.S. Department of Justice, went unanswered.

Both Lee and Allen had been active in a SNCC vote drive.

Moses said four Negroes had been killed in neighboring Wilkinson County since the August, 1963, March on Washington.

Archie C. Curtis, 60, a Natchez undertaker, testified he and another Negro had been stripped and beaten by hooded men on a desolate road outside the city on February 15, 1964. Curtis said he was lured to the spot by an unidentified caller who told him a woman was dying of a heart attack. He told the committee the beating stemmed from his participation in a vote drive.

A Negro was forced to strip and was soaked in motor oil before being beaten in Amite County, near Liberty, on Feb. 1, 1964, Moses said. Another Negro was shot and killed in Tallahatchie County by policemen on Feb. 13, 1964.

Other witnesses told of cross burnings, threatening phone calls, and economic reprisals for taking part in civil rights and vote activity. Moses called for a "thorough investigation by the Justice Department." Moses and other SNCC staff have issued pleas to that agency numerous times since beginning their vote campaign in 1961. ###