

NEWS FROM  
Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc.  
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ATLANTA, GA. -- A civil rights leader in Mississippi has asked for the appointment of five extra federal judges in his state to protect voter-registration workers during the summer. Five United States marshals would be assigned to work under each of the extra judges.

The request was made in a petition by Lawrence Guyot to Elbert P. Tuttle, Chief Judge of the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, who resides here. Guyot acted through Attorneys Joseph Jordan, Norfolk, Va., and Len W. Holt and Simon L. Cain, both of Washington, D. C.

Guyot who lives in Hattiesburg, Miss., told Judge Tuttle that more than 1,000 and possibly 2,000 students and other persons will come into Mississippi to conduct voter education and registration during June, July, August, and September.

The Petitioner said he is employed by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), both of which are trying to eliminate racial segregation in Mississippi and secure the vote for Negroes.

"It has been the experience of the petitioner, and his counsel, that all voter-registration and political-education programs in Mississippi are met with --official and unofficial -- beatings, shootings, arrests on spurious charges, and other forms of harassment," Guyot's petition said.

"Experience has taught the petitioner that the only protection afforded, and it is minimal, under such circumstances as shall exist this summer, comes from being able to go into federal courts for relief from 'official' violence and intimidation."



Guyot declared that only three lawyers in the whole state of Mississippi are "willing to handle a racially controversial case and to assert the necessary constitutional defenses. In each instance when an integration worker is arrested the matter is racially controversial."

Guyot asserts that the three lawyers cannot be everywhere in the state to try to protect the voter-registration workers. He says that even the 50 lawyers being sent into the state by various groups will not be enough to cope with "massive and official repression certain to be inflicted" on the registration workers.

"Many of the local communities have acquired more weapons and are preparing or have prepared concentration centers for imprisoning voter-registration and political-education workers coming to these cities during the summer," Guyot added.

Because of vacations, Guyot says, there will be only one federal judge sitting in Mississippi most of the time during the summer, and this is not enough to protect the people who will be working in that state.

Last week end in Atlanta, the board of the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF) called upon President Johnson to protect the workers in Mississippi with federal marshals, "augmented by federal troops, if necessary."

Attorney Holt is a member of the SCEF board and of its Legal Committee. SCEF is an interracial civil right organization based in New Orleans, La.