

COUNCIL OF FEDERATED ORGANIZATIONS - Sunflower-Bolivar Counties

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEGRO COMMUNITY HIT BY COKE BOTTLES

June 24. Ruleville, Mississippi. The Ruleville Negro community, headquarters for the Sunflower-Bolivar Counties SNCC summer project, was hit last night by at least seven incidents of bottle-throwing, by two automobile chases by whites, and by reports by four persons of hearing gunshots. There were no reports of any personal injuries; several windows were broken and several cars suffered minor damages.

Four SNCC workers - Negro staff member John Harris and white summer volunteers Joe Smith, Len Edwards, and Dale Gronemeier, presented a report of the incidents to Ruleville Mayor Charles Durrrough and requested stronger local efforts to end harassment. Mayor Durrrough indicated that his staff would look into the incidents, but stated that "Those people have been taught to lie to the police." He blamed previous shootings of Negro homes in Ruleville on civil rights workers "to get money."

The incidents of Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning were:

--A bottle crashed into the porch of Mr. and Mrs. Hackett, Negroes, of 800 W. Division St. at about 3:30 A.M.

--A bottle smashed the window of Mrs. Matilda Hicks, Negro, 615 Division St., at approximately 3 A.M.

--A bottle was thrown onto the porch of Mrs. Cleo Connally, Negro, 644 LaFayette St., sometime after midnight.

--The car of Mrs. Willie Mae Smith, Negro, 720 Center, was scratched and dented by a coke bottle; at about 4:30 am.

--The car of Len Edwards, White SNCC volunteer and son of California Congressman Don Edwards, was dented and scratched by a bottle thrown at approximately 2:30am.

--The car of Mr. Dudley Perkins, Negro, 627 Byron St., was scratched and dented by a coke bottle, two bottles were thrown into his yard, and two bottles were thrown into a neighbor's yard at approximately 2:30am.

--A bottle was thrown through the Henderson residence (Negro), 641 Elm.

--Two reporters from Look magazine, Chris Wren and Tom Koenig, were chased from Ruleville to Greenwood at speeds up to 90 mph. The car which chased them was a white Valiant with Mississippi plates 6B2163. It had been chased by Mayor Durrrough earlier in the evening; Mayor Durrrough got the same license number as the Look reporters.

--The same white Valiant tailed a carload of SNCC workers around the Ruleville community later in the evening.

--Four local Negro residents, Mrs. Baylock, Mrs. Knight, Mrs. Bessie Mae Herring, and Mrs. Sisson, reported hearing gunshots at around 2:30 and around 3:30 - 4:30 am. There were no reports of shots hitting anything.