

COUNCIL OF FEDERATED ORGANIZATIONS - Sunflower-Bolivar Counties
Box 275, Ruleville, Mississippi
Phone: 756-4947

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MOLOTOV COCKTAIL HITS NEGRO CHURCH

June 25. Ruleville, Mississippi. Williams Chapel, Ruleville Negro church, was hit by a molotov cocktail at 2 am this morning. The church has been the scene of three Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sponsored voter registration meetings this week. The fire was promptly put out by the Ruleville Fire Department: the Chapel stairs and front suffered minor charring. Eight gasoline-filled plastic bags spread around the church failed to ignite, saving the church from more extensive damages.

Negro Charles McLaurin, 23, of Jackson, Mississippi, director of the SNCC Sunflower County Summer Project and a staff worker for the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, said this morning:

The events of the last two nights have demonstrated the inadequacy of local law enforcement in Ruleville. After white bottle-throwers rampaged through the Negro community in the early morning hours yesterday, a delegation of civil rights workers met with Mayor Dorrrough. He told them he was stepping up police vigilance. The arson of Williams Chapel this morning clearly indicated that local officials are incapable of controlling violence and that a federal presence is needed in Ruleville.

The fire was discovered at 2 am by Mr. Perry Hamer, Ruleville Negro and husband of Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, civil rights congressional candidate. It was reported by Dale Gronemeier, white college teacher from Los Angeles and SNCC summer volunteer.

Ruleville Mayor Charles Dorrrough has told newsmen and the FBI that civil rights workers are responsible for the arson. McLaurin would only speculate: "The clear purpose of the arson seems to be to intimidate us in our work for voter registration. We will not back down because of the use of violence against us. The suggestion that civil rights workers are church-burners is so absurd it doesn't deserve a reply."