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NEWS RELEASE

STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE

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NOT OFR RELEASE BEFORE
NOON, December 11, 1964

WASHINGTON, D.C.-- The Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) has asked the General Service Administration to suspend a federal contract held by an Atlanta company where striking Negro workers charge job discrimination.

SNCC chairman John Lewis said in a letter to Bernard L. Boutin, Administrator of the General Service Administration, "the only reason Scripto, Inc. of Atlanta is able to under bid all other manufacturers and receive a renewal of its government contract is because of the low wages they pay their Negro employees".

Lewis Said "700 of the 900 workers at Scripto's Atlanta plant are Negroes and all but six of them are classified as 'unskilled' by the company". He said "scripto's unskilled workers-- all of them Negroes -- make only \$2,600 yearly before deductions, or \$400 less than the nationally defined poverty level."

Lewis said the federal contract, renewed December 1, 1964 about the time the strike started, contracts an unspecified amount of Scripto pens and pencils for all of the ten federal districts in the U.S.

Earlier, Lewis had pledged support for the striking Scripto workers and said SNCC will join in the nationwide action to withdraw patronage from scripto products. In a letter to the President of local 754 of the striking International Chemical Workers, Lewis said, "It is disgraceful that scripto has been allowed to perpetrate virtual economic slavery and poor working conditions for such a long time".

The strike, now in its second week, is over the issues of wages, working conditions, and discrimination.

The 700 Negroes working in the plant are classified as unskilled and make \$1.25 per hour. The union contends that many of these unskilled workers are doing skilled work and that many times whites are brought in over Negroes to fill skilled positions. Only 6 out of the 700 Negroes in the plant are classified as skilled.

The union started negotiations, eighteen months ago, asking for an across the board increase of twenty-five cents an hour and has dropped its demands to eight cents per hour. The company offered a 2% increase to unskilled workers and a 4% increase to skilled workers in lieu of a Christmas bonus. The union charges that this is no raise at all because, in the past, this has been the rough formula the com-

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pany has followed in giving Christmas bonuses.

The union is also asking for the dues checkoff and improved working conditions. The company has refused to consider the request for the checkoff even though the union presented 700 signed slips from workers requesting it.

After lengthy negotiations, scripto agreed to permit employees to go to the bathroom without asking permission, the only concession it has made so far according to the union. Recently a woman employee died on the ground outside the plant where the foreman ordered her taken after a fall in the plant, rather than placed in the plant's clinic. One woman with 21 years in the plant held up her hand at a recent meeting of the strikers and showed where she had lost two fingers as a result of an accident in the plant. Another woman picket was hospitalized after she was struck down by a strikebreaker driving into the plant. Union grievances also include the fact that there is no seniority in the plant.

The union, at a meeting in the Ebernezer Baptist Church in Atlanta November 6th, unanimously passed a resolution calling on all groups to boycott scripto pens, pencils, and lighters. The International officers of the Chemical Workers have threatened a world wide boycott of the company, and strikers are quick to point out that scripto has plants in Southern Rhodesia as well as England and Mexico.

The Company has kept the plant open trying to operate and advertises daily on radio and in the press for people to replace the strikers.

Lewis in a memo to Friends of SNCC groups around the country, called upon them to bring to the public's attention the true facts about the strike and to mount campaigns in their communities to spur boycotts of scripto pens, pencils and lighters.