

COFO NEWS RELEASE

January 16, 1964

1017 Lynch Street

352-9605

Jackson, Mississippi

INDICTMENT OF 18 ACCUSED MURDERERS

JACKSON. Civil Rights workers in Mississippi expressed "guarded optimism" and some doubts about the indictment and arrest of the 18 men accused of murdering James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Mickey Sewerner last June.

Some COFO and FDP leaders today (Sat.) doubted whether the indictments would result in any convictions since the Federal Jurors like, the state jurors are composed almost exclusively of white persons. The possibility that an all white jury would convict white men for murdering a Negro or White Civil Rights workers is seen here as "extremely doubtful"

It was also felt that the indictments would take the national spotlight off the other activities of the civil rights movement. Ironically, the three slain men had worked diligently on these activities; now their deaths may serve in some ways to divert attention from cause they were fighting for. Right now, for example, the FDP and COFO are directing all their energies to challenging the five segregationist Mississippi Congressmen.

FDP chairman, Lawrence Guyot and other FDP members from Aberdeen, McComb, and Jackson complained about the "viciously discriminatory" bonds set for the 18 alleged conspirators. "A Negro," one Aberdeen man said, "would never have been set free on \$5,700 bond for killing a white man. He might have been lynched before that ever happened." A Philadelphia, ^{Miss.} ~~Mississippi~~ preacher said that "nothing has changed much since the arrests (of Rainey, Price and the other accused conspirators)". "They (local toughs) still beat up folks and when we ^e call the sheriff's they tell us to go call the FBI. About a ^{month} ~~month~~ ago there was a Negro man shot in a cafe.....there was a fight there. We called Sheriff Rainey about it but they never did investigate the shooting."