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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CORE "SHOWS CAUSE" TO GOVERNOR McKEITHEN; URGES ACTIONS

In a sharply worded letter Richard Haley, Southern Director of the Congress of Racial Equality, reacted to Governor John J. McKeithen's statement that he could not conceive of any conditions that would cause Negroes in Louisiana to demonstrate. Haley told McKeithen, "You are just not informed." The letter listed 15 specific incidents and conditions covering police brutality, public accommodations and voting. Haley called the list "a bare sketch" of the difficulties faced by Negroes in Louisiana. The letter did not include events already known to the Governor, such as the murder of Frank Morris in Ferriday, the burning of two Negro churches near Jonesboro, and the beating of CORE worker William Yates in Bogalusa.

Haley told the Governor that the "rapidly worsening" situation in Louisiana called for "the strongest possible statements and actions from you, of which perhaps your trip to Jonesboro was a beginning." CORE called for McKeithen to take five immediate steps including a meeting with mayors, sheriffs and registrars, a statewide advisory role for a cross-section of Louisiana Negroes, desegregation of all state facilities, equal employment practices at all levels of state government, and compliance with federal regulations for school desegregation.

The specific grievances listed in the letter included refusal of service to Negroes at seven named places of public accommodation in Bogalusa, and at four named places in Jonesboro, where, on March 24, four Negroes were arrested for seeking service at the Blue Grill Restaurant. Haley also reported to the Governor

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that in Jonesboro on March 11, Mr. Ernest Thomas, a Negro resident, was hit in the face, while handcuffed, by one police officer while two others poked him with a nightstick and a shotgun. The letter also reported that on March 20, Mr. Royan Burris, a Negro resident of Bogalusa, was kicked and beaten by city and parish law enforcement officers. Also in Bogalusa, on March 29, a tear gas grenade was thrown at a Negro union meeting hall when a session of the Bogalusa Civic Voters League was letting out, the letter said. CORE's letter to the Governor also cited voter registration statistics showing that in the sixteen parishes with 35% or greater Negro population, the Negro share of registered voters is less than 8%. END

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