

AMERICUS SHOOTING

AMERICUS, GA. - The death of a boy in Americus, Georgia, July 28th., was the tragic result of half-hearted protection of civil rights demonstrators and the adamant refusal of local white officials to agree to remove the necessity for street protests.

State and local policemen, supposedly under orders to protect demonstrators, have pointedly and consistently turned their backs on threatening white onlookers, and have left the Negro community unprotected from the lynch law which has prevailed in this city. Whites have been allowed to stone Negro cars and attack Negroes on the street during demonstrations.

For nine days, Negroes in Americus have in ever increasing numbers marched to protest the arrest of four women who refused to participate in the illegal segregation of polling places. They have repeatedly demanded of local officials that the women be released, the charges be dropped, the election be voided because of illegal election procedures, and a new election be held.

Now the greatest insult of all has been perpetuated on the two men caught in the tragic trap of violence and provocation: they have been charged with first-degree murder and are being arraigned before Justice of the Peace J. W. Southwell, the very man who has twice assaulted SNCC workers in sight of his office in the Sumter County courthouse.

Justice Department officials have refused three times in the past 18 months to arrest county officials who illegally segregated elections on three occasions since March 1964. So-called investigations by FBI agents have never resulted in the prosecution of any official or unofficial perpetrators of violence against Negroes in Americus. Federal officials have used the excuse that Southern juries would never convict whites accused of attacking civil rights workers. Since Negroes in Americus, as in the Deep South as a whole have no protection against their oppressors, and since they have appealed, without success, to every level of government, we feel justified in making the following demands:

1. that the Department of Justice arrest the officials responsible for conducting elections in Sumter County and charge them with illegal conduct,
2. that the Department of Justice arrest Justice of the Peace J. W. Southwell for on numerous occasions depriving individuals of their civil rights,
3. that the Department of Justice prosecute violators of the jury exclusion law,
4. that the recent election for justice of the peace be voided and another one conducted under federal authority,
5. that federal troops be sent to Americus to protect people who desire to exercise their right of free speech.