

CORDELE, GEORGIA. Since March 31st segments of the press have had a field day interpreting, or misinterpreting, demonstrations in Cordele, Georgia by hundreds of Negroes and sympathizers against segregated and inferior schools. Demonstrations at the Court House and School Board in Cordele by 500 protestors has resulted in the arrest of over 90, thirteen of whom have been falsely charged with desecration of the Georgia and American flags.

Demonstrations came to a head in Cordele March 31st when 500 students from A. S. Clark High assembled in Lincoln Temple church rejected the pleas of Superintendent of Schools Moultrie to accept a "freedom of choice" desegregation plan. (Freedom of choice plans during the past year have only resulted in a slight change in segregation patterns for over 90% of Negro school children in the south still attend segregated institutions.)

Cordele students left the mass meeting at the church at approximately 3:00 and proceeded in two groups of 250 each downtown. One group went to the School Board, but were turned away by deputized whites and joined the other group at the courthouse. The actions of the students at the courthouse where they met 10 policemen who assaulted several demonstrators and a group of 7 or 8 young white men who drove in from Atlanta assembled who called themselves the blue angels, have been grossly misinterpreted and have only recently been clarified at April 6th hearings.

City Judge Joseph Andrews, who took the place of ailing County Judge Wendell Horne, heard overwhelming evidence presented by Attorney C. B. King that the flag was not desecrated and that demonstrations were peaceful. The prosecutor, according to reliable sources, offered no evidence to refute King's presentation.

In a statement released April 1st from the national office of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Chairman John Lewis said, "...yesterday, March 31st, an American and a Georgia flag were reportedly removed from the flagpole in front of the Crisp County Courthouse and torn by the demonstrators. They then attached two signs

which read "freedom now" and "We shall overcome."

"This action has touched off a large outcry against the demonstrators. Yet, the reason the students were demonstrating (inferior and segregated schools) has received little or no attention. The issue has now become the tearing of a flag. No mention is made of the fact that the Negro child who was in a segregated 1st Grade in Crisp County in 1954 is graduating from a segregated 12th grade this spring. Every student demonstrator in Cordele has heard promises from the federal government; but every student demonstrator attends a segregated school.

"SNCC also takes note of the fact that Baker County, a nearby county, is today the first county in the country to be refused Federal funds because of its failure to implement the desegregation plan submitted last year to the U.S. government. We ask, when will Federal funds be denied to Crisp County?"

The Crisp County affair has had national repercussions. April 7th Representative Maston O'Neal of Bainbridge, Georgia introduced a bill to make desecration of an American flag a federal crime punishable by a \$10,000 fine or five years in prison. "O'Neal's bill would make it a criminal offense to "Publically mutilate, deface, defile, defy, trample or cast contempt upon any flag of the United States at any place."