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STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JOHNNIE WILSON STATEMENT

THE STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE feels that national attention ~~should be~~ should be focused on the case of 19 year old SNCC worker Johnny Wilson who has recently been convicted by an all white jury of four Georgia State charges and sentenced to 3 years on the Georgia chain gang. This case stems from demonstrations held on August 17, 1967 outside of the 12th Army Headquarters and Induction Center in Atlanta, in which 12 SNCC workers were peacefully picketing to protest the induction of black men into the U.S. Armed Forces and their being sent to Vietnam. Following an incident between some of the demonstrators and Atlanta police, Wilson and the other 11 demonstrators were arrested on city charges, convicted of various misdemeanors, and sentenced to terms at the Atlanta City Stockade, ranging from 30 to 120 days.

Judge T.C. Little, who presided over the case, was prejudiced by the fact that he had a son fighting in Vietnam, and charged Johnny Wilson with "insurrection" a crime which carried the death penalty in Georgia and which subsequently was declared unconstitutional in a case involving three other civil rights workers -- this charge was later dropped by the State of Georgia.

During 2 weeks spent in the Fulton County jail before being transferred to serve his sentence at the Atlanta Stockade, Wilson became ill and suffered several blackouts. Prison doctors refused to admit him to the hospital. At the city stockade, Wilson, along with the other 9 male demonstrators, were segregated from other prisoners for their political beliefs, and sent to the hole (a box 4x4x7 feet) for talking, or saying "Black Power" to their fellow prisoners. While in the hole, prisoners are given only bread and water, one blanket, and a tin can for waste disposal. Johnny Wilson suffered two blackouts in the hole, and was given aspirin as a remedy. Excessively high bond totaling 36,000 dollars

was set by the judge on the prisoners, and when enough money was finally raised for their release on bond, Judge Little had left town with orders not to free the prisoners. As a result of their treatment and segregated facilities in the city stockade, the twelve prisoners filed suit against the City of Atlanta and prison officials. After which, they were finally freed after serving 60 days in the stockade.

On February 1st and 2nd, 1967 Johnny Wilson stood trial on 2 state charges of assault and battery and 2 state charges of "opprobrious" language. Out of a panel of 24 jurists, 5 black men were scratched by State Asst. Solicitor General Robert Sparks. Throughout the trial, Solicitor Sparks prejudiced the jury through constant referrals to SNCC and the war in Vietnam, and stated "If Johnny C. Wilson will not fight in Vietnam, why should he be allowed to fight in the streets of Atlanta."

Conflicting testimony for the state was given by the City Police and the U.S. Army. All six witnesses could not identify any of the demonstrators except Wilson, yet they were very "certain" that Wilson was the person who allegedly assaulted 2 of the police officers (one of them Captain Morris G. Redding). Howard Moore, Attorney for Wilson, overheard one of the army officers say "They all look a like," and the only description that any of the witnesses could give of the demonstrators picketing the induction center on August 17th, was that they "had beards, long hair, and were colored." Captain Redding stated that the first time he saw Wilson, Wilson was getting ready to throw another officer against the wall, yet he could not identify the officer, and no such officer ever gave any testimony. Redding alleged that Wilson hit him in the face and tried to choke him. On the day of the picketing, Redding was dressed in plain clothes, had no identification that would mark him as a policeman, and was unknown to Wilson. Captain Redding, who has arrested other SNCC workers including SNCC Chairman Stokely Carmichael, further prejudiced the jury by

referring to SNCC and using the words "Black Power."

The all white jury took approximately 2 hours to reach the verdict of guilty on all four counts, and Wilson was subsequently sentenced to 3 years on the Georgia Chain gang.

We in SNCC feel that this case blatantly exemplifies the fact that the courts and governmental officials across the United States are engaged in a conscious conspiracy to "frame-up" and deny justice to all black men and black organizations who dare to stand up and fight for their human rights, and refuse to fight yellow men abroad while black men here remain an oppressed and despised colony within the United States.