

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
6 Raymond Street N.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30314

Incident Summary Dec. 1st - Dec. 9th

December 1:

AMERICUS, GA. - Charges dropped against Ralph Allen, Don Harris, Thomas McDaniel, and John Perdew. The four had been arrested in the summer of 1963 and indicted on charges of assault with intent to murder. A Negro spectator was dragged from the "white" side of the court room by Sheriff Chappel.

OXFORD, MISS. - Integrated group refused service at white restaurant.

December 2:

HOLLY SPRINGS, MISS. - Stan Boyd arrested on traffic violation while publicizing ASC elections.*

STARKVILLE, MISS. - Bill Light, Ronald Carver, Jimmie Lee Jones, Sandra Bray, and Liz Fusco followed by Highway Patrol, stopped, and questioned about rear door of their truck not opening from the outside. When Carver told the patrolman that the door opened from the inside, he was arrested for "interfering with an officer". In the process of writing tickets for "improper lights, improper tags, and failing to stop before entering a highway", Patrolman Floyd Williams slammed the truck door on Jones' arm three times. The group continued on and were stopped again in front of the Mens dorm at Mississippi State University, where two large groups of male students formed. Patrolman Williams shined a light in Jones' face and told the group, "There is Martin Luther King, right there". Referring to Carver and Jones, he then said "How would we notify your mother if we found you dead tomorrow morning?" The group was then allowed to drive on to Starkville with Highway Patrol following.

December 3:

MERIDIAN, MISS. - Eight local high school students arrested on charges of "disorderly conduct" after going to eat at the previously segregated Toddle House. White toughs circled group as they left restaurant. COFO workers, Luke Kabat and Freeman Cocroft later arrested on charges of "trespassing and disorderly conduct".

CANTON, MISS. - Elayne DeWitt arrested by Deputy Billy Noble while poll watching for ASC elections in local store. Store owner had told her, she could stay. She was held for "investigation". Eartiss Crawford was grabbed by two white men while poll watching. They pulled a gun on him, threatened to kill him, and hit him in the neck. Tougaloo student, Euvester Simpson, was arrested in Flora for "disturbing the peace" while aiding in the ASC elections. Also, in connection with the elections, George Raymond was arrested for "trespassing". His arm was broken in the Madison County Jail. Marvin Rich, while poll watching at Madison Co. Health Center, was approached by Ross Barnett, (former governor), who asked Rich if he was a white man. When Rich replied yes, Barnett moved away and group of whites began to throw stones at Rich. Later when Rich attempted to enter building, two white men beat him with belt buckle and almost broke his nose.

HOLLY SPRINGS, MISS. - JAMES Batts, local Negro, arrested on charges of perjury and "getting a license under false pretences". Deputy Sherrif Red Roach later said that Batts was being held on four or five charges under \$2,000 bail. When Frank Cieciora went to Courthouse later to see about Batts, he was arrested on charges of "impersonating a lawyer".

*ASC - Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Services committees are formed to distribute cotton allotments to individual farmers. The Department of Agriculture determines these allotments - the amount of land that can be planted - by states. The states distribute them among the counties. The local committees, elected by and from all the farmers taking part in the program, determines the allotments to individual farmers. (A more detailed discussion of the ASC elections and their significance will follow the completion of the summary.)

December 4:

PHILADELPHIA, MISS. - Twenty people were arrested by FBI in connection with murders of three COFO workers, Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman. Eighteen of the twenty, charged with conspiring to deprive citizens of their civil rights. Sheriff Rainey and Deputy Sheriff Price were only two charged with accessory to murder after the fact.

JACKSON, MISS. - Having a great deal of difficulty finding out vote returns from ASC elections in most counties where COFO supported candidates, because COFO workers are not allowed into counting places by local authorities. COFO is compiling reports to send to Dept. of Agriculture in Washington because is serious doubt about validity of ASC elections due to many harrassments, illegal and discriminatory procedures which characterized them.

STARKVILLE, MISS. - Local man, Mr. Johnson, while driving worker Bill Light to trial for charges made on Dec. 3rd was arrested by Patrolman Williams, who gave Light the tickets, for "illegal parking":

CANTON, MISS. - George Raymond reported that while in jail from December 3rd, police handcuffed him and shaved off his beard. In the process, one arm was broken, and he was bruised and cut up.

December 6:

WASHINGTON D.C. - The Freedom Democratic Party held a press conference here to announce the beginning of their challenge to the five Miss. Congressmen.

NATCHEZ, MISS. - About 45 people began a stand-in at Clark's Movie Theater. The stand-in was begun by high school students who were later joined by adults. For three hours the demonstrators stood out in the cold. The manager would not sell them tickets, but went around to white customers standing at back of line to sell them tickets. The demonstrators were surrounded by a group of hostile whites who hurled profanity at them all the while they stood out in the cold.

PHILADELPHIA, MISS. - All suspects arrested in the murders of Chaney, Goddman, and Schwerner have been bailed out. All day long on the radio, local minister made pleas for the Philadelphians because "they are innocent". Sheriff Rainey is still wearing his gun and badge.

December 7:

SELMA, ALA. - The Justice Dept. suit against Selma officials (including Dallas, Co. Sheriff Jim Clark and his posse) and eight restaurant owners accused of defying Civil Rights Act began today.

BENTON COUNTY, MISS. - Balloting here for the ASC elections were done by mail. COFO supported candidates in 3 out of 5 communities. Four COFO workers and a local woman stayed to watch ballots counted. "The entire police force was reported to be room during the counting." Bob Smith, COFO worker, saw at least one instance of illegal practices, the county committeewoman, who was calling off the name of candidates who received votes, called off the name of a white candidate, when the ballot contained only the names of Negro candidates. During the day, two white men stole lists of names containing eligible Negro voters from COFO workers.

December 9:

ABERDEEN, MISS. - A white man who claimed he was owner of Tom's Restaurant called Project director and told him to come, for he was desegregating. When three people showed up at the restaurant in the evening, the owner chased them out and hit them with a broom. A crowd gathered outside and tried to block their car. The lady and child who had come got away but Joseph Maurer was arrested for "disturbing the peace".

SELMA, ALA. - The three-judge panel failed to hand down a decision in the case of five restaurant owners who are accused of violating the Civil Rights Act, although their case was finished on Dec. 7th.

December 9:

JACKSON, MISS. - Latest report on ASC elections -- won a chairmanship and two alternates in Holmes County. A chairmanship, vice-chairman, and 1st member in Benton County. A chairmanship and possible alternate in Madison County. Holmes, Issaquena, Madison, Marshall, and Panola Counties will contest the elections. Hope to have elections declared invalid due to irregularities such as poll supervisors misinforming voters, voters not receiving notice, being refused a chance to vote, landlords marking ballots for tenants, padding lists with non-eligible white voters. Farmers have drawn up list of requirements for running a fair election and protest sent to Secretary of Agriculture, Freeman.

Discussion of ASC elections:

As part of its farm price support program, the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture determines each year how much cotton it wants to have grown. To control this, they set up a cotton allotment program - the amount of land that can be planted by an individual farmer if he wishes to receive price support for his crops. To choose not to participate is almost always economically disastrous for an individual farmer, for it means he has to sell his crop at market price, far below the government support price.

Agricultural Stabilization Committees are established in every county, where farmers participate in the Federal Program to determine how much land each farmer can plant for the year - his allotment. The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture gives each cotton growing state an allotment of land. State commissioners, appointed by the Federal Gov't, distribute the total State allotments to each county where farmers take part in the program. Each county is divided into communities of farmers who take part in the program - landowners and sharecroppers alike, as long as they actually sell the cotton they grow. Each community casts a vote to elect members - farmers - to the county board which distributes the county allotment to each participating farmer.

These elections are important because in most areas where cotton is grown, it is the only cash crop. To not receive an allotment or to receive a small one, can mean disaster to a poor farmer or sharecropper, almost always Negro; for he then cannot make enough profit to last through the winter and plant next year. And if he plants on his own, outside the program, and sells without support, he still cannot make enough. These allotments have been used often as economic weapons against Negroes participating in Civil Rights work.

This has been possible because Negroes have been unable to vote in the ASC elections. By insuring them a vote, we can eliminate the use of allotments as economic weapons. Additionally, the ASC elections in Mississippi have proved to be a very effective way to organize Negro farmers.