

WATS REPORTS Wednesday, February 10, 1965

SELMA, ALA. STUDENT ARRESTS AND BEATINGS FOLLOW COURTHOUSE DEMONSTRATIONS

This morning, about 300-400 students from the Keith HS in Orville, a small town ~~about~~ 16 miles outside Selma, and the Hazen-Harrell HS, also out in the county, were walking to Selma to participate in a march on the courthouse. Somewhere on the road outside of town, they were stopped by Sheriff Clark and his men. The kids ran away, through the house and barn, and through the fields belonging to a Mrs. Rosie Moore. The sheriff's men came up onto her porch and demanded to go into her house to search, threatening to use tear gas. She refused to let them enter, so they broke her door down without a search warrant and tore up the place. SNCC staff worker Frank Soracco from San Francisco came out to investigate. While he was talking to a posseman, the posseman sprayed tear gas at him. The gas got into his eyes, but he is all right now. The kids were told by the possemen to go back to school. One of the school kids said he overheard his principal calling up the sheriff that morning.

At 3 pm that afternoon, 175 students, some from Selma University, and some from the local high school, went to the courthouse. They were met there by Clark and his men, who told them to begin marching. They were taken in the direction of the jail, but before they reached it, they were turned off a side street, and started on a forced march out into the county. They were chased by possemen with billy clubs and cattle prods, made to run about three miles out into the county. If someone fell down, he was beaten and cattle-prodded. Finally the students managed to get onto private property, and the possemen left them. Local people and SNCC workers drove out into the country and brought back the kids. The wounded students were taken to Brown's Church, where they were treated by a doctor. About 14-15 kids are exhausted from being beaten and having run so far. Two girls are in very bad shape, with cuts and bruises all over their body. At least one person is in the hospital.

Newsmen who tried to follow the group into the county were stopped by possemen.

John Lewis issued the following statement:

"Sheriff Jim Clark proved today beyond the shadow of a doubt that he is no different from his Nazi counterparts.

He and his men broke up a peaceful, nonviolent gathering of Selma citizens.

Using cattle prods and billy clubs, they chased Negroes as far as three miles out of the city, beating those who fell to the ground, and preventing them from seeking aid.

This is but one more example of the inhuman treatment afforded to the Negro people of Selma, Alabama. The United States has always come to the aid of people in foreign lands who are gripped under a reign of tyranny. Can this nation do less now for the people of Selma?"

John Lewis, Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

This afternoon at 4:30, 200 more students went to the courthouse. They stood there for about half an hour, unmolested, and then left.

MARION, ALA. Mrs. Alvert Turner/Bab

In the morning, a group of people who marched to the courthouse were turned around. In the afternoon, 200-300 students and adults marched to the courthouse. City and county police stopped them, so they all knelt in prayer for 15 minutes, were led in the singing of "Amazing Grace" by a local preacher, and then, as a heavy rain began to fall, they left.

CANTON DB #28 week of Feb, 7, 1965

George Washington, a grocery store owner, who had rented two houses to COFO workers, testified about what happened to him after he urged several Negro citizens to vote in FDP Congressional Hearings here. The next day he said, he was arrested for burning garbage in the city. Later, white wholesale suppliers stopped making deliveries at his store. A few weeks later, the COFO office was bombed and he was arrested for failing to report the incident to the police. He was beaten at the police station, and warned against associating with Negroes..

HATTIESBURG DB# 29 2-10-65

Hattiesburg's first day of Congressional Challenge Hearings began here today as nine witnesses testified to violence and discrimination in the county's civil rights process. The first witness Rev. Robert Beech, of the NCC, spoke of his work in voter registration activity and of the continued harassment and violence including being beaten. Miss Mary Louise Crosby, 23, of Hattiesburg, said she was threatened with a knife and had hot coffee thrown on her while sitting in at Lea's restaurant. Doug Smith, 18, assistant project director and lifelong resident of Hattiesburg, related cases of retaliation against Negroes who attempted to register. His own house was bombed last summer because of his civil rights activities. Other witnesses told of trying repeatedly to register, without success. One woman having gone to the court house eight or ten times, and failing each time. Project director, Sanford Leigh, a Negro graduate from Yale, also testified to the atmosphere of fear surrounding Negroes who tried to register. He explained the importance of voting, saying, "A registered voter doesn't have to beg for anything."

BATESVILLE DB# 30 2-10-65

Voter procedures in Panola County took up two hours of the hearing in Batesville today. Ike Shankle, registrar of Panola County since January, 1964, admitted under questioning by MFDP atty George Flaff that in May of last year, he closed the Sardis registry office leaving only the courthouse in Batesville available to people who wished to register. He said he closed the Sardis office on the day the decision in the US vs Duke case became known. (the court determined that the constitutional interpretation section should be removed from the voter registration tests in Panola County for one or more years.) Shankle, explaining why, said "Since I was the person responsible under the injunction, I felt if I was to go to jail it would be through my own actions, and not one else's." He then claimed that he had not appointed a deputy registrar because he could not afford one, alleging that part of the money would have come from his own pocket. To a question as to which section of the Mississippi Constitution he picked for applicants, he replied that they were among the simpler sections. He admitted however, that one of them post facto law, was complicated.

Earlier witnesses testified that Negroes were intimidated from attempting to register by a framework of violence and economic reprisals.

CANTON DB # 31 2-10-65

Five witnesses testified today; they were among 12 Negroes who have testified since deposition-taking began in Canton on Feb. 7. About 25 hostile and 50 friendly witnesses were subpoenaed by the FDP in Madison County. FDP attys said that they were unable to finish questioning all the witnesses due to lack of time.