Notes From Mississippi

By Jerry DeMuth

The national elections of last November 3 weren't the only elections of importance to Mississippi Negroes. One month later, on December 3, there were Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASC or ASCS) elections. And though less than 7 percent of Mississippi's voting age Negroes were registered to vote in the national election, any Negro, of importance to Mississippi Negroes. One month later, on December 3, Why was "Cigarette" council town." Judges, according Stan Boyd and Leon County, Sheriff "Flick" Ash stopped them again. This time he charged Rubin with having improper lights.

In Starkville, police ticketed Bill Light three times.

But the greatest harrassment occurred at the polling places in Canton, a town of 10,000, 25 miles north of Jackson, and the seat of Madison County. Canton is a big White Citizens' Council town, leading officials are members and the council sticker appears at most establishments, including on the voter registrar's door.

Six persons were ejected from Canton area polling places where they were poll watchers; one of them was arrested by police. Police also arrested three other election workers on charges ranging from "for investigation" to "disturbing the peace." The other persons were beaten at polling places.

A white man pulled a gun on Earnest Crawford while two other whites threatened Crawford. One grabbed and held him while the other beat him. At another polling place, poll watcher Marvin Rich was pelted with stones by a white mob. He later returned to the polling place as the vote counting began. Two white men blocked his way and beat him, one using his fists, the other a belt buckle.

Nevertheless, seven Negroes were elected to community committees, three of them as chairmen.

Though Tennessee gets all the publicity, it's not the only state to forbid the teaching of evolution. It's also illegal in Mississippi and has been since 1926 when the state passed its anti-evolutionary laws. Under the law, teaching evolution is punishable by a $500 fine and the mandatory loss of any position the educator held.

There had not been any movement to change this law but among books being considered last fall by the State Textbook Purchasing Board were Biological Science, an Inquiry into Life; and High School Biology. All three books discuss evolution as a theory, but not as an established fact.

The three books were strongly attacked by a fundamentalist south Mississippi group, the Jones County Study and Action Group. JCSAC was especially incensed over Molecules to Man, just the title of which they felt taught evolution.

In mid-November the newspapers...