

[1964]

I Harassment BY Private Parties

A. Against Whites

Generally the white volunteers have been able to live peacefully in the Negro community and have been able to use the stores in the Negro community town of Ruleville without incident. There are, however, almost daily incidents of whites driving past the community center slowly with insults to ~~ME~~ hurl or trash to throw out. I have had white ladies on two separate occasions tell me I was a Communist nigger lover and then give me an obscene hand gesture. Miss. Ellen Siegal, summer volunteer, was asked by a carload ~~of~~ of whites how many Negroes had she been sleeping with. This type of harassment has also been frequent while summer volunteers have been canvassing for voter registration. Carloads of whites (usually youths) frequently drive by while workers are going from door to door in the Negro community. In the first week of July, Joe Smith, COFO summer volunteer, was stopped by four whites while canvassing. They threatened to beat him but did not.

The summer volunteers have met with harassment when they have ventured away from the Negro community. The Indianola Public Library was closed to COFO volunteers on July 7, 1964, after three workers had tried to use its facilities. A sign appeared in the front of the library after an emergency meeting of the library staff. It read "the facilities of this library are reserved exclusively for the citizens of Beat 3 and the City of Indianola." There have been several incidents in white cafes when summer workers have been told to leave or just have not been served. These matters were not pursued because public accommodations is not a part of the summer project. There was also an incident in Drew on July 23, 1964, when Rabbi Allan Levine of Rochester and Jeffry Sachar, COFO summer volunteer, went to the Billups service station in Drew. The attendant asked them if the phone call they were making was connected with civil rights. Then the attendant pulled a gun and the Rabbi and Sachar fled. When this incident was reported to Police Chief Floyd of Drew, he told them he was not interested. Any attempts by white volunteers to go to Negro schools have been met with open opposition by the school authorities and the police. When attorney David Goldstick and I went to Ruleville Central High to speak to the principal, a policeman arrived and told us that we could have no more appointments with the Principal, or anyone else in the school without first checking with the school superintendent. Other whites have been chased off school property in Ruleville.

B. Against Negroes

It is more difficult to document incidents of harassments against Negroes because they often do not tell anyone, or are afraid to report anything. Generally, every Negro who has worked for the movement such that the white community might know about it has met with harassment of some kind or another. Whites continually express their disapproval of the summer project and voter registration to the Negroes (most frequently on an employer-employee basis). Almost all the Negroes who are known to support the civil rights movement in Ruleville have lost their jobs. I must add that this is very difficult to document so that some action might be taken. The attached affidavits on job losses would probably not be convincing in court. Moreover these are just the losses this summer and only a part of those. It should be noted that Mr. Joe McDonald, Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer and some others have been unable to get work for several years in the community.

There ~~been~~ have also been some more dangerous types of harassment against local Negroes. On Tuesday August 11, 1968 Mrs. Fannie

Lou Hamer reported seeing one of the white men who had beaten her in jail in Winona last year. That evening she received a phone call from an unidentified person. The person said that "We know where you are now, Fannie Lou, so don't try to get away. You're going to end up in the Mississippi River tonite." Another incident accurred about two weeks ago outside of Mrs. Campbell's house in the Ruleville Negro community.. A carload of whites pulled up and shouted at a Negro man walking along the road. They told him to come over to the car. When he refused, two men jumped out and tried to get him into the car. Mrs. Campbell's screams and the resistance by the Negro prevented them from succeeding. I do not know what connection this man had with the civil rights movement.

Finally, there is the day to day harassment of most of the Negro leaders in the Ruleville area. Joe MacDonald has been unable to get a loan at the bank for several years. Others don't even try because they know what the answer would be. These same Negroes do not try to get jobs any more either, ~~because~~ of the same reason.

C. Against the Community

There have been few incidents of actual violence in Sunflower County this summer. On June 24, 1964, a group of white youths patrolled the negro community where the volunteers were staying and hurled bottles at cars and houses. One or two windows were broken and several cars were dented. The next night, June 25, a molotov cocktail was thrown at the Williams Chapel, meeting place for COFO and SNCC mass meetings. The fire was promptly put out by the Ruleville Fire Department, but the Chapel stairs and front suffered minor charring. Eight gasoline-filled plastic bags spread out around the church failed to ignite, saving the church from more extensive damage.

Other types of harassment against the Community and the project have been of a subtler nature. The radio which the Community Center uses to keep in touch with other areas has constantly been jammed by another radio unit transmitter. I have attached a recording of this jamming. Moreover, there are frequent radio calls from outsiders over the radio. I should add that Ruleville has been particularly aimed at by the papers and radio stations in Mississippi. The Clarion-Ledger reported that there are all night bi-racial orgies in the community center. Several papers have commented on the Communist activities that are going on in Ruleville. One Memphis paper made allusions to the Jewish members of our project as though they were the leaders of the movement. The radio programs have generally picked up this same line of harassment. Mayor Charles Borrough was heard to say on his morning radio show, "Watch out for those Communist Agitators around here."

Finally, the most prevalent harassment for the workers this summer has been the arrests in Drew, Mississippi, by the local authorities. Most of this information will appear under the arrest heading.

II. HARASSMENT BY OFFICIALS

A. From Police and Sheriffs

The major source of police harassment has been their presence during voter registration canvassing. In every community in Sunflower County except Ruleville, the local police have followed voter registration workers while they have been talking to local Negroes. Frequently the police car will pull up in front of a house where a worker is talking to a Negro on the porch. Their presence has a noticeable effect on the Negro. On several occasions this type of harassment has gone further. On July 14, 1964, Jim Dunn, COPO volunteer, was giving a leaflet to a Negro on the Negro's front porch when Chief of Police Floyd of Drew rushed up on the porch, snatched the leaflet from the Negro and said to Dunn, "You may be under arrest; come with me." The following Saturday Floyd was driving around town jumping out of his police car and taking pictures of the workers as they talked with Negroes in Drew. On Friday August 7, 1964, while Jim Dunn was canvassing in Sunflower, Mississippi, Deputy Sheriff Parker and Wright pulled up and stopped in front of the porch where he was talking to a Negro. They just stayed there and stared until Dunn left and then they called the Negro woman over to the car. She was quite nervous. Then Parker drove up and stopped in front of the next house where Dunn was going. Dunn asked him what he wanted and was told to mind his own business. Parker continued to mutter at Dunn and finally got out of the car and asked Dunn if he wanted to make something out of it. He said this several times while standing near Dunn. Dunn said he might write to the Justice Department, but that he didn't want to make anything out of it now. At this Parker said, "Why you 4-eyed son-of-a-bitch, you're under arrest; get in the car." Parker pushed Dunn into the car. Inside Wright was holding a large flashlight and hitting it into his palm threateningly. Parker started to stutter when Dunn asked what the charge was. He asked "Were you passing out leaflets?" When Dunn said no, Parker mumbled some more and finally said, "Do you want to go to trial?" When Dunn said no, Parker said get out. The following day Friday, August 7, while canvassing in Sunflower, the Police Chief stopped Dunn, Joe Smith and one other volunteer. He asked Dunn for identification and then asked if Dunn were a member of the Communist party. When Dunn hesitated, the chief said it would be all right to take the 5th Amendment on that question. The conversation ended when Dunn asked if the Chief were a member of the KKK. Dunn.

The police have also harassed the volunteers under different circumstances. Once in ~~Memphis~~ and once in Ruleville police entered a Negro cafe and asked the whites to leave. In Ruleville the whites were forced to leave, while in ~~Memphis~~ they put up some resistance and remained. This incident was complicated the next Tuesday, August 11, when the Mayor met several of the workers and told them that if they ever went into that Negro cafe again, he (the Mayor) would close down the place.

The police have also stopped workers when they have been driving in the community and in the county. I was stopped at 12:15 on August 11 and told that if the police ever found me driving at night again after 12:00, I would be put in jail. The policeman continued to say that he thought I was a thug and a trouble-maker and that he doubted I had ever been near a college in my life.

There have also been several times when the police have come to the Community Center. Twice the police came over to get local whites who had been talking with the workers and take them away from the Center. Once the police tried to search a truck that was unloading

in front of the center, but when they were asked to produce a search warrant, they backed down and said we could proceed. In another incident around the Center the Police approached me and said that one of the local whites saw a worker wave at his niece. The policeman said that he was warning us because the white said he would shoot off that person's arm if he waved again. (It should be added here that the local girls seem to get great pleasure out of waving at certain members of the project). The Police on August 14 told Dale Gronemeier after Gronemeier had been driving his motorcycle around with a Negro girl on the back that he was really stirring up the local whites and that he better quit or else.

All of the people in the movement who have tried to take pictures of certain events or places have had particular problems with the police. There have been frequent threats of breaking the cameras.

The sheriff of Sunflower County, William Hollowell, on August 13, informed me that from now on all bail would be \$500 per person. The bail had been set at a lower scale, but he said that he would set it at \$500 no matter what unless it would be more.

There have been gunshots around the Negro community almost nightly. Our investigations show that they come from the local police shooting at dogs; these shots frighten both the Negroes and the whites.

There was also an incident of a policeman pulling his gun on a Rabbi during a mass meeting and threatening to shoot someone. This story is attached as exhibit A. There are also attached several affidavits of police harassment of Indianola negroes. Exhibits H, J, K.

B. From Mayors

~~Exhibit L~~ M FROM MAYORS OF SUNFLOWER COUNTY.

The majority of harassment from the mayors of Sunflower has come from Charles Dorrough, mayor of Ruleville. Before the workers reached Ruleville Dorrough went to several homes in the Negro Community and told the people not to let the northern workers come in and live with them. He said that the workers would beat and kill them. Two of the people approached were Mrs. Butcher and Mr. Williams. Dorrough has also made threats (often indirectly through other people) to Negroes who are working for Civil Rights. He told Nancy Newsome, aunt of Fred Brown, a local Negro who has participated in civil rights activities, that when the workers leave Fred Brown had better leave also. The mayor also made a personal call on Rev. James Corson of Stanford California, and told this Methodist Minister that he was not welcome at the local Methodist church. Corson had visited the local minister earlier that week and had said he would visit the church that Sunday, but Dorrough said that if Corson showed up at the Church, he would be kept out.

Talks with either the Mayor of Drew, Mr. Williford, or Dorrough have been frequent, but they usually break down when the Mayors start asking lewd questions about sexual habits of the workers or the morals of Negroes.

Again I would suspect that the COFO workers do not know the extent of the harassment against Negroes simply because Negroes don't tell us everything.

C. From City Attorney's and Others

There have been assorted harassments from various local officials. A few days after the 25 were arrested in Drew on July 16, City Attorney Townsend of Drew called in all the parents of the arrested negroes and had a talk with them. When two of our workers tried to be present they were forcibly removed from the meeting. Mrs. Nora Hayes of Drew reported that Townsend gave them a long talk during which he called Representative Don Edwards (a visitor to Mississippi this summer) Castro's secretary and called all the workers for COFO communists. Townsend asked all of the

people there to have nothing to do with us. When Mrs. Hayes raised some objection to Townsend's request, he turned on her and told her she was not legally married.

A common occurrence in the county has been the questioning of any lawyer who works for Civil Rights about his "Communist" background. Every lawyer who has come into the County and dealt with the officials has been asked if he is affiliated with the Communist Party and if he is a member of the Lawyer's Guild. Moreover each is told that he will be checked on by the local officials. In the period of two days, C.A. Max Frericks, lawyer from Waterloo, Iowa, was asked about his Communist affiliations no less than five times.

Another type of incident occurred on July 8, 1964, when a COFO worker, Jim Dann, was thrown out of the voter registration office in Indianola. The details of this incident are on attached Exhibit B.

A peculiar kind of harassment has come from school officials in Indianola, Ruleville and Drew. In all three school (Negro), civil rights activities have been condemned by the administration. In Indianola presently (August 14th, 1964), three school boys are suspended indefinitely for conducting a meeting during lunch hour on the school playground. After talks between the Principal of the school and David Goldstick, LCDC lawyer and Liz Fusco, summer volunteer, about reinstating the students, the Principal said he refused to meet any more people about the suspension. The superintendent of schools who is white took the same position. In Ruleville, Attorney Goldstick and I were told that no white workers would be allowed on the school grounds without first clearing it with the County superintendent. The students at Ruleville Central High have been having meetings in the schoolyard concerning their dissatisfaction with the school system. Last week the school issued a statement which the students had to take home with them. It is attached as Exhibit C. There was also an interesting incident concerning this pamphlet and one M.C. Perry. It is attached in a statement labeled Exhibit D. In Drew the Town Board of Aldermen at the request of the School Board issued on August 14, 1964, a proclamation ~~stating~~ banning all unauthorized personnel from the school and the school grounds. Reference is made elsewhere in this report to the Drew school situation. See in particular the arrest of Joe Smith. Exhibit 6

Another incident of harassment occurred on August 11 and 12 when a prisoner allegedly escaped from Parchmen State Prison. All during these two days prison trucks patrolled the Community Center area and asked questions of the local people. The people in the trucks were aware that white workers were in the community and they visited several of the homes where whites were staying. Their presence was frightening for the local Negroes.

III. ARRESTS AND "PROTECTIVE CUSTODY"

A. Drew, Mississippi. July 14, 1964. Seven COFO workers were arrested in Drew on this date. Two were arrested for distributing leaflets on public property without a ~~permitt~~ permit. They were Mike Yarrow of Swarthmore, Pa., and Fred Miller of Mobile, Alabama. Each was released for \$100 bond. The five other workers were arrested for obstructing the traffic on sidewalks. These workers were James Dann of Los Angeles, California, Gretchen Schwarz of Sunnyvale, California, Landy McNair, a CORE staff worker, Charles Scattergood of Seattle, Washington, and John Harris, a SNCC staff member from Montgomery, Alabama. All were arrested by Chief of Police C.E. Floyd of Drew, Mississippi. Bond for Schwarz, McNair and Scattergood was \$100 also, but Dann and Harris had \$200 bond; Harris because of "insulting" language to the Police Chief and Dann because he had been warned earlier in the day by the Mayor not to be getting into trouble. The following morning a lawyer from the Lawyer's Guild, Jerry McCroskey, appeared in Drew and removed all 7 cases to the Federal Court.

B. Drew, Mississippi. July 15, 1964. Twenty-five civil rights workers and local Negroes were arrested on this date. They were arrested for obstructing traffic when a voter registration meeting moved from a Church lawn into the street in Drew. The COFO and SNCC people arrested include, Charles McLaurin of Jackson, Mississippi; Christopher Hexter of New Haven, Connecticut; James Dann of Los Angeles, California; Jeffrey Sachar of New York City; Gretchen Schwarz of Sunnyvale, California; Ellen Siegel of Boston; Charles Scattergood of Arlington, Virginia; George Winter of Iona, California, and Michael Yarrow of Philadelphia, PA. The Ruleville Negroes who were arrested include, Linda Maria, Bettye Louise Surnoy, Ore Doss, Fred Brown, Paul Jackson, and John Clark Edwards. Ten Drew Negroes were arrested: Walter Van, Jr., Henry Lee Hardy, Golden Davis, Lenora Scott, Bertha Williams, Pauline Moore, Mary Harvey, Nelson Andrews, Horace Davis, and Florine Johnson. They were arrested by the Chief of Police, C.E. Floyd and by a number of auxilliary police. All were taken to jail, except for Florine Johnson. Of the rest all the men and boys went to the Sunflower County Farm while the Girls went to the Indianola County Jail. Bond ranged from \$110 to \$500 and the total amount for the group was \$4860. McLaurin had an additional charge of disturbing the peace and his bond was \$500. Maynard Omerberg of Los Angeles and the Lawyer's Guild was the attorney for the 24 defendants in jail. All of these cases were removed by Attorney Omerberg and the Lawyer's Guild, except for the case of Christopher Hexter, which will be mentioned in a later arrest.

C. Indianola, Mississippi. July 17, 1964. One local Negro, George Lee Jones, was arrested for resisting arrest. He was tried on July 18 and on July 21 was taken to the County Farm to serve a 60 day sentence. He was arrested by local Indianola Police and sentenced in the Mayor's Court by Mayor Tom Pitts. Attorney Jack Oppenheim of New York City and I paid the \$250 Appeal Bond for Jones and got him out of the County Farm. We suspected that there was some civil rights motivation to the arrest, but since that time realize that Jones deserved his sentence. Jones is in jail again for a longer sentence. He was arrested for fighting with brass knuckles. Our case has been removed to the Federal Court and the LCDC Office in Memphis is handling it.

D. Drew, Mississippi. July 30, 1964. Two people, one a COFO summer volunteer and one a local Drew youth, were arrested on this date. Fred Miller of Mobile Alabama and Eddie Williams of Drew were arrested for distributing leaflets and literature on city streets without a permit.

Trial was set for 10:00 July 31, 1964. Application for a continuance was refused by the Mayor of Drew. David Goldstick of New York City was permitted to represent the Defendants. Defendants were found guilty and sentenced to \$100 and 30 days on the County Farm. Appeal bond was posted on July 31, 1964. Trial set in Circuit Court the first Monday in September. Removal proceedings being handled by Memphis office, LCDC.

D. Drew, Mississippi. August 4, 1964. A local Negro, Henry Lee Hardy, was arrested pursuant to a complaint by a local Negro innkeeper for a debt of \$17.50 which Hardy acknowledged that he owed, but hadn't paid for two months. Hardy had been working with the COFO and SNCC summer volunteers in voter registration work. The charge was a section of the Mississippi Criminal code subjecting one who intentionally defrauds an innkeeper of payment of a fine not to exceed \$500 and a sentence not to exceed 3 months. The defendant was incarcerated in jail on the night of August 4, and was brought to trial before the Justice of the Peace the following morning. LCDC attorney Goldstick of New York City prevailed on the J.P. that since the Mississippi Constitution did not allow imprisonment for debt and further the imprisonment of the defendant had subjected the city of Drew to a possible law suit for false arrest, false imprisonment and abuse of process. The defendant was released. We assured the J.P. that if the defendant did not pay his debt in one week to the innkeeper, we would wash our hands of the matter.

E. Cleveland, Mississippi. August 5, 1964. At 1:00 this afternoon 12 COFO workers were arrested for distributing literature on the public streets of Cleveland without a permit. Formal application to distribute this literature had been made a week previous to the arrests. Trial was set for the following Monday. The following morning the defendants were released and charges dropped. City Attorney John W. Valentine informed Goldstick of the LCDC that "upon looking into the matter more closely, the City decided to drop the charges.

F. Drew, Mississippi. August 6, 1964. An arrest of one Christopher Hexter. See Exhibit E, attached

G. Ruleville, Mississippi August 7, 1964. An arrest of M.C. Perry. See Exhibit F, attached.

H. Drew, Mississippi. August 13, 1964. An arrest of Joe Smith, summer volunteer. See Exhibit G. attached.

I. Drew, Mississippi August 14, 1964. Four were taken into "protective custody" by the Drew Police Department. They were kept in jail during the night and released the following morning, August 15, 1964. The full details of the proclamation and the circumstances surrounding this incident are to be found in the Joe Smith report, Exhibit G, attached.

IV. RELATIONS WITH FBI AND DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND LOCAL POLICE

A. Protection in Ruleville has been adequate. There are hourly patrols of the neighborhood by the local police car. At least twice I have seen the truck stop a car of whites and send them on their way. In Indianola the protection has not been as good. Patrols are not made as frequently and I refer you to the report of Rabbi Alan Levine, attached Exhibit #1 for an example of how the police actually provoked an incident which might have led to violence. In Drew there has been only harassment. The Police Chief C.E. Floyd, believing everyone in the Summer Project is a Communist, has followed and arrested many of the workers in the area. He and the other officials may say something about protection, but it is quite obvious that they are trying to prevent any COFO activities in Drew and are doing everything in their power to prevent any such activities. I refer you to the Joe Smith Exhibit, #G, attached. The Police in Drew appear to be torn between their duty to keep the peace and their hatred for COFO activities. They are dedicated to keeping COFO activities out of Drew.

B. The FBI and Department of Justice have made frequent visits to the project in Ruleville, more frequent in the first part of the summer than in the last six weeks. On almost every incident that we have asked for help, investigation has followed quickly, thus on the basis of my experience this summer, these two departments have been very good. However I would like to know of any follow-up to any of the investigations that have been made.