

July 10-14

Dear Friends,

Batesville is a good place to be. The people are all very warm and as of yet we have had no bad incidents. The local people are becoming extra careful because nothing has happened since April and they expect something to happen soon. We have been spending our last week getting to know the people around where we are living and canvassing for voter registration. Next Monday I am going down to Clarksdale to check at the Federal Courthouse on who are registered voters. Here in Batesville the clerk will not give us any information at all. It is often hard to know whether or not someone is telling the truth when he says that he is registered to vote. Many of the people are still afraid to register even though there is actually little to fear around here and so the best way to get rid of the bothersome voter registration worker is to tell him that you are registered. So we are going to do some checking. We have also gone out to one of the plantations around here and have spoken to some of the people who are active out there in the movement. A union has been organized on one plantation, the Hays plantation, and today we are going out there to try to get some affidavits for a hearing that is to take place on July 14 and 15 to consider extending the federal minimum wage laws to include farm labor. You probably already know that these people now make about thirty cents an hour for ten hours of labor in very hot weather. We hope to get out to some of the other plantations around here where there are still unregistered voters. But on some of these places they do not allow civil rights workers and they shoot if they see you. There is one place we can get in at night but have not been able to because of a lack of transportation. During the demonstrations in Jackson someone from SNCC came up and got the car that was being used up here and we have not been able to get it back yet. All we have been able to use is an old panel truck that is not too dependable. This means that we cannot use it for long trips, such as out to the plantations, or for night driving. This is quite a restriction on what we are able to do, so we are working very hard on getting the car back. I think that I already told you, but the information on Batesville is in the May 17th issue of The Nation. The people who are strong in the community are really good people. Right now I am sitting at Robert Miles house. He is the head of the movement here. The people here had formed a voters league in 1963 before the civil rights workers came. Mr. Miles house has been shot into numerous times, fire bombed and tear-gassed. On the weekends the house is guarded by local people. The people in this area really respect Mr. Miles and many of them stay up all night guarding. Mr. Miles is a famer and he has about 175 acres planted mostly with soy beans and cotton. Last week he was away for a few days and I did some of the evening chores of bringing in the cattle, feeding them and the hogs and getting the eggs from the chickens. I'm becoming a regular farmer...So, there are many pleasures to life in Mississippi.

In our canvassing, we've discovered a number of interesting things re: industry, wages etc. around here. For instance, a man works c. 50 hours in a furniture store, at \$35.00 per week. We told him that it is illegal because of

Federal Minimum Wages, but he's rather reluctant to do anything. We'll have to visit him again and urge him to get together with other men in this situation. At the moment, I'm trying to plant seeds for a Maid's Union. So far I've been using the SNCC technique of prying and prodding with questions until the idea comes out - but it is slow. I now have to go back and start seeing the contacts that I've made. Most women cook, clean, wash for the white folks from 5-10 hours a day; wages are usually \$3.00.

The biggest problem is this; we're past the excitement of white workers and mass meetings. What specific things can happen next? People really have no ideas for programs, especially programs that look middle class. This is a reason that a lot of SNCC people have gone off to the frontiers of Alabama - that's exciting and you don't have to consider the real future.

Met with kids tonight and farm co-op. Two meetings a night every night until you can't imagine what night to plan a new meeting for. And, people here are brave. Karel (another volunteer) and I got dropped off at the home of a lady with 12 kids who will probably be thrown off her plantation soon for registering, for seeing us...we hid inside while Gene and another worker went down the road and then came back - one doesn't even park on the road since the bossman might see. He's already taken all these people's crops (from sharecropping) and pays \$2.50 instead of \$3.00 a day. Mrs. Rogers says she often feeds the kids every four days. Things we take for granted. And the most depressing thing is that we have nothing to offer, and why should a man have to ask?

Freedom,

Nancy and Gene Turitz

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