

January 10, 1965

Dear Friends:

On Monday we went up to Americus where Ricks and Zev were supposed to have trials, Ricks for ~~impairing the~~ contributing to the delinquency of a minor - he let a 14 year old get on a picket line; and Zev for having improper license plates. Ricks, as is very typical of him, didnt show up for the trial - he was home visiting his family in Tennessee - but it didnt matter as they hadnt set his trial down for this term, so we filed a demand for trial and wait it out. Zev's case was another matter. You have 30 days on out of state tags in Georgia and Zev had brought a car into the state with Minnesota tags which was here about 5 or 6 days. He went up to the troopers shack to get Georgia tags and they arrested him. The Solicitor was extremely pleasant and said that he really felt that Zev wasnt guilty (the ticket said he was in the State 10 days, which wouldnt be any offense) but that the officer now insists that he had seen Zev for 30 days, and he (the Solicitor) wanted to check with the cop again before he would nolle prosequi. Zev had been best man at a wedding just before he came down and the couple was married by a Judge who sent a telegram attesting to this fact. We are now waiting to see if this will be enough evidence for the prosecutor. But the mere fact that w he was willing to talk about dropping the case means that things are being felt in Americus. They ~~had~~ had enough of us up there, that is very clear. But it is also clear that the Solicitor is getting very worried about the increased Negro vote as kept inferring what a "decent" guy he was and if it was up to him alone he would drop all these cases, and he would see what he could do, etc. I guess he's up for re-election soon. But we also got bad news from the same county. One ~~of~~ of the county officials told a local man (CB is representing him in a civil suit he is bringing against a white lady - unheard of in this part of the country) that they would see to it that the case would never be heard in their courts. We are going to have to start pressuring the Judge to calendar it. Its damn frustrating to represent someone in a civil suit as until the jury system is appreciably altered you will never win a case no matter what happened. A couple of days ago a man came up from Bainbridge, about 50 miles south of here. He owned a beautiful 250 acre farm which he had built up over the last 30 years. He bought it then for \$6000 and its now worth \$75000. A few years ago he bought a lot of new equipment and then had a heart attack so had trouble paying it off. He went to the man who held the note and the man told him that he would give him an extention if he would sign his propertey over to him. He did this and was making all the payments but he still couldnt work his land the way he should and needed a little extra time. He asked the man if he would give him another month, which the man agreed to do. The next day the man sold the place out from under him. Of course this extension wasnt in writing. When you are black and doing business with the white man you damn well better not tell him you doubt his word and ~~want~~ want an agreement in writing. People have been shot for less than that. So here is this poor bastard after working his whole life to build up this farm and they steal it from him. The Civil Rights Act cant do a god damn thing about this. And what the hell can we do - sue the Cracker in his racist court. Shit. And the most grotesque part is that when they threw him out of his house he unhitched a chandelier and now they threaten to swear out an arrest warrent unless he brings it back - and he has ~~xxxx~~ the right to take the chandelier but he is so frightened he will do anything they say. This is how Negroes live in the rural counties. They are ~~xxxx~~ absolutely under the whim of the white man. He can steal their property, rape their wife, and there isnt a damn thing they ~~xx~~ can do about it if they want to go on living. But now they can eat at Howard Johnsons and ~~w~~ everyone feels a whole lot better about things.

This whole incident reminded me of a story CB told me the other day. This ancient woman came in and was complaining about a neighbor who was "sprinkling dust" (Voodoo crap) around her place. He calmed her down and told her he would look into it and see that she stopped it. He told me

chat she comes in from time to time - usually to complain about someone working black magic on her, or to have him write her a letter, or make a phone call to the white man, or some other ~~man~~ relationship with the white man which she just cant handle. She is absolutely penniless - once she came in to tell him she wanted to pay him for all the work he had done for her and pulled out an old crumpled up dollar bill. He had quite a few clients in her position. But anyhow, the way he first got to know her was that her grandson was in jail and he tried to get him out on habeas. This was about 10 years ago when he first started practicing here - he had no money to pay for a court reporter at the hearing and of course she couldnt afford this - but they borrowed his fathers car and drove to the county where the jail was located and did have a habeas hearing which the relief was denied. But she has been eternally grateful to him for trying to help her grandson and now comes back with all her problems. The reason for all the foregoing is to tell what the grandson was arrested for, and how Negroes are never safe. The grandson was about 17 or 18 and had a job delivering orders for a grocery store. One day he was making deliveries in the rain, came back into the store and went into the back room. An old woman, white, who worked in the store, ran out and screamed that he had tried to rape her, and exposed himself to her. He was immediately taken before the Judge (Court wasnt in term then but that didnt seem to be a problem) and sentenced to 3 years in jail. What had happened was that he had crabs or some kind of body lice. The rain made them irritable and they were digging into his skin. So he went into the back and was standing by the stove with his pants open, ~~pickat~~ picking crabs off. The white woman walked into the back room and screamed - and he goes to jail for 3 years, and he was damn lucky they didnt call it attempted rape and give him life. Of course he didnt have anyone to represent him, and the system carried out its course against him the way it deals with indigent Negroes who occasionally fall into a white field of vision.

The other thing that came to mind with this story was the whole problem of billing clients that CB has. So many people come in each day and take up his time with long involved stories of being done in by whites - usually cases in which nothing can be done, and that even if something can be done the person doesnt have the money to bring suit and usually isnt even interested in this - he wants someone to tell his ~~st~~ story to. So we listen and give some advice or whatever is necessary and kill a couple of hours every day this way. Occasionally some of these people do pay something but usually its a wasted effort to even send a bill. The other day we got a letter from Valdosta. One of these letters written with pencil on ruled notebook paper - The letter read: "Dear Lawyer King, There has been Several letters here for Mr. Smith. he has gone to Cleaveland Ohio. Address I dont no. From a Friend". Mr. Smith was one of the people who came in for a whole lot of advice, and the office had been routinely billing him for the last three months. So I guess he is "From a Friend" and figuess this might stop the bills from coming.

On Wednesday Don Harris called from Washington to tell me about the Congresssional challeger and ask ~~h~~ me to write a story up for the local Negro paper as Wed. night was their deadline and they wouldnt get back beofer Thursday. The single thing which most impressed the people from Georgia was their visit to the Ghana Embassey. He called ahead before they left and set up appointments. While all the people from Miss were running around being rebuffed by various government department officials the people from South Georgia were receiving a gracious reception from an African nation, run by black men. It was a very good thing for them to see, ~~esper~~ after their treatment by their own government. The ~~ambassex~~ representative was a very high officer in their Embassey and he was very good. They saw a film on Ghana and another on Africa; were given booklets, and samples of products, etc., and treated like distinguished guests. We are going to try and get copies of these films to show in the counties around here. ~~Most~~ people have no idea that Africa has modern cities, etc. They believe

picture the white man has given them, in school and in the movies, of a bunch of wild cannibals and spear throwers rugning around in the bush. There is a Cracker who owns a movie in Harlem here and he has been intimidated enough by the pool hall guys so that he will show any movie that SNCC asks him to. Last summer they ran a couple of SNCC movies in his theater.

On Wednesday we tried a ~~xxx~~ case of a man charged with possession of lottery numbers. Before his case was called (we had to go back three different times that day) they had two whites being charged with a bunch of traffic offenses in the Albany Recorders Court. It was a very interesting things to see. These two guys were driving with their wivss. They were stopped by a cop and according to their testimony and that of a gas station operator who saw the whole thing, the cop provoked an argument and started to curse them out. He started choking one of them and the other tried to pull the cop off. The cop kicked him in the groin. The gas station guy ran over and asked the cop what the trouble was. The cop pulled his gun and told him to get the hell out of tere or he would ~~lik~~ kill him. During the cops testimony he was asked by the whites lawyer if he kicked the man. "Yes I kicked him, I kicked him as hard as I could". The city attorney then asked "You only kicked him after he attacked you right" Cop: "oh yeah, thats right". So occasionally even whites are the victims of these ~~x~~ sadistic bastards. Our case was very interesting. The defendant is a guy reputed to be a numbers runner. The Negro cops arrested him at the bus station (along with a white cop). He said he didnt write numbers that day, it was early in the morning, and this is what the people in Harlem have also been saying. It looks like they just arrested him on the wrong day - no warrant or anything of course. But since they picked him up they had to make ~~xx~~ a case against him so they produce a scrap of paper with a few numbers which the white cop claims he found in the guys hat. The Negro cops were really in a bind. This is the first time they arrested a guy defended by CB. There were about a dozen of the pool room crowd sitting in Court and when they felt the Negro cops were lying they started a lot of angry muttering. One of the Negro cops looked terrified. This is really too bad in a ~~ny~~ way as they had some amount of respect before, as ~~k~~ people felt they were Negroes and only incidently cops, but now they have proved themselves to be just like the white cops and there is no distinction being made in the eyes of the poolroom guys. The will have it alot harder from here on in. The trial proceeded much as usual when CB is in the Recorders Court. He delivers long and beautiful orations about due process of the law which serves no other purpose than to delight the pool hall guys. He also insists on pretending that this is a Court where the law, in all its solemn dignity, is heard, and so objects whenever the city prosecutor leads his witnesses, etc., which infuriates the judge. Of course the Court reacts the same as it did when I was here two years ago. The Judge drinks coke and reads the newspaper during the trial. The City prosecutor had another appointment so just left in the middle of CB's defense. And the Judge just found him guilty as usual - but this time the fine was less than the usual \$200 maximum misdemeanor which we really didnt understand.

The case the pool hall guys were really interested ~~xxx~~ in didnt get called that day and will come in this week. This is two loal barbers also charged with numbers. Everybody knows that they do not run numbers but they were arrested by one of the Negro cops and a bunch of white detectives. Things will be very bad for the Negro cop in this affair. The story going around Harlem is that the Negro cop was messing around with the girlfriend of ~~x~~ one of the barbers and the barber cursed him out ~~sxxx~~ for it in front of a lot of people. So ~~kxxxxx~~ a few days later this cop and a bunch of white detedtives arrest him for numbers. The pool hall guys are really pissed off about this - they have thier own moral code which this was a terrible violation of. All of this is really too bad as all the respect which the black cops built is being lost and Harlem, which had been relatively calm - the number of drunk arrests and cuttings was considerably down - will revert to the same old way.

On Friday I wrote to the Zoning Board to get permission to put the nursery school in the house they want as nurseries arent allowed (they are conditional rather than permissive use) in residentially zoned areas. I also wrote an article for the Negro paper on the school desegregation decision in Albany - next year the 1st through 4th and also the 11th and 12th grades will be desegregated - and explained how people go about transferring. CB really got an excellent order with two grades up and one grade down a year. ~~xxxx~~ It is drawn so that you can apply to the nearest ~~xxx~~ formerly all Negro, or nearest formerly all whites school and the only criteria for refusing a transfer is if there is no room in the school and there is no one who lives further away who is allowed to attend. - which is excellent as none of the white schools are overcrowded, and the housing patterns and school zones are such that almost anyone who wants to attend a white school can. The experience of the children attending the whites schools has, on the whole, been very good. The parents are very happy as the children are learning alot more - the classes are much smaller and there are books for everyone. In some of the Negro schools children have to share books and no one can take a book home as they are used by several different classes. There is relatively little equipment and supplies compared to the white schools.

Harris, Randy Battle and Coolie (John Washington) went up to Atlanta for a SNCC staff meeting. Harris wanted us to come along because of Wendy's nursery school project, but unfortunately the meeting never had enough time for this to be presented. But Foreman had heard about the idea and asked her for a copy of the prospectus. Cobb was also very excited about it, so maybe we will hear something from them.. We left at 2 am (the meeting started in the morning) and it was still going. They ~~wxx~~ were discussing plans for a staff ~~a~~ meeting where the summer black belt project would be worked out. ~~Things~~ This meeting was composed of mostly project leaders and the top people in SNCC and was an amazing cross section of the intellectuals and the local staff people working together. There had been alot of complaints about the "silent staff" - the local people who never said much at meetings because they felt inadequate to speak to the college trained staff, but this doesnt seem to be the case anymore. The most ~~a~~ impressive thing ~~was~~ was that the few whites who attended played a very insignificant ~~real~~ role in the interchange and dialogue that went on, so it is free from the old problems of white college kids coming in and attempting to run things. In fact a couple of the most ~~x~~ impressive ~~xx~~ speakers were two guys who ~~wxx~~ were raised in Mississippi and were not college educated, as they can best articulate the needs of the local people.

Dennis

Phil: This was a fantastic opportunity for me as I sat in on what is really a top ~~strag~~ echelon meeting of SNCC. I cant explain how impressed I am with some of the people I met. They are brilliant. So much of the Atlantic City stuff and other things are so clear to me now. They werent hoaxed or anything else - these guys know just where its at - but they ~~wxxwxx~~ were overpowered by the "official" civil right groups like Roy Wilkins. If a guy named Ivanhoe Donaldson ever gets to California make certain that you ~~h~~ go and hear him talk. He knows so clearly where its ~~ag~~ at - he spoke about the need to avoid any kind of centralizing decision making - that if the idea was good somehow it would ~~a~~ be put into effect. He was joined by Laurence Guyot, another amazing guy, and the leader of the MFDP. Guyot said that ~~the~~ summer project idea was only wanted by 4 people originally and that it won out because it was good and people could be convinced of this. That the Atlantic City challenge was wanted by only 3 people originally and the Washington Challenge only by 5 - he talked about how SNCC didnt ~~n~~ need a formal apparatus for hiring and firing, that people who felt they couldnt function where they were would eventually see this and move somewhere else. ~~(then had some... to transfer... at... and... fighting this...)~~

so long as it was anything formalized. He said that if a guy in Miss heard that things werent going well in Ala and he wanted to go then it should be encouraged, but that he wouldn't stand for someone being directed by Atlanta to go from here to there. The whole problem of discipline is a very difficult one for SNCC, and there are also hundreds of seemingly insurmountable problems, but after having listened to some of these guys I have tremendous faith in their abilities to work this stuff out. At one point there was an argument as to whether SNCC should send Miss staff into other projects to tell them about what had happened with the MFDP and try to teach people to organize similar things in their communities. There was a big argument about this. Mrs. Blackwell, a Miss woman with the MFDP got up and said that she just wanted everyone to know hhat the MFDP people had been talking about this, and that they had decided that they ~~w~~ were going to go around the South and tell people about he MFDP and that if SNCC wanted to go with them they were more than welcome, but that MFDP sure as hell wasnt going to be stopped just because SNCC didnt feel it was important enough - and this was great for the ~~knsp~~ people to hear.

We also learned how the Establishment is planning to do SNCC in. There is a memo going around the big civil rights org in NY now started by NAACP. What they plan to do is really to isolate SNCC - they want to put \$15million into Miss through the NAACP - to get King to come in and organize the ministers they also plan a big red baiting campaign this summer. Those mother fuckers make me ill, but as Ivanhoe said, "fuck them - we are here now and we will stay here and if they cut off every god damn penny we will still be here."

I also heard a very interesting story abut Savio. Lafayette Surney is the project director in McComb where Savio was. He wanted to stay on at the end of the summer, but the poeple wouldnt let him. Surney says he is a schmuck and told me of a couple of stupid things that he did. At first I couldnt believe it, but then more I think of it the more possible it is. It makes sense that he, as a northern white, really couldnt identify with what was ~~kn~~ happening, ~~sn~~ in a way which the people there could relate to. In other words he could intellectually comprehend a whole lot, but couldnt relate his actions to it. But he could come back to a college campus and transfer what he had seen and learned into a situation which he could more closely identify with. Just thought you would be ~~n~~ interested in this.

Oh, I also talked to Julian Bond who never did get the call through. (we got hung up on something else and forgot) But I talked to a guy there, I fogget his name, who had worked in Miss last summer and i s now in Atlanta who clearly sees the connection and was furious when he heard that Bond hant done this. Then the two of us gut in a big argument with Surney who didnt understand why ~~wxx~~ SNCC should be concerned with college students out in California's right to speak (probably comes from his personal dislike of SAVIO) but we did get him to see ~~n~~ how this issue accutey affected SNCC in terms of fund raising at least. I wish I had more concrete things to tell you. Ivanhoe told me that there is a plan for a SNCC legal defense group (Kinoy, etc) underway and he wants me to be a part of it and will let me know, but I am not getting too excited until I hear from him. I think I am now in a position to attend some more of these staff meetings and will go whenever I have time. Battle is more friendly towards me (he doesnt like whites) and he will probably ~~z~~ be the man here when Harris leaves.

Dennis