

March 7, 1965

Dear Phil:

Roy left for Atlanta on Friday for an Executive Committee meeting and hasn't returned yet - but I'll fill you in on what, if anything, is happening with the NEW STRUCTURE when he returns.

I'd like you to add my brother to the list of newsletters, and if it is possible, send him as many back copies as you have. He just got an apartment in New York, is learning sound editing for film, and is even talking about going out to Oakland to college next year. I just discovered I don't have his address here in the office, so I'll take this home and fill it in: Mr. Steve Roberts

Unfortunately, the Voice of Americus & Southwest Georgia has just changed editors. Scott McNeil, the anarchist, c.o., college proff and tractor repairman had a fight with the rest of the staff. It was felt that he and Perdew were "too radical". There is some stupid little white bitch from Washington state (Bellvue I believe is the town) who has been running the library and community center. She is now the editor and it has become the Negro high school society newspaper, with occasional stories about the wonderful classes in dance and art that Liz, the white chick, is making available for all those poor little kiddies. Before McNeil resigned he received three letters from Bellvue, Washington (alot of Liz's friends subscribe) which called him a communist (all 3) and an athiest (2).

Something you might like - I just saw a memo from Cleve Sellers who is one of the "unknown" voices of SNCC moved into new prominense. In explaining why the summer project will be Washington direct action and not whites to Mississippi, he says that (1) many of the people who were students at the Freedom Schools last year will be teaching this year, and that local people must run things themselves and (2) cutting whites off from Mississippi might force them to "look into their own backyards" for meaningful work.

Dear Friends:

The week started off with alot of writing. I find that I am engaging in more and more of this kind of work as opposed to "litigation", but am also convinced of its value. For example, Roy and I felt that it might be valuable to have some of the Moultrie parents write to the office of Health Education & Welfare, requesting that they reject the two grades a year plan proposed by the Moultrie Board of Education as woefully inadequate. What we conceived of as a handful of letters has grown to about 150. They made it a freedom school project and everyone became very enthusiastic - started to see it as a way of "petitioning for a redress of grievances". I don't think that HEW has responded yet, but I also don't think that they have accepted the Board's "plan", something that is normally done as a perfunctory matter - a fast "acceptance" of any crumbs that these Schhol Boards might want to throw down, so they can boast of their statistics of COMPLIANCE. But this might pose a new problem for them. I also wrote a letter to HEW, as an attorney interested in the situation (I still have a hell of a lot of trouble thinking of myself as an "attorney" and wait for the letter from California telling me the whole thing was a big mistake on the part of some records clerk.) - the letter ran about 4 pages and I just outlined all the reasons why this plan is totally unacceptable. Meanwhile, the Bibb and Muscogge County cases were decided by the Fifth Circuit and they ruled that these grade a year plans are no damn good - that schools have until 1968 to

desegregated, and want them to work from top and bottom at the same time. They ordered Bibb and Muscogee to desegregated 9th through 12th and also first by 1965 and to be completely integrated by 1968. Meanwhile the Inc. Fund likes our novel request for relief - that Bryant H.S. be closed immediately and all ~~stufx~~ students be integrated and absorbed into the other existing high schools in the county (all white), and is willing to go up on it to the Fifth Circuit.

But it seems that someone in Moultrie has decided on using the ancient remedy of "self-help". There have been 6 fires at Bryant HS in the past three weeks. On Wed. March 3rd there were 4 fires set at the school. Two in the band room and two in the "library" - the two worst facilities that dump has to offer. The fire chief says these were "definitely instances of arson". But aside from the school fires, there have been others. Several stores in the Negro community, owned by whites who have very bad hiring policies, have also been burned. One store, across from the high school, was burned to the ground. The Cracker who owned it was supposed to have slapped a Negro girl a while ago.

The other writing I have done is for the Negro newspapers in Albany. One piece explaining the school deseg plan in Albany (next year there will be open enrollment at first, and second, third, fourth, also eleventh and 12th grades. SNCC is doing a very thorough job of canvassing to get parents to send their kids, setting up parents meetings where parents of kids already in the white schools are speaking - having the 6 high school seniors go to PTA meetings and speak - there has been some problem with a few of the "Tom" principals who wont let them have the floor, but on the whole the Negro school officials have been very cooperatives. Also some research on restoration of civil rights to ex-convicts produced an article informing them that even if they have done time for a felony they can apply to the Board of Pardons and Paroles to have their civil rights (right to vote) restored. Many guys who have done time just assume they can never vote again and dont bother trying to do anything about it. Such a large number of Negroes have done time during their lives: liquor charges, small burglaries, etc - and because of the Court system here they get large sentences - that this could result in an appreciable number of people who can now vote.

Finally, a three page letter to Kunstler and Kinoy, with an idea Roy suggested for using law students in SWGa this summer. At first I didnt like it but after talking about it for a long time began to see alot of merit. Basically it would entail using 3 or 4 of them directly in the field - to serve as "legal consultants" to SNCC staff. But before they came here they would have to attend exhaustive seminars in various aspects of "social" law: welfare rights, consumer buying, etc., along with real practical knowledge in filing removal petitions and also some of the affirmative ligation that is being brought by K & K in Miss. Then they could go into the other towns in SWGa and ~~ax~~ lay the ground-work for this ligation.

Roy has gone up to Atlanta for an Exec meeting, and took Stu with him. Stu is going back to Detroit. He showed up here about 4 weeks ago - he was in Atlanta and Herman brought him down to Moultrie fo work there (He wasnt on SNCC staff). First day there he was put in jail, and when he got out Roy brought him to Albany. There seemed to be quite a bit of friction building between Stu and the rest of the staff, as he had a tendency to talk incessantly, and had "just lots of good advice" for everyone. A few days before leaving for the Staff meeting a large bundle of National Guardians came into the office. When Harris was here he used to take them down to the pool hall and pass them out. Which was beautiful because it looked like those adds for the Philadelphia Inquirer - a picture of hundreds of people milling around reading the Inquirer at some event which would normally have taken their attention with the caption. "In Phila nearly everyone reads

the Inquirer". So Roy loaded Stu up with a huge bundle (Stu by the way is a very short white kid), brought him down to the pool hall, opened the door for him, told him to make sure every one got one and not to step on anyone's shoes or brush against them while they were shooting, and turned him loose in a room jammed with the roughest hoods in Albany. It must have been a very harrowing experience.

Tuesday was a complete waste. First two white ladies showed up from Chicago. One was writing a book, I don't remember exactly what she was writing, but something to do with Negro voting, and the other was just along with her. They sat around and talked from 9 a.m. until close to 1, when I finally suggested that perhaps they should go to the SNCC office to get more information. About an hour after that a white guy from a newspaper, also from Chicago I think, dropped into the office, and wanted an exclusive on the Moultrie situation. We managed to get rid of him in about 45 minutes. So damn many people come to the office wanting to interview CB or just to talk, and he allows them to waste hours of his time and after they go he bitches about how he wasted the day and how this won't happen again. The people who come in generally (with a very few rare exceptions) really seem to feel that he owes them all sorts of time - "they are very sympathetic to his work and to the Movement" - and get extremely pushed out of shape when I suggest that we have a lot of work to get out that day. And when you add to these people all the local people who come up to the office, and tell you they don't want a conference, "I just want to tell him a question" there is very little time left to do anything that is productive of income. He is far too patient and tolerant as far as I can see, because these damn interviewers drive me crazy with their naive questions and arrogant demands for time.

But like I said, CB is extremely understanding. This brought to mind a story he told me of his first personal injury suit. An old Negro lady had been injured on the city bus (this was long before the Movement boycott put them out of business). He took the case on a contingent fee basis - 33% - which is the "suggested minimum" of the Dougherty County Bar Assn (of which he cannot become a member, even if he wanted to, because of race). So the bus company finally settled for \$3000. When the lady came up to the office to get her \$2000, he gave her \$2400 instead - he said he just couldn't take \$1000 when he knew she needed it more than he did.

CB's financial situation is somewhat of an enigma to the white community. They are convinced that he is a millionaire. One white lawyer told him a while ago that he had conducted a systematic search of the records of every bank in ~~Georgia~~ Albany and Atlanta, and wanted to know why CB was keeping his fortune out of state. A couple of days ago a white school teacher came into see him and it turned out that she wanted to borrow \$100 to pay some back bills. She seemed very annoyed when he told her he wasn't a lending institution. She just assumed that he would reach into his desk drawer and give her a \$100.

On Wednesday night the Dougherty County Resources Development Association, Inc. held its executive committee election meeting. All the Tom ministers and the rest of the "chosen representatives" of the white folks downtown were soundly defeated. Goldie and Slater are two of the officers. I was really afraid they would gain control and sell the ~~the~~ thing out, but right now it looks pretty good. And the new by-laws are published with the anti-communist clause deleted.

Wendy was talking to JoAnn Christian and a couple of the other girls who are in the white school (high school). They said that things are appreciably better than in the beginning of the year (when they were surrounded by the football team and had soda bottles thrown at them), in that there have been some glimmers of communication. The 6 girls who

transferred are extremely strong, and willing to make all kinds of efforts to get through to these Crackers no matter how they are rebuffed. Jo tells about how she got into a discussion with a group of girls who told her that their maids steal from them. Jo asked them whether they thought they could feed 6 children on the \$15 or \$20/week which their mothers pay these maids, and wanted to know whether they wouldnt steal too, to feed their children. This kind of shook ~~in~~ things up. A while ago Mamie Ford was walking across campus with a white girl. This had never happened before, but they were in a discussion after class and werent ~~not~~ really conscious about continuing it as they walked to another building. Kids in the windows of other buildings went crazy and a riot almost got started. Books, bottles, etc were thrown at them; all sorts of ~~names~~ screaming and cursing went on. But the principal is supposed to have expelled about a dozen kids for it, and if this is true, it will do more than anything else to stop crap like that. They also showed up at a dance held in a club, but sponsored by the school, and were refused admittance at the door. But in spite of all the crap they have to put up with, every one of them is ga glad she transferred as the level of education is so appreciably different than that offered at the Negro high school, that it is worth the harrassment. So you can imagine what the Negro school must be like, as very few white southern schools are worth anything.

Wendy went to Atlanta on the weekend with Carol King to buy some equipment forthe nursery school. I went to another union meeting with the guy next door. It was as good as last week and with evan more people. The company is trying everything it can think of to keep the poeple from voting in the union - the local Negro ~~and~~ dentist's secretary has been phoning all the workers and telling them to vote ~~the~~ against the union, the company has bingo games with large prizes on the night~~s~~ of union meetings, the bulleting boards are filled with anti-union cartoons, etc. What was good about the meeting was that the white organizer on~~ly~~ spoke for a few minutes, and that all other speeches were made by the employees who are trying to ~~r~~ organize. One real old guy got up and made this very long speech and in the course of it told how his father never gave him anything (he was talking about how they should organize not for themselves but for their children), except \$1.10 He gave him the money and told him: The dollar is for a pair of overalls with a top pocket and a bottom pocket. The ten cents is for a pad and a pencil. Put the pencil in the top pocket and put the pad in the bottom pocket and go to school and learn something because if you ~~are~~ dont learn the white man will cheat you for the rest of your life.

Yesterday Semmie Lee Willis' parents finally came in to see us and we learned some intersting things about his case. He is the guy g doing 33 years in the Sumter County Work Camp, who had this white inmate write us. From what the mother told us, it seems that one night he came home very drunk. His house is directly across the street from a white woman who was a widow. She said that she woke up in the middle of the night and found him asleep on her bed. She turned on the light and shook him untilhe woke up; he realized where he was, said: "Oh Lord, Miss Myrtle, I sure am sorry" and walked out. The sheriff arrested him several hours later in his own bed where he was still sound asleep - the whole thing was probably like some kind of nightmare to him. She also said that he never touched her, and didnt touch her purse which was sitting on the dresser. They took him to another county and held him about a week. They wouldnt tall the parents where he was until one day the sheriff came out to see them and said, "Semmie's been sentenced. They put some years on him". Which is quite an understatement. So we'll ~~have~~ have to drive to the county, about 50 miles away, and see what the record shows, and then go out to see him. I would really like to see a study done on the number of Negroes serving time on "guilty pleas" where there was no counsel of ~~their~~ choice involved/.

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 what the MFDP people had been talking about this, and that they had decided that they were going to go around the South and tell people about the 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 ~~black~~ 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 about 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 people wouldnt let him. Surney says he is a schmack 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 ~~happening~~, ~~as~~ 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 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 is now in Atlanta who clearly sees the connection and was furious when he heard that Bond hadnt done this. Then the two of us got in a big argument with Surney who didnt understand why ~~we~~ 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 how this issue acutely 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 be the man here when Harris leaves.

Dennis