

June 20, 1965

Dear Friends,

Rev. Wells ran for a seat on the City Commission. So hundreds of kids ran around the Negro neighborhoods putting posters on trees and phone poles - and the cops follow them around tearing them down; then they started arresting kids and we had to run down to the jail - they didn't plan to hold them because they know they can't make anything stick, but it's just the same old harassment. They had been picking up kids and then turning them loose but one young girl put ~~an~~ up a sign which she made herself, not one of the regular posters, which said: "A Vote for Wells is a Vote from Hell" (meaning it was a vote for a way to escape from the hell that people live in) so some moronic cop came up and crossed out "from" and wrote in "to" - so she came back and crossed out "to" and wrote "from" in again - and he arrested her; he tried to put handcuffs on her but she was holding a hammer which she used to put up her sign and when he grabbed her she told him to turn her loose or she'd hit him with it - this happened in one of the Negro housing projects and a lot of people came out and stood around the cop. He got very scared but finally a squad car came and took her away. They had a juvenile hearing for her a couple days later (she was out on her own recognizance) but the cop didn't show up so they continued it. Then Rev. Wells had a loudspeaker on a car and was driving around the ghetto encouraging people to come out and vote - so they arrested him. He didn't have a permit to run the loudspeaker even tho the city ordinance is clearly unconstitutional having been so held by the USSC in a very similar case. But Pritchett is running scared lately - I think the damage suit we filed against him is helping and also there is a federal injunction against him prohibiting him from arresting for constitutionally permissible conduct. We went down to the jail for Wells but they had already turned him loose - but they still wouldn't give him the permit (which we contend he doesn't need) and he went back to the projects with the loudspeaker. He rode around until late in the evening but the cops never came back. Finally one of the kids called the cops and told them that Rev Wells was out there running the loudspeaker and disturbing the peace but they still didn't come out to arrest him. But the election itself didn't go very well. There were three whites and Wells in the race. Two whites got about 1900 votes each, Wells got about 1500 and the other guy got about 250. It was a very poor turnout, but there is no provision in the City Code for poll watchers so we will never know how honest it was. Many Negroes were turned away because of a "mixup" as to which polling place they were registered at, etc.

I learned something very interesting the other day about the rural counties. Very few Negroes out there have phones - and I just assumed it was because it is an expensive luxury, but I was told by some people from Worth County that they have been trying to get phones for 4 and 5 years without success. They are told that no lines run out that way, the white farmers who adjoin their land have service. It turns out that they only have party lines out in the rural and they don't want to put Negroes on the same party lines with whites. And I

guess the power structure thinks this is an excellent arrangement and there is absolutely no communication between these rural families except driving dozens of miles from farm to farm. They are now on a big letter writing campaign to the phone company in Atlanta and also to the State Public Utilities commission to see if they can't remedy this.

My motion for rehearing in the Burkes case was sent off to the Ga. Supreme Court and two days later I got a postcard telling me it was denied so we will go into the Federal court on Habeas.

The other day a woman phoned the office, very upset. She had been living in a house with another woman who had rented it in her name. Now her friend moved out and she wanted to go on paying the rent on it. First the landlord agreed and accepted the first week's rent but he just came over and told her he was putting her out, that day because she was unmarried with 5 or 6 kids and didn't have a job so he couldn't be sure about getting the rent on time. He said he was coming back in a couple of hours and if her furniture wasn't an out before then he would put it on the street, as he had a tenant who wanted the place that day. I told her that under Georgia law she had three days after eviction notice and to tell him that if he had any problems with that he should call her lawyer. These bastards just take advantage of the fact that people don't know their rights, and their fear - most people would have just moved their stuff onto the street and started looking for another place, but this lady wasn't going to be pushed around - she said she was glad to learn that she had 3 days because if he touched a piece of her furniture she was going to kill him.

We made several trips to Moultrie last week on Ricks and Kitchens cases. First we went down for the signing of the bill of exceptions. Then the Judge called and said that he discovered that we had some testimony that shouldn't be in the brief of evidence but should have been incorporated in the bill of exceptions itself. There is no law on the point and it is absolutely immaterial in which document it is in as it gets before the Supreme Court anyhow but he insisted so we made another trip to Moultrie (and a hell of a lot of extra paper work). Then the next day he called and said he discovered that a written order overruling our motion to challenge the jury panel had never been entered. He ruled orally and it is entered in the reporters transcript but he wanted a written order - a damn two sentence statement which he could have written himself and filed with the Clerk, but no - so another 80 mile round trip to Moultrie. Then the bastard had the nerve to apologize for having us make all these trips but "I just want to see the issue clearly before the Court and not have it decided on a procedural technicality" - and the damndest thing is that he might just be serious. This Judge is really a pretty good guy by south Georgia standards (tho when I said this C.B. asked me if I was forgetting, just for a minute, who I was and where I was). He was certainly civil during the trial and in conferences with him; it was always "Mr. King" and not any of that "C.B." crap - and ~~he~~ tho he did convict (the system demands it) he didn't give maximum sentences.

Well, the unbelievable finally happened. C.B. won a case in Recorders Court - not before the Hon. A. N. Durden of Albany as that will never happen, but in Moultrie. One of the SNCC kids had an accident with a white woman and he was charged with reckless driving. Since they were planning to throw the book at him ~~and~~ C.B. went down to defend him. It was an intersection accident and both the cop and the woman's testimony placed her on the wrong side of the imaginary center line at point of impact. So C.B. got up and asked for a directed verdict. The Judge then asked the cop again if he was sure that that was where the woman's car was and the cop didn't catch on and said yes he was sure, so the Judge said, "well, there's nothing I can do here but dismiss the charges". Which is a far cry from Recorders Court in Albany where CB overheard the Solicitor telling the Judge, "I know this charge won't stick but we gotta charge these niggers with something" (and he did).

The reason this letter is so short for one which covers two weeks is that I spent the last four days in bed. I bent over to carry out some of Wendy's nursery school stuff out of the office where it had been stored and hurt my back. I was convinced it was another disc because the pains were the same. But after 4 days of lying in bed with an electric hot pad I feel much better. I'm going to Atlanta tomorrow to have a doctor look at it anyhow, just to make certain.

Four of the law students are here. A married guy from Berkeley and his wife are on the way. These four are working out pretty well. One guy, a white kid from Columbia, got here about two weeks ago. They took him down to Cordele one night for a mass meeting and because Peacock was in jail. Peacock was arrested for "discharging a firearm within the city limits" and several assorted offenses. Seems his romance went sour, he got very drunk, and did, in fact, discharge a firearm within the city limits. So the SNCC guys and Stan went up to the jail to see him and find out the charges. When they asked what the charges were the desk sargent told them "discharging a gun..." and a couple of others like drunk and disorderly. Stan told him he wasn't interested in what the officer thought the charges were but demanded a copy of the city code and wanted the exact ordinance numbers. Everyone got very pushed out of shape and finally dug up the city code. Then Stan told them that they had damn well be sure that Peacock got the right food (he's a diabetic) because if anything happened to him the city of Cordele would never have enough money to pay for the damage action that would be brought. A little later Fred (the guy who was Rev. Pullwood's "legal advisor") called up the Judge and told him that Peacock wasn't getting the right food. The Judge was very concerned and offered to set bond over the phone. Fred said it didn't matter as they couldn't raise the bond anyhow, so the Judge called the station and had him turned loose on his own promise to appear. Stan is now working in Americus, probably raising hell up there. Drew Days, a Negro guy from Yale, and also a very good man is now working in Cuthbert. Another white guy from NYU is working in Worth

County and will then be moved to Moultrie or Cordele. The fourth guy, Furman Templeton, is in our office. The whole thing with putting law students out in the counties is a kind of experiment. One of our biggest problems is that we really don't know the most important kinds of litigation to bring on behalf of people out in the counties as we aren't there on a day to day basis, and the only people we hear from are the "Negro leaders" who may or may not represent what the people really need. Like a funeral director from the counties who lives on a paved road may be very concerned with school desegregation or a particular restaurant discriminating, but the people in that county may be much more concerned with the fact that they live on unpaved mud paths. Hopefully, a law student working out there every day and going around with the SNCC people can determine these things and gather all the relevant data for us. They can also be of assistance to SNCC in that every day a dozen questions come up involving "legal" problems - but by the time these guys get into our office they have forgotten the question or the urgency has passed. And depending on how independent the student is he can find a lot of things to do on his own - like Stan will be writing articles about people's legal rights in various areas for the Negro paper in America. If the experiment works I hope it will change the orientation of the LSRRRC away from placing guys with lawyers, so many of whom don't really do any civil rights work, or are in a position to afford law clerks, and instead put them with SNCC and other local Movements for the summer.

Dennis

A very strange thing happened at the Nursery School. There is a group of between 20 to 30 kids ranging in age from 3 to 20 who hang around there every day. Some are very helpful and have really built the whole school - others are destructive as hell, and most just hang around. But they have come to think of it as THEIR place and ~~when~~ the Wendy and Bettye have told them many times that one day they wouldn't be able to come around because it would only be for little children - no one really believed it. So the other day they had to put every one out as they start on Monday and had some last minute arrangements to make. The kids were furious; banging on the doors and windows - a dozen of them just sat on the porch all day long. The next morning they found that someone took magic marker and wrote on the wall of the playhouse "Windy kis my asses" and "Betty pussy". But to counteract this the next day someone scrawled "I love Betty and Wendy" on the front door and on the sidewalk. It will be a hell of a problem getting these kids used to the fact that the school is only for kindergarten kids as for many of them it is the only real home they have. SNCC is now trying to find another building in the neighborhood to let the kids fix up and turn into a freedom school, but until they do there are going to be a lot of very pissed off kids in CME.