

Thursday, May 28

Dear Vails,

I was hoping to have a chance to write sooner as I wanted to relate to you all that has been going on in connection with SNCC, but have been caught up in various other matters until now.

Last Saturday we had an all-day orientation meeting which was a real doozy as it was beastly hot and the church basement wasn't terribly well ventilated. (But everyone kept saying "wait till you get to Miss. if you think this is bad"). The meeting was fascinating and much too long to relate in all its detail, but i shall try to give you a small idea of what went on. We were "oriented" by a group of speakers, from various professions, all of whom had spent at least some time in the south working with various aspects of the rights movement. The thing which really impressed me about all of them was that despite the fact that all of them had spent time in jail and told ghastly stories of mistreatment (a mild word for what some of them went through) and deprivation of rights, not a one of them was bitter or disillusioned with the movement or their personal work within it. At this point, before the summer project starts, the point they most emphasized over and over again was the fact that one of the only things which will keep us all safe (relatively) this summer is vast and continuous publicity of what we are doing. It is one of the few things which can prevent the Miss. police et al from doing as they wish, since when national attention is focused upon them they must tread more lightly. On June 10 a committee of SNCC officials will meet with President Johnson with the hope of convincing him to send in a substantial force of federal marshalls for the summer--- who will be constantly on hand in case of any trouble and who have the right to make on-the-spot arrests in the face of blatant refusals and denials of Constitutional rights (i.e., police brutality, the beating of prisoners, especially within the confines of a police station, denial of writs of habeas corpus, denial of proffered bail, etc.). Evidently the Justice Dept. men and FBI officers who are already in the south already have this privilege and duty of the on-the-spot arrest, but very seldom step in when they should. One of the SNCC workers at our session told a jolly story: he had been hauled into a police station in Jackson, Miss. and, while the police chief held him, a dozen men beat him up quite severely. The next day while he was in his cell, recuperating from his beating, a FBI man appeared to take pictures of his cuts and bruises. Said the FBier, with all



apparent sincerity, i suppose, "Don't worry, son. I was there while those brutes were beating you up. In fact i even took notes and got some pictures of the whole thing. You needn't feel that you are alone without sympathy down here. The FBI is always around." This is all well and good, but it seems to me that a little more than just sympathy was called for in this situation. Perhaps i'm wrong. Maybe this sort of beating is within the Constitutional rights of the police -- if so, 'tis a black era for our country. We certainly can't honestly call the Nazis or the Red Chinese brutes and inhumane when we permit this sort of thing, especially with a federal government official standing by, "seeing the whole thing", and not moving to do his duty. I suspect that we treat our pets and animals in general much better and with more respect than we treat our fellows. In any event, i am hoping that you don't want the same sort of thing to happen to me and that you will be willing to do something in retaliation. At the moment the first thing you could do it to write to your Congressmen (i've already sent off letters to Messrs. Lausche, Young, Clark, Scott, Saltonstall and Robert and Edward Kennedy), telling them that your (erstwhile, hairbrained) daughter will be spending the summer in Miss. working under the auspices of SNCC and that you would like to know that i will be in some way protected by having President Johnson send in substantial forces of federal marshalls for the summer who clearly understand that theirs is a right and duty of on-the-spot arrest (U.S. Code) in the face of violation of Constitutional rights. Perhaps someone like Mrs. Wyatt and others who are interested in our collective welfare would also be willing to send letters. Letters also to Pres. Johnson and the local newspapers would be more than welcome. I realize that you may be a bit reticent about doing this, but after all it is the right of every American (and indeed: the very essence of a democracy) to voice his opinions to even the highest officials, and i would like to come out of this unscarred if possible. On June 9 there will be a public hearing in D. C. sponsored by SNCC and other southern rights groups featuring testimony from many people who have worked for these groups in the South, emphasizing to the President and the country that the need for these federal marshalls is indeed necessary. Hopefully you will be able to catch part of the hearing at least, and find out what i have gotten myself into. It's really scary!

As to particulars, i will be leaving the Law School on Friday, June 12, i think; from here we all go to Ohio Wesleyan for a much-needed training session which will last for about a week. From there we will be "bussed in" to Miss. The project ends around the 23 of August. In the meantime i am busy sewing little "care packets" into my skirts so that if i have to go to jail i will at least be partially prepared.



I was quite surprised by my professors' reactions to my project for the summer. Mr. Sander, the strong supporter of civil rights and monetary contributor to SNCC said "What do you want to do that for?" and offered no further comment. Mr. Katz, the "independent Republican", on the other hand, said, upon hearing the news, "Isn't that exciting, isn't that grand! And good for you, etc." Guess you just can't tell about people.

Hopefully i won't go to jail, but just in case i do, would you be willing to post my bond? You will of course get it back eventually, and i would pay it myself, but i don't think i have enough money in the bank, and in any event would be unable to get it out of there without appearing in person, which seems out of the question. I seem to be getting you into something which you really didn't want to be a part of, or at least not quite so actively. I do apologize if i am putting you on the spot and would avoid it if i could. Forgive me if i am being an ungrateful daughter. I am proud to say, however, that i owe most of the way i feel about things of this sort to you both. Thank you.

Hope this finds you all well and kicking. Has Dave definitely gotten with job with the corporation? Again let me thank you for the fun vacation. Back here in the cement city all is fine.

Much love to you all,

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