MEMORANDUM

To: Tim West

Fm: Joe Sinsheimer

Re: Interviews with Bruce Payne

Dt: November 12, 1998

Enclosed are two interviews with Bruce Payne. Bruce was a student at Yale University when he became involved in the Mississippi civil rights movement. Payne became of the first northern white students to volunteer in Mississippi. In the fall of 1963, Payne spent two weeks in Mississippi, valunteering his services as part of the 1963 Freedom Vote campaign. In the interviews: Payne discusses 1) Allard Lowenstein's role in recruiting students to the Mississippi movement 2) Bob Moses' leadership style and 3) about the importance of the 1963 Freedom Vote in the history of the Mississippi campaign.

Interview with Bruce Payne
Durham, North Carolina
March 18, 1983

Joe Sinsheimer: After high school graduation, where was Bruce Payne, what was he doing?

Bruce Payne: Let me begin before that. And it might be worth beginning before that with some other people. I came from a Forest Service family, public service family, liberal family, fully developed Truman Democrats. And I was an Eagle Scout and I was student body president of my high school, big high school.

And I was kind of a liberal activist in high school. Questions of tax increases for the school and so forth. I led a demonstration while in high school at the school board.

When I got to Berkeley, a lot of students who I had known went to Berkeley, so I knew already a lot of people. I immediately became a member of the campus political party, SLATE, which was a kind of liberal-left political party. I was unusual in it because I wasn't a child of the Old Left. About half the people in it had, I would say, had some kind of left connection in their background. I was from a different kind of background.

Sinsheimer: What year is this now, do you know?

Payne: This was 1959. I had already run for office as early as 1960. And lost but did better than some of the other SLATE candidates. I was speaking on platforms-- I remember early in 1960 we had a day of speaking and talking out for four and half hours. It was in response to the sit-ins in the South. This was sometime around February of 1960. And in May of 1960 I was co-chairman of the meeting in Union Square in San Fransisco against the House Un-American Activities Committee. The day befeore the students were washed down the stairs.

Again, it was because I was a kind of liberal, fair-haired boy, student body president Eagle Scout type. There were lots of other people that could have done that. But I had already moved into a kind of moderate position of leadership in SLATE, and I was our good candidate and our good figure for the outside world.

Payne (cont.): My position in those days was pro-Adlai Stevenson, and when Stevenson wasn't, didn't win the nomination, I was unenthusiastically in favor of Jack Kennedy, who I regarded as a kind of not very brave moderate. And I worked on the campaign some, but over the summer, the summer of 1960, I had been active in the National Student Association (NSA). First met Al Lowenstein, just briefly at the NSA Congress in 1960. By an odd chance I ended up on the National Executive Committee of the NSA, because I was a regional officer and somebody res resigned.

So I knew all the NSA leadership, gave a nominating speech for Tim Jenkins, who was the black natioanal first vice-president of the NSA. So those were the people that had been responding to the civil rights movement, and I had some kind of connection with all that. I spent the next ...

Sinsheimer: What was your academic interest at this point?

Payne: Well, being so involved in politics in high school I decided the one thing that I didn't want to do was major in political science at Berkeley. So I was trying to find the truth somehow, and taking various courses in psychology, and anthroplogy and so forth; but gradually came to find that the people that I admired most were a group of political theorists at Berkeley. Jack _____, Shelton _____, Norman Jacobsen.

And gradually I fell into taking courses with them and became a politcal science major in spite of myself. I think I took eight courses, twenty-four semester hours in politcal theory. Including the honors seminar in political science with Norman Jacobsen for two whole years.

So I spent an awful lot of time on politics. I was involved with some of the organizing about farmworkers, just supporting it on the campaus. I was involved a little bit in the anti- capital punishment work. Mainly I was involved in trying to make a real place for politics on campaus.

The only place we had was off the campus really was _____ YMCA, and I was corresponding secretary or something there for a semester. But I kept working because what I really believed is that educational reform and political consciousnes went hand-in-hand. And I wanted to see that kind

Payne (cont.): of thing happen at Berkeley, and Berkeley was an enormously exciting place then.

Sinsheimer: So would you say that at that time as you were doing this you felt like you were making progress, felt like keep going, or were their periods of say frustration and then progress ...?

Payne: I was encouraged about the progress, the growth in consciousness about politcs among students then. Things happened pretty totally unpolitically through the fifties, and I had seen a little bit of that. And you know being around San Fransisco and being around Berkeley there was a little bit of difference, there was always a little bit of stirring. I was reading the political poets from San Fransisco and buying books from Lawrence Ferlingetti at the City Lights bookshop and so forth.

Yeah I was moderately hopeful. I thought that things were headed for a smash-up at the University. I thought that the way that Clark Kerr was monitoring the University of California was a real mistake. And eventually there would be some kind of blow-up there, and I actually told him that in his office in early '63. Basically he didn't want anybody to do anything that everyone couldn't do, more or less the same factory theory of the university. And he called it a Multi-versity, he wouldn't call it a University.

And I thought that universities are fragile places and that it would be better to have some sort of incremental change than to have the whole thing blow up in Kerr's face. And I think, you know, what happened in universities across the country was not all that helpful. The University administration on the whole committed an atrocity, expelled somebody or you know, brought the police on campus in the midst of negogiations, or did something that mobilized everybody against them, polarized the campus. But the reforms that came out of it on the whole weren't very impressive.

And it that kind of politcal situation, it seems to me likely that they won't be.Well, anyhow, I wearied but I guess on the whole I was hopeful.

Sinsheimer: What did you do the first couple of summers between school, did you stay at Berkeley?

Payne: Yep. The first summer I don't quite remember. Let's see, what did I do? I guess I worked -- I can't remember. One summer I worked for the Forest Service. Oh that first summer, that's right, I worked for a camp, a camp counselor. I had been a Boy Scout camp counselor. I worked for a church related camp and then I went to the NSA Congress and spent all my time traveling around.

The second summer I worked for the Forest Service. That was the summer after my sophomore year. The third summer after my junior year I went home, and I took a course in Statistics that summer and worked for my father on the house. . Built a fence, did some other things. Did a lot of political stuff that summer with Rene Davis. Rene and I were very close friends. He was at Oberlin and I had met him through Carol Williams, who had run off to Oberlin to teach and been a graduate student at Berkeley.

So we did that. We both took a Statistics course that summer. He was working for the Labor Department and wanted to do things with SDS and other people. I was sort of on the fringe of a lot of discussions, a good many of them were about civil rights. And Rene lived at our place that summer.

So again I was, I guess that summer in '62 I went to the NSA Congress in ... where? In Columbus, Ohio. And then I got to know a lot of people. Ed Schwartz who is now running for City Council in Philadelphia. I worked with a lot of people, I didn't know that the opposition was the CIA. I was kind of dumb, I thought my people were going to win. I was playing sort of a semi-powerful role, a kind of brokering of things, because I knew a lot of people in the West, I knew a lot of people around the country. I wanted to see good solid thoughtful liberals win, but I also wanted to see people who were concerned with educational reform. Again, I was chairman of some committee that had to do ... . I met Joel Fleishman oddly enough that summer. He was advising that committee.

And I met Al (Lowenstein) again Again not at any great length. The first time I spent any time with Al he was at Stanford during my senior year, and Ed Garvey came out traveling, through the NSA, and I took him down and we spent the day talking with Al. Because I ususally had some relationship with the NSA people that traveled out to the West.

The summer after my senior year I also spent in D.C.. Again mostly working for my Dad. I had some kind of minor paying job as well. I was getting ready to go

Payne (cont.): to graduate school in the fall at Yale. I missed the March on Washington because I had to be up at Yale by a certain time for some ... (inaudible). But I was in Washington both before and after and knew some of the people who were involved in the planning of it.

Sinsheimer: What was your attitude toward that?

Payne: Well, I was for the March.

Sinsheimer: Disappointed that you didn't get to go?

Payne: Yeah, real disappointed that I couldn't be there. I remember that I had to be in New York that morning. I didn't get involved in the planning of the March so much, but somehow my friends were talking about it, and they were -- I knew a lot of people on the Hill at that time. I guess I didn't take it as seriously as a kind of historic event. It was one more thing that was going on, and it was going to be a big thing, and I sort of wished I had some, at the time I had some role working on it. But anyway I had organized some things and I had some time for that. But it looked like a big thing. I heard the about the kind of things John Lewis was saying, and the argument about his speech and so forth.

But I was real pleased by how it cam off. And I was moderately disappointed in those days, predictably disappointed by the Kennedy administration on civil rights. I didn't have much use for Bob Kennedy, I didn't have much use for the President really. I still thought that they were a lot more decent, people more committed to civil rights, which I thought was kind of a fundamental issue.

And increasingly disturbed by what was going on in the South because the denial of voting rights was so proved, so _____, and that was such a fundamental thing. And I had been sympathetic to the sit-ins, I had raised money. But I had never wanted to be a Freedom Rider and I had never wanted to sit-in at lunch counters. I thought that those were significant, I was for them, but I had never seen myself involved in that. But the voting stuff-- every once in awhile I would think, you know, something really ought to be done about that. The damn administration should do something. It's terrible that the Federal Courts are not intervening more directly.

Payne (cont.): I didn't know much about reconstruction history then, but I had a sense that, you know, haven't we learned anything in a hundred years. These are evident prima facie denials of fundamental constitutional rights. Why can't you just get a court order and force it right there. So I was, really was increasingly-- and I was paying attention to the issues especially that year and that summer-- increasingly impatient with the federal government.

Sinsheimer: How were you keeping on top of things, just being around a college environment? Just reading the news media?

Payne: I knew a number of people who were sort of my community at Berkeley who were better informed than I was generally. I had finally gotten to reading a regular paper, and I guess the Times was coming in my senior year in California for a brief while.

But somehow I was always better informed in the summer when I was home in D.C., and home with my parents and reading the newspapers and so forth. The group of people I was with at Berkeley were pretty _____ on the whole, and only intermittenly was... but I used to in those days get much more out of conversation than any kind of intense reading. Which I didn't do enough of in college.

I guess I was almost always among say the top twenty percent of the students at Berkeley in terms of being well-informed about national issues. But hell there were a lot of people around there who didn't know anything.

Sinsheimer: Right. So now we have you going to New York to Yale?

Payne: Yeah. When I got to Yale I was, friends of mine had told me that Bill Kaufman was a person very much worth meeting. That he was the center of all the best stuff politcally at Yale. I met him right away. I told him I was a graduate student in political science interested in politics. And he said that he had never met one of those before (laughter).

Anyhow, I met some of the people who knew Bill, and I also somehow very early on met Joe Lieberman who was the editor of the Yale Daily News, and had been involved with John Bailey; a kind of organization Democrat, but personally a sort of liberal. And a very interesting undergraduate, just about to graduate from there. Nice guy.

I met immediately a lot of other people on the campus. I was totally bowled over by Yale, it was a wonderful place. It was intellectually exciting

Payne (cont.): and so forth. And I was really deeply involved in my courses. There was one other political science graduate student who shared a lot in common with me, who was interested in all kinds of political problems and encouraged me to stay involved.

And then within a couple of months I had heard from somebody that I had met, that Al Lowenstein had been in town and that he had asked for volunteers to go to Mississippi. This was actually, sometime in mid-October. So I had only been there about six weeks.

I said when is the next meeting about it and he said, "Tomorrow night." And I went to that. And I guess Bill Kaufman was there and people were talking about going, and I got to meet a variety of the people who were going. And I decided really that night.

There was letter from Bob Moses that I saw, asking for help. But I guess, yeah, Al was there that night, that's right. He had come before and he had come back. And I just decided that I would go down.

It was sort of real easy to decide that. It seemed to me kind of obviously right, a great opportunity, there were good people going down from Yale. Suddenly white outsiders could play a helpful role. Moses said that the problem was that everybody was being put in jail, that nobody could move around. And all the usual ambiguities about not wanting to impose yourself on a situation where you weren't sure you were wanted and so forth . ... Here the vote was central and the need for white outsiders, it was logical that we go.

And also I talked it over with a sort of girl friend that I had and she knew somebody with a lot of money. And he agreed to pledge bail money. So I could go knowing that I would have adequate bail money. And that really led to where I ended up being sent in Mississippi because it was thought I could afford to be arrested. And Moses decided that I should be sent down with George Greene to Natchez, because he assumed that might happen there.

Sinsheimer: What was Al Lowenstein, what was his pitch that night? Was it soft sell, hard sell?

Payne: It was in a way typically Lowenstein. He talked about the real needs of these people. He told stories about being down there. He talked about

Payne (cont.): citizenship, about the vote, about the inadequacies of the administration, about the kind of minimum decency thing, about this was, you know, a fundamentally American thing. And about how few people in America would really act on behalf of their beliefs. And this was a chance--if we believed these things, you know the regular things that Americans are supposed to believe-- then we could do something. It was clear that it was going to be dangerous. I think Al said that in a variety of ways. It didn't make it more attractive, but in a sort of kind of way it didn't register.

I didn't feel the danger personally. I thought, well of course it will be dangerous, I can risk that. But it also seemed like it was going to be a good group of people. I liked the people who were involved. They seemed thoughtful-- politically they were moderate to liberal-- I met some of them who were involved as deacons of _____ Chapel, who were involved with Bill Kaufman. They seemed to me, you know, kind of good and earnest. Also a little different from the Left at Berkeley in a way that I had been used to working with. And I must say very easy to work with. And they were very generous about helping out, doing whatever was necessary, people putting in a lot of extra time.

I spent a lot of time talking Joe Lieberman into going. I said Joe you know you are a little bit of a moderate and you have been around with John Bailey, and in twenty years they are going to ask where were you in the civil rights movement. And it is going to be good for you to go down there. Furthur more, they need some people with some press capacity, and you have that. So he agreed to go down with me.

We drove down in a borrowed car, stopped at my parent's place in Washington.

Sinsheimer: When is this now?

Payne: This is late October of '63.

Sinsheimer: What did you do about school?

Payne: I went to my professors. I said that I am going to have to miss a week or two weeks of classes. That I didn't want their endorsement, but I wanted to be fair about telling them. I thought it was

Payne(cont.): important to do this thing. I would try not to fall behind in my work. But I thought it was only fair to let them know.

They were moderately enthusiastic, or in one case very enthusiastic. Professor Alexander _____ _____ from Italy asked if I would take him with me. He is a frail old man and a wonderful old European liberal and I said, "No." But he made me promise that I would talk to him when I came back. And he actually wrote an article about me for an Italian paper when I came back. So Yale was perfectly decent about it, I didn't see any problem.

I drove down ...

Sinsheimer: What did your parents say?

Payne: They said they were worried. My grandmother was real worried. They told me that they were worried. My father seemed intent on talking to me, and took me into the bedroom and asked me,"What do you know about Mississippi. What do you know about what is happening down there." And so I told him in some detail. He asked me some more questions. And I talked to him about the violence, about murders, the random murders of civil rights people. The beatings, the people getting arrested and thrown into jail. I knew quite a lot actually. And he said, you, know, we have some Forest Service people down there and I have kept up with the situation, and I know how bad it is there. So I didn't know if you knew. That's all I wanted to say to you, I wanted you to know for sure what you are getting into. Go. You have our blessing. I remember that.

Sinsheimer: I am interested in the fact that you said that the fear didn't register because time and time again these people who were interviewing (SNCC interviewers) in '64 were frustrated. They would ask people if they were afraid, and they would say no. I read this comment that said they were either lying or that they were ignorant. They didn't know how to respond to it. But it seems like time and time again people said well the fear didn't register, at least in say-- they were trying to get a sense in the training sessions. . .

Payne: We didn't have any training sessions. By the summer of '64 people had learned that they wanted to try to do something about that. But even then, you can look at the war literature and find the same kind of thing. To be afraid is to do something that people in their teens and even in their early twenties find it very hard to do, which is to imagine their own death. That is what you are really afraid of, you are afraid of getting hurt, you are afraid of getting maimed, you are afraid of getting killed.

You know in some way or the other most of us, believe in the fact that we will live almost forever, or that we will live until we are old or whatever it is. You have a few narrow escapes, maybe you learn something about cars. But I knew in Mississippi to be careful, to be prudent, to be alert for my own safety. But I didn't know fear until the very end of the Mississippi experience. Really until the day, a few days after I left Mississippi.

I don't know if I told you that story. But I didn't discover fear until I was in the Justice Department. And then I discovered it all. I thought it was going to kill me I was so terrified.

Sinsheimer: You stopped at your parent's home, and ... who did you borrow the car from.

Payne: Mark Foster. It was a little Corvair, and he came from a well-off Connecticut family and was sympathetic about civil rights. I think Mark may have come from a Republican family as I recollect. He was a very decent guy. I knew him much better later, because we were both Deacons at the Chapel the next year. He was then I think a junior. And I was struck by the fact that neither Joe Leiberman or I had a car, so Mark lent us a car.

Anyhow we drove, we had dinner with my folks and talked to them for awhile. And then we drove straight through to Jackson from there. I think we left and just drove straight West.

When we got to Jackson. I stayed in Jackson for a couple of days, stayed at the Freedom House, was at the COFO office. I was struck by the problems between the COFO office and the NAACP office up the street. Began to have the sense that there was a lot going on. I met some of the NAACP people. I met Robert L.T. Smith, who I liked much. Before I left Mississippi I met Aaron Henry, I don't remember when. I met Ralph (Robert) earlier on, who I guess was the first black man to run for Congress since Reconstruction.

Sinsheimer: Right.

Payne: And I knew something was wrong early on when some of the SNCC people were scornful about Ralph (Robert) Smith. And they were all-- as I recollect-- eating the groceries that came from his store. And I thought, I knew about factional disputes. If you were on the left at Berkeley, you knew about factional disputes. But I sensed that immediately, and I understood the odd role that Lowenstein was playing. He and Moses were often kind of at odds. Moses sort of being pushed by his staff. And Al naturally wanting to make decisions, and then sort of backing off and leaving the decisions to Bob. And doing it with some grace. But Al was a little bit too bluntly ... but Al was exciting. And Moses was even more exciting, charasmatic.

I think, actually I think it is interesting, I spent about a week in Mississippi, that's all. Maybe a little longer than that. Not more than about eight or nine days I guess all told. One of my main objects, from about the second day I was in Mississippi was to make Bob Moses smile.

I thought he was wonderful. I thought he was one of the best people I had ever met. I loved the softness in his voice. I loved the thoughtfulness. I loved the kind of toughness. And I knew what was worrying him. That he made the decisions. I knew that he was worrying about people dying,and I knew that he knew that people might die, or get very badly hurt, and that he knew that they didn't understand that or take it seriously.

And you could see that that weighed on him. And he looked like somebody who used to smile a lot but didn't smile much any more. And I liked him so much-- I wish I could remember what I said to him. I was hanging around some the morning before I left. I said something that made him smile a whole lot. And it sort of was, in an odd way it was the high point of my time there, just before I left. I also felt sort of blessed because I had survived it. Had done a little good and was free to go.

Sinsheimer: Who met you in Jackson? Who were you supposed to ... ?

Payne: We went straight to the COFO office and as I recollect the first person that meant me was David Dennis. But I don't know why that would be true because he was the CORE operative there. But I think when I arrived we found our way to Lynch Street, found our way to the address and it seems that he was the person in authority at the office. Bob was going to come back in a couple

Payne (cont.): of hours, he was overseeing something, or something like that. We had called from about Meridian. But I am pretty sure-- there were also a few people who knew people that I knew at Berkeley. Mike Miller had been around, he wasn't around then, but Mike was an old friend of mine. So I kind of felt that I had some kinship, some people in common.

But I guess I knew a few of the Yale people, but it is hard for me to remember . ... Oh yeah, Craig Teague and John Oaks and David _____, three sophomores that I came to like an awful lot. I don't know if _____ was with them, _____ was there that summer.

Sinsheimer: Do you know how many people went from Yale?

Payne: My recollection is that it is in the thirties. Maybe thirty-five, thirty-eight, something like that. Went for only a week, or for two weeks. The idea was clear. It was to ... the southern Senators had been saying that black people really didn't want to vote. Actually the whole idea had been Lowenstein's. And I am pretty certain of this.

They were sitting around, I think him and Jenkins and Moses, maybe somebody else, in Mississippi during the spring (of '1963). I guess Al had been at Raleigh in the spring. It is interesting I had just remembered, I think it was in the spring of '62, I spent time with Al at Stanford and later that summer at NSA that I saw him again.

But this time in the fall of '63 was the first time I had ever got to know him. But the way it had come about was that they had asked what do people do in Mississippi--I mean South Africa-- on election day. And Al said that they have a day of mourning, and then he said I don't think that is right here. We will have our own election, and the mock election came up. And they had already done pretty well in that September mock election, but know they were afraid, afraid to do it on a statewide basis, outside of Jackson, that they just weren't going to be able to organize it because everybody would get put in jail.

And I forget where Dennis-- what did I say Dennis ...-- David Dennis. He had the fifth district, was CORE's district, the rest were SNCC's districts. One day I went out with him to Canton. I think I went out with him, anyhow two or three of us... . For a couple of days didn't do much of anything.

Payne (cont.): I got to know George Greene though, some. He had He had come up to Natchez and talked. There was a lot of trouble going on in one place in the state, I forget where. And Lowenstein said that because I had bail that I should be sent there. And I was all eager to do that. And Bob said,"No." Just kind of flatly,"No." That he had another plan. And Al kind of awkwardly said, "Well okay. Was it important that he has bail." And Bob said, "Yes I understand that." And it was his idea, and I don't know whether he had talked to George-- we had been at the Freedom house together there. But anyhow it was his idea that I go down to Natchez with George.

Sinsheimer: So you had been in Mississippi about four days now?

Payne: Yeah, probably three days. So then the next day when we left there were some new Yale recruits in, and it was decided that Nicholas Francis Bosanquet a _____ fellow from Cambridge would go with us. Nick was a funny guy. Very bright guy. But very unknowledgable about America. And anyhow, he went down there ... . This is hard to remember.

I think now, I think the first time George and I went down there, just together. Had a meeting at Father Morrisey's rectory with ... . That's right we had a meeting at Father Morrisey's rectory with two blacks and two whites, including the _____ a good, liberal Catholic down there. A devout Catholic, a friend of Dorothy Day's as I later discovered.

Then we went out, we went back and stayed at George Metcalf's rooming house. And then we must have... . I don't remember how Nick got there, but Nick wasn't there that first day, I don't remember if we went back, or maybe he came down by some other means.

Anyhow there were some calls from the police chief to Metcalf to threaten us and so forth. The next night we were at Father Morrisey's, continuing to talk, by then it was clear that one of the people who was in the meeting probably the funeral director had already told the police chief everything that had gone on. That they knew very well that we were there.

Payne (cont.): Oh, and that is right. And that night, late that night they arrested George. And I went in the next morning. I guess-- sorry for all the confusion. Nicholas was really there all the time. He just wasn't involved in the meetings, he stayed back. And that is why I didn't think of him.

The next morning he went out to talk to the radio stations and the TV stations about getting better coverage. It was one of the minor things we were doing, was trying to hassle them, and build up evidence for an NCC case.

I went down to the jail because we had heard that George had been arrested. He and I had gone out a little the night before, early in the night to try and talk to some of the other blacks and hadn't gotten anybody, but he would do that later. They arrested him and he spent all night there. I went in early in the morning to talk to the police.

I was interviewed by a captain of the police, who was friendly to start with and then when he found out that I was there about George Greene he started yelling at me. He accused me of looking just like Bobby Kennedy, shallow complexion and a little ... . And I tried to tell him I didn't think much of Bobby Kennedy either.

But it was ... I sat around in the waiting room at the station for part of a day with police officers saying really violent things about the civil rights movement. And then the captain decided he wanted me to see how they really treat their Negroes down here. And took me out to a black school and the black teachers were asked to say how wonderful it was, and sort of looking really quite fearful. They told me, "Yes sir," how wonderful it all was. It was a kind of an awful position for me to be in, it was really weird riding in this police car.

And then we went back and the police chief came in. And the first thing that happened was a Forest Service person was interviewed about some arson problem or something. And I didn't say anything, I decided that I didn't want to get him into any trouble. Then he said he would talk to me. And he said a variety of things. And he started taking down vital statistics about me, it looked like he was going to put me in jail too.

And he came to the business about what does your father do. And I said well he works for the

Payne (cont.): U.S. Forest Service in Washington. And up pops this guy from the Forest Service, there is a lot of loyalty in the Forest Service. And said, "Excuse me but did you say that your father works for the Forest Service in Wshington." I said, "Yes, his name is Bernie Payne." He said, "Oh my God, Bernie Payne." And I saw what the reaction was and we had this long talk about, kind of animated talk about Dad, and the chief of the Forest Service, and about the Secretary of Agriculture, Freeman. And he made it sound like I must know all those people, and I didn't make it sound any different.

And the attitude of the police chief changed. And then he started talking, he stopped filling out whatever information he had there. And he started talking about that things were probably going to start getting bad, and he knew what the movement had done elsewhere and he wasn't going to have it in his town. And if there was a demonstration he just hoped that I would be leading the way. "'Cause I will tell you if there is so much as one rock thrown, well my men have guns and they know what to do with them. I'll tell you if there is any trouble here there is going to be some slow walking and some sad singing."

Meanwhile it was an interesting moment. He also told me how well we treat our Nigras.

Sinsheimer: The Forest Service ... ?

Payne: This police chief. You know most of these people are real happy here. And let me call somebody over. And he told me, yeah, how happy, how good the chief was. This was a black guy, who knew this little shuffling dance. And just was incredibly obsequious. "Yeah he comes in here all the time and works for us, he should be in jail really he was convicted, but we just let him to do it like this."

I found out later that he was an informant from the jail. He was the movement's principle source of information. That is how I knew George had been arrested and so forth.

But anyhow, I got George out. By that time they had also arrested Nick. They had picked him up on the road. And he was in. And they were just going to keep him there. I said, you know, I will

Payne (cont.): the British counsel up here from New Orleans. If we have to bring one of her Majesty's ships up to Natchez. This man is from ... . So we negogiated back and forth. And George and I sort of had the feeling that Nicholas wasn't likely to be particularly helpful in the sort of clandestine negotiations we were going to do. Our job was to try to get polling places. And that we could let Nick go back to Jackson. So what I did-- we had talked about that a little the night before and I thought it would be all right-- so what I did was say look I will promise to take Nick out of town. And we had to go out of town that day anyhow. We had to pick up Ella Baker, our old SCEF person, former NAACP person, left-winger. She was coming in, she was SNCC's godmother sort of. And she was coming in at the airport. And we were going to take her somewhere.

So anyhow I agreed to that. And then that afternoon we were back at Metcalf's place getting ready to go. That's right, we took Nick back, maybe all the way back to Jackson, I don't remember. Maybe up to Vicksburg and put him on the bus or something like that. Came back, picked up Ella at the airport, and then we were back at Metcalf's house.

And that afternoon already there were cars circling around. We drove back to see Father Morrisey that night. The police chief had threatened Metcalf with losing his lisence to run a rooming house if a white person stayed there another night. And Father Morrisey had agred to let me stay at the rectory that night. We came out of the rectory and I was going to drive George home-- Metcalf's was just a little bit away from the rectory-- and George was going to take the car or something.

Anyhow, the car sounded kind of funny when I got into it. And the accelerator seemed to be stuck. And I opened up the hood of the car and people had just shoveled sand into the oil intake, sand,rocks etc. But the funny thing was that it was a Corvair, and the oil intake went down on the outside and into the oil pan underneath, rather than being right in on top of the engine. And anyway, we pulled right back in front of Morrisey's driveway turnoff. I didn't know if the car had been totally destroyed at that point.

End of Interview.