

SELECTED SECTIONS OF A DAVID DENNIS FIELD REPORT FOR
MARCH 1-31, 1963*

March 19: Miss Fay Bennett, Mr. Charles Butts, and I went to Greenwood. There we had a meeting with the workers where a discussion was held on techniques of getting aid from the Federal government and putting pressure in the right places.

During the night my car was shot into several times by an unidentified person in an unidentified car. My wife was using the car at this time. It was parked at the time of the shooting in front of her cousin's home (in Jackson). She called the police but no one came out to investigate.

March 20: I helped in the distribution of food to over 500 people in Greenwood. On this day over 75 people attempted to register. From 7:30 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. I conducted a non-violent workshop for over 50 high school students.

March 21: I helped in Greenwood by canvassing and helping with the books. At 3:00 P.M. I met Mr. Blackwell of VEP to discuss Voter Registration in Mississippi.

[March 23-26 was occupied with routine canvassing, for which he [Dennis] had brought five Tougaloo students and his wife up to Greenville.]

March 27: Canvassing began early Wednesday morning but was terminated early that afternoon because of action in Greenwood. On this day Bob Moses and ten other workers from SNCC were arrested on charges of "Breach of the Peace." The night before, Mr. Greene's home was shot into by white hoods. [Greene's sons were involved in the movement; one, George, worked for SNCC.] Bob Moses, James Forman, and other workers had drawn up a resolution asking for protection from harassment and intimidations. They then, along with other citizens, went down to the Mayor's office to discuss the matter. Upon their arrival they were met by policemen and a police dog. At this point James Forman and Lawrence Guyot were arrested. The other people then proceeded to the courthouse to register. Bob and the other workers returned to the church, where distribution of food and clothing was taking place. Approximately 100 people were there. Bob and the other workers began to talk to the people about voter registration when they were approached again by the police officers. The group refused to disperse and therefore was arrested. Upon hearing about the arrests, we, the Greenville workers, left for Greenwood.

Upon arrival we found things in quite a turmoil. We immediately held a strategy meeting at which we planned for our next action. Mr. James Farmer was contacted to speak at a mass meeting on Thursday night. We decided to hold our voter registration classes for the next day...

* The above field report and others were made available to the writer by the national office of CORE in New York in December 1965. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin later became the official depository for CORE documents. All additions by the writer are in square brackets.

March 28: We met at the First Christian Baptists Church at 7:00 A.M. to prepare for the people who were planning to go down to register. People began to arrive at 8:00 A.M. We held voter registration clinics and I gave points on non-violence and jail. At 10:00 Rev. D.L. Tucker arrived to lead the people (50) down to the courthouse. They left the church at 10:30 walking in double file. Upon reaching McLaurin Street they were stopped by the chief of police and about ten other policemen who ordered them to disperse into smaller groups. They complied by breaking into groups of five. After arriving at the courthouse a small group of whites began to gather outside. Because of the schedule of the lunch hours of the registrar(11:30 to 1:00) the group decided to walk back to the church. After walking a few blocks they were met by police and a large police dog. The police immediately began to push and pull people in the line and let the dog snap at the people. This frightened the people and they began to break in confusion and fear. At this point one of the officers yelled, "Get that black 'nigger' preacher"(Rev. Tucker). The man who was in charge of the dog immediately let the dog loose on Rev. Tucker. Another officer then yelled, "Kill that 'nigger' preacher." The dog then knocked Rev. Tucker to the ground and bit him on the ankle. He was taken to the hospital by Dr. Aaron Henry and several other workers for treatment.

Around 1:30 I sent Rev. and Mrs.[Dianne Nash]Bevel and my wife to meet Jim (Farmer) at the Memphis airport. Around 2:30 we began to send carloads of people to the registrar's office to register. Police set up roadblocks along the routes and turned the cars around. We immediately filed a complaint with the Justice Department. Around 3:30 the roadblocks were lifted.

Later that evening the commissioner denied that the dog had bitten Rev. Tucker. He claimed that the dog was only playing. Jim arrived in Greenwood at about 7:00. The mass meeting began at about 7:30 P.M. with an attendance of approximately 2,500.

March 30: The registrar's office was closed, so I took Jim to Memphis via Ruleville where he met some of the people who were taking part in the home industry project.

March 31: We canvassed and spoke in churches throughout the city. Later that evening I took the students and my wife back to Jackson. I returned to Greenwood the next morning(200 miles roundtrip).