

SUMMARY

Police activity directed against the Greenwood Project has taken all the forms usually employed in a police state.

Beatings of project workers have been few. This is probably due to the wide publicity the Summer Project has received. But brutality and threatened brutality at arrest and detention have been common and serve the same purpose. There is no doubt that beatings will resume after the summer is over and the glare of publicity shifts elsewhere.

The real indictment of Mississippi law and law enforcement is that it is aimed specifically and in all its many forms at the activities of Civil Rights workers. There has been daily harassment and intimidation. Protection from private violence has been consistently denied. The whole judicial process -- arrest, bail, detention, trial, sentencing and prison treatment -- is one long nightmare for civil rights workers. There is so much "built in" discretion in the legal process that it is easy for officials to subvert it for their own purposes and hard for lawyers to redress the balance.

The following is a summary of the devices used by Greenwood officials to frustrate the civil rights movement.

The police have used their power of arrest and in a discriminatory and unconstitutional fashion. This has taken many forms. There have been frequent arrests for traffic violations. Those arrested are usually thrown in jail rather than given a ticket and allowed to go on. Badly needed cars are impounded. In most cases the violation is trumped up. The trials almost always result in convictions. There is no hope of winning the case unless it is removed from the state courts -- a long and expensive procedure.

The local judiciary has allowed a blanket "John Doe" warrant to be issued. This gives the police a free hand to arrest nearly anyone. They have used this warrant to "scour" the streets, to prowl the Negro community looking for suspects, and frighten Negro citizens. Many "John Doe" warrants have also been issued on the say-so of local whites for alleged petty offenses -- technical assault, profanity, reckless driving, etc. In following this up, the police come to the office and arrest the first person they see who might fit the description on the warrant. They have also made many arrests under vague statutes such as Breach of the Peace, Disturbance in a Public Place, Resisting Arrest, etc. These are arbitrarily employed by the individual officer and are extremely hard to fight in court, as it is the officer's word against yours.

After arrest, the prisoners are rarely permitted to make a telephone call; consequently many arrests go unreported. High bails are the rule: the average bail in Greenwood this summer was close to \$200 for all offenses, including the most petty. This is completely unconstitutional -- the officials have used bail to keep people in jail rather than to allow them to go free until trial. No bail bondsman is available to civil rights workers in Mississippi, so the whole amount of the bond must be raised in cash.

Trial times are set so that there is no time for a lawyer to prepare the case, find witnesses, develop the facts and defend the worker. Continuances are almost never granted.

Jail conditions are appalling. Visiting hours are not often respected, particularly in the Leflore County Farm. Vitally needed medicines and medical care have been denied prisoners there for days at a time.

Greenwood is typical in the pattern of Mississippi law enforcement. The officials were ready for the project. They were armed with

unconstitutional laws. They are unimpeded by any respect for the constitutional guarantee of due process of law. They are immune against legal action by Negro citizens. They did all they could to frustrate the project.