

the Negroes that we had been working with. As the mob grew we hid inside the home of one of the Negroes. We called the Justice Department and the F.B.I., both of whom gave us the same answer. They told us that there was nothing that they could do but that if we were killed or injured they would certainly investigate. They said that they were not able to make arrests but were only an investigatory body. We were finally forced to make a run for it. They chased us for ten miles, on two occasions they tried to force us off the road, and on other occasions they tried to surround our car and stop us. We were lucky, however, and managed to reach Luverne. There is no doubt that if they had caught us they would have killed us. The justice dept. and the F.B.I. did nothing even though we gave them evidence that the Mayor, the Chief of Police, and the State Troopers were organizers of the mob, they didn't even "investigate". It is interesting to note that the F.B.I. finds no difficulty in arresting students who burn their draft cards.

But more disappointing than the lack of protection is the non-enforcement of the Voting Act that we suffered so much in Selma to gain. In Crenshaw County the registration books are open for registration only two days a month. Twice a month during the long hot summer months of June, July, and August we would bring 60-75 people down to the Courthouse in Luverne to try to register and vote. Most of these people risked their jobs and some their lives to come down to the courthouse and face the board of registrars. The board would usually only be able to process about 55 of those applying. Those who got in to attempt to register were faced with a four page form to be filled out, a quotation of the constitution to be read, 8 questions about government to be answered (to the board's satisfaction) oaths to be sworn, and witnesses to be produced. Out of the 55 or so that the board would process 5 or 6 would be allowed to pass. Just before the last registration day in August the Voting Rights bill became law. The next registration day well over 200 Negroes were down at the Courthouse hoping, at last, to become voters. The board was only allowed to use a small form with about 8 questions on it, asking name, address, age, citizenship etc. That day the board processed less people than they did under the old system of the 4 page form and literacy test. The Courthouse opened at 8:30 in the morning, no one who arrived after 9:05 in the morning got in to see the registrar, people waited from 9:10 until 4:30 in the afternoon when the Courthouse closed. The voting act contained a provision that if 20 people made a complaint that the provisions of the act were not being carried out that Federal Examiners would be sent in. Almost all of those who were left waiting when the Courthouse closed filled out complaints. Over 150 complaints were sent in to the Justice Dept. We have never had an answer from them.

There is a sign in the Mississippi headquarters of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee—

There is a city in Mississippi called Liberty
There is a street in Ita Bena called Freedom
There is a department in Washington called Justice

There is more than just the dangers and frustrations of the civil rights movement that a worker has to get used to. You have to adjust to a way of life in which the people live in complete and abject poverty and total subjugation. In which everything that the Negro has is either inferior, or inadequate, the schools, the streets, the sanitation system, the houses, the food, the clothes, the everything. You have to adjust to a society in which Negro children are taught that they are really not a human being but just...a nigger. A society in which Justice is a white man's whim.

It is impossible to really comprehend the reality of the poverty of the Southern Negro without seeing it and living with it day after day, week after week, month after month. We got to know poverty very well as we walked from cabin to cabin day after day. We'd walk up the dusty red dirt road under the hot sun toward an old decrepit wooden cabin held off the ground by crooked stacks of red bricks. We'd trudge across the swept yard of dirt bleached white by the sun that surrounded the cabin. We'd carefully climb the rickety stairs, worn thin over the years, up to the porch, and begin to talk to the woman who sat there listlessly shelling peas, (the family's sole

food at the moment), in the shade that the perch afforded. Lying in the corner of the porch would be her year old baby, lying there without the energy to brush off the flies that crawled over his face, over his lips, over his eyes. There was no glass for the windows and no screens, just wooden storm shutters that had to be left open during the hot summer months. Light was provided by an old oil lamp and heat by a wood burning stove. Water had to be brought from the neighbors well down the road. As we went from cabin to cabin we saw a lot of children with birth defects caused by lack of good food during their mothers pregnancy. We saw a lot of rickets, and a lot of scro, and we saw a lot of hunger.

Tyranny is the partner of poverty in the south. There was a Negro named Johnson in ~~XXXXXX~~ County who was a sharecropper on land owned by a white man called Joe ~~XXXXXX~~. After Johnson had gotten planted and most of the work was done ~~XXXXXX~~ decided that he wanted all of the crop. so in June of last year he ordered Johnson to move off the farm which he had worked for years. Johnson knew that if he moved he would get none of the proceed from the crop and he refused to go. ~~XXXXXX~~ then began to shoot at him with a shotgun. Johnson was slightly wounded but was able to get away from ~~XXXXXX~~. Johnson went into town to get the sheriff and lodge a complaint against ~~XXXXXX~~. ~~XXXXXX~~ however, called up the sheriff and had Johnson arrested for supposedly insulting his (~~XXXXXX~~) wife. For the next two weeks Johnson remained in jail, every time we went down to bail him out the sheriff put another minor technicality in our way. Finally after two weeks we were able to get him out of jail. When Johnson returned to his farm ~~XXXXXX~~ again ordered him to leave and Johnson again ~~refused~~ refused. Two days later ~~XXXXXX~~ son (35 years old) drove up along side of Johnsons son (16 years old) as he was walking along the road. ~~XXXXXX~~ pulled out a pistol and shot him twice in the side. The boy was taken to the ~~XXXXXX~~ County Hospital (built partly with Federal funds) where the doctors refused to treat him and ordered him taken out. He was then driven 60 miles to the Catholic hospital in Montgomery were they were able to save his life. ~~XXXXXX~~ continued his threats and attacks against Johnson untill Jonson was finally forced to leave.

Even more despotic then the sharecropper system in the plantation system. The ~~XXXXXX~~ plantation in Dallas County is one of the larger plantations in the area. ~~XXXXXX~~, the owner, is a high ranking member of the KuKluxKlan. Workers on his plantation work a 12 hour day 6 or 7 days a week and are paid \$1.25 a day (or about \$10 an hour). No one is allowed to leave the plantation without the permission of ~~XXXXXX~~. Everything that the workers must buy (all Negro workers of corse) they must buy at the plantation store there on the plantation. Anyone that leaves the plantation without permission is beaten up. ~~XXXXXX~~ has threatned to shoot any civil rights worker found on his land. We know he is not bluffing.

If someone were to ask me to I could talk about the civil rights movement for 6 days and 6 nights and fill a hundred letters such as ~~this~~. Unfortunately, however, no matter how much I talk or how much I write I always run into the same problem. It is as difficult to tell someone ab ut the movement and give them a real understanding of it as it is to give someone a real comprehension of the Grand Canyon or Banff from a little black and white snapshot. You can see from the snapshot that there is a hole in the ground or a mountain but that does not get over the real truth of the situation. It is the same in talking about the movement, the best that I can hope for is to give you a written snapshot. I will write another letter soon, but before I close this one there is one more thing that I want to discuss. The people who make up the movement. I don't mean the great leaders or the civil rights workers, but the people who are the backbone of the movement, the people who were born and grew up in the Black Belt of the deep south, the poorr and uneducated, the old and the young. Sometimes people wonder why we stay in the movement w th it's dangers and frustrations, sometimes we wonder ourselves. A large part of the answer to that question lies in the people that we work with. There is a strong bond that is forged between civil rights workers and between the people that they work with. No one leaves the south without leaving a part of himself there, and no one leaves with out taking a part of the south

There is somuch I want to say about these people an words are so pitifully inadequate. There is ~~de~~ much to describe and there is no time , especially in a letter, to tell it.

Most of the demonstrating in ~~Selma~~ was done by the young students in Jr. and Sr. High School. One of the student leaders was a 13 year old girl named Veronica Smith. She had been arrested a number of times in demonstrations and was one of the students that were in charge of picket lines. One day when she was arrested she was brought up beofre Sheriff ~~xxxxxxx~~ to be booked.

(brusquely) "Nigger, whats your name", he commanded.

(quietly) "Miss Veronica Smith"

(angrily) "Nigger! You know haw to talk to us! Now whats you name!"

(quietly) "Miss Veronica Smith"

(ominously) "Nigger, we're going to give you one more chance. Now..whats..your.. name."

(quietly) "Miss Veronica Smith"

He knocked her to the floor with his billy club and kicked her once. She got up.

(sneeringly) "Okay, nigger, whats your name."

(quietly) "Miss Veronica Smith"

He beat her down again with his club a kicked her a few times in the mouth. She got up slowly, she was bleeding from the mouth.

(angrily) "Say Veronica!"

(reluctantly) "Veronica"

(angrily) "Say Smith!"

(slowly) "Smith."

(satisfied) "okay, then , nigger."

(softly, defiantly) "Miss Veronica Smith"

They beat her up untill she was unconscious and then dragged her off to a cell. Where she stayed about five days untill we could get them out.

There were old people too who had that quiet kind of courage. One day about noon time we were in the 1st Baptist church dispatching teams of pickets to variouse places downtown, when a dozen old ladies entered the church. They were all forty or fifty or sixty, and they said that they wanted to go picket the Wellfare Office becasue they had been removed from the wellfare rolls after they had tried (unsuccesfully) to register to vote. They had come from Orrville about 20 miles SouthWest of Selma. They had had to walk part of the way and they were pretty tired. We told them they ought to rest awhile before they went out to picket, but they said that they thought they should do their picketing during the noon hour when lots of people would see them, besides they knew that they wouldn't get nere then 50 steps before they were arrested anyway. So it didn't matter how tired they were. Later that day I found that the cell I was in was just down the hall from theirs, and that we could shent to each other. They were in a cell with steel bunks, but with no mattresses. There were 6 bunks so half of them had to sleep on the concrete floor. We were there for 3 days. When we left they were in good spirits.

There were others kinds of courage. I remember a peer farmer who came shyly, hesitantly, up to the Freedom House one evening. He was nervouse about talking to a white person, even one who was a freedom worker. He didn't say much he just sert of stood there for a moment and then he thrust a dellar into my hand and softly mumbled "This is to help you all out." I knew where he lived and I knew that without that dellar he and his family would not eat the next day. I wanted to give it back to him and tell him that we really didn't need it. But, somehow, standing there looking at him I couldn't do it. If he had the courage to give me that money I would just have to find the courage to accept it.

Well, I'll write again

Bruce