

Letter # 6?

Dear Lynnman Col.

It is now about ~~12~~ 12:30 at night on a Saturday ~~XXXXXX~~ on a Saturday night. I am tired. I have just finished driving the last of the Juvenals who were arrested today. They were being let out of the jail four at a time about an hour apart and left to walk home. (Juvenals, by the way, are those under 16 not 18). The last group was let out at about 12 o'clock. After we drove them home we stopped to pick up a coke at one of the Negro restaurants, while we were in there sitting at the both (we were both white) three different people came up to us and began talking to us ~~XXXXXX~~ very friendly. They all said they thought that we were doing a wonderful thing etc. I mention this because it is completely typical. I have yet to ~~not~~ sit down at a table in a restaurant without (if there is room) someone coming over a joining me (usually a complete stranger) (Please compare to Famous Foods, the U & I, or Olivias).

Anyway I obviously owe you a letter as there is much news to cover. Last Friday I (the 8th of May) was ~~given the assignment~~ told to work at strengthening the boycott of white merchants here in Selma. That afternoon a group of us began walking around downtown talking to persons going into the white stores (that is Negroes going into the white stores) and telling them not to go into them. Me and another worker were arrested while talking in front of the state owned liquor store for colored, warrants were issued for the arrest of one other but he ~~was~~ was tipped off by our arrest and got away. Anyway we were charged with all sorts of stuff like disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace, conspiracy to encourage to boycott etc. Due to that fact that we were afraid that they would hire some drunk to say that we threatened him our lawyer plead us guilty to disorderly conduct and ~~we~~ we were given a \$17 fine which SCLC paid. The rest of the week I spent in organizing a demonstration for the next Saturday (today) and in getting leaflets printed and distributed in the county. The movement here has really fallen apart and it is going to be a hard job to build it back up again. First of all there was the general letdown after the march and also disillusionment when the white folk left and when they saw that after all they still didn't have Freedom. In addition everybody is so busy squabbling over the food and clothes that were sent down that they have no time left to ~~fight~~ fight Wallace. All in all things are a mess down here. Anyway it was very difficult to get demonstrators especially since picketing is a 99% sure arrest. The plan was that we would divide the demonstrators up into teams and at intervals during the day send them out to picket downtown, that way the maximum number of people would see them being arrested, and it would also keep the police on the streets for the longest time (their presence in large numbers greatly inhibits business). The first group of 7 left from the funeral home about 10:15 A.M. (We had ~~not~~ sneaked our demonstrators into the funeral parlor and into Walkers restaurant and also smuggled the signs into them, all during the day the cops were looking for the place where we were issuing from in the hopes of confiscating the signs and stopping us as soon as we ~~we~~ walked out of the door. As it was we were always on the street and picketing before they saw us). Anyway the first group of 7 left from the funeral home, ~~this group was~~ the picket captain of this group was a 15 year old girl, all but 2 of the team were girls one of whom was 13 and another 14., this was typical of the composition of the teams. Anyway this team got ~~not~~ a full block before they were arrested. A few minutes after they left the funeral home a team left Walkers cafe, they also got only a block. At 11:30 I sent a 3rd team out from Walkers, they only got 50 steps before they were arrested (the cops turned the corner a second after we left the cafe, this blew the cafe and we had to move everybody through the alleys to the funeral home while their attention was taken with arresting the team of pickets.). the next team left from the funeral home, by careful planning of the route they were able to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  blocks before being arrested. The next group (1:00 P.M.) which was the one I went with got 3 blocks before being arrested, this was the largest group with 12 pickets and instead of being driven the few blocks to the jail we were marched down the middle of the street. The next group only got 1 block, and the last group was arrested for walking along and singing, they didn't have any signs because we had run out.

5-9-65 182

There were also a few people arrested for passing out leaflets or preaching on the corner. All in all there were either 56 or 57 persons arrested, about 22 of those were under 16 (mostly girls, the over 16 were mostly girls too). We were in for about 4 hours the juvenals longer. ~~Th~~ I can not describe to how it affects me to see these young kids ~~participating in~~ participating in the movement while there parents are to frightened. 8 year old girl who leads singing, 12 & 13 year olds who go to jail and get beaten and tea gassed, and cattle prodded, 15 year olds who are picket captains. One of the 14 year old girls talked back to a cop in the jail and got slapped aroud a bit but she was not seriousl hurt. Well, our trial comes up ~~next~~ teusday. FOUND OUT more about that girl that was slapped. Her name is Vernoica Smith and she is either 12 or 13. She insisted on being called Miss Veronica Smith so the deputy slapped her twice and then hit her down with his club.

Letters are funny things. I started this letter Saturday night, it is now Teusday night. Yesterday I was arrested by Jim Clark's Deputy for Contributing to the Delinquency of Minors. What happened was that I went to the trial of the under 16 pickets Monday and Judge Reynolds ordered me out of the court, later I went back in (a damn fool thing to do) and the Judge ordered me arrested for contributing to the delinquency of minors. I was thrown into a cell (I was never allowed to make a phone call) with a White man who, untill he was arrested for armed robbery, was a member of Jim Clarks posse. He was one of the men who was mounted on a horse and carried a bull whip. It was not a pleasant stay ( I was in 24 hours) he only knowek me around one, injuring my shoulder, but I had to listen to his constant haranguing, which was pretty sickening. 5 of the teen age girl who were in court were also but in jail for contempt of court they "got smart" with the judge. No one knows how long they are in for but I could hear the them being beat-up every time the started to sing, I knew that they were being beat-up becauwe I could hear the slaps and their screams. These girls are all 12,13 or 14. One of them is ~~XXXX~~ Veronica Smith.

It looks like Alabama is going to get hot again. In fact hot is an inadequate word, what is going to happen this June in Montgomery is going to make Birmingham and Selma look like a candle next to an atom bomb. ~~CKKK~~ The plan is to get 10,000 demonstrators from all over the state to go to Montgomery and demonstrate to get rid of Wallace and to demand a fair and free election for all offices in the state. The idea is that if they put the 10,000 in jail ( and ~~we~~ we are going to demonstrate so that they have only three choices- 1-close down the government and the city of Montgomery, 2-put all of the demonstrat in jail or 3-disperse us by force) we will get another 10,000 ~~Ehd~~. Actually the feeling is that this is going to be the rough one, the final push, the show down. We arn't kidding and Wallace isn't kidding. It'ss going to be a LONG HOT SUMMER only I mean really LONG and really HOT.

Your "little ole white agitator"

Bruce Hartford

[Notes added 2018 by Bruce Hartford

1. "Veronica Smith" is a pseudonym used to protect her and her family from Citizens Council retaliation in the event that some portion of the letter was later published in California.
2. The anticipated Montgomery protests described at the end referred to a campaign proposed and advocated by Jim Bevel. Ultimately, the campaign did not get off the ground and was shelved in favor of the SCOPE project.
3. Some of the dates and days are in error, May 8, for example, was a Saturday not a Friday. And this letter was probably started in the early morning of May 23 and completed May 25]