SAVE

February 18, 1964

Report from Leflore county: Charlie Cobb

Since last Tuesday, 300 people have tried to register to vote in Ruleville, Miss. This is because of their enthusiasm over the shipment of food and clothing which arrived there last week (10 tons from Boston Friends of SNCC). (Bob mentioned yesterday that the people were told they should go to the courthouse in order to get food and clothes). Charles McClaurin says that another 150-160 people wanted to go down to the courthouse, but there was no money for gas for transportation.

Charlie has been in Leflore County interviewing people- the following information is from families from the North Leflore area primarily:

One woman is holding citizenship classes on the plantation where she works. She decided to begin them just after Kennedy was assassinated and has continued since then. Her home has been shot at once, but no one was hit (the roof was hit).

Charlie says that the need for food and clothes is greatest in the North Leflore area. Many people are without clothes, some are half naked. There is one plantation between Ruleville and Greenville where the people work from 5am-7:30pm and earn $2 a day chopping cotton or $3 a day driving tractors. There is one woman who has six children, all of whom must pick cotton rather than go to school. The woman cleans the house of the "boss man" and earns $2 a week. She wanted to register to vote, but he told her that he'd get the law after her if she left the plantation.

If the people borrow money from the whites they must pay back 25% interest. There are houses with many children and no commodities, the children are barefoot, naked and hungry. If they attempt to register they'll be put off the plantations.

In Sunflower County there was one woman who was living off of social security. Her boss then reported that her wages were higher than they are and her social security was cut off. (she had been getting $40/month, S.S.)

The following are quotes concerning Eastland's plantation:
"Eastland's plantation is the murderer's home."
"All then Negroes do on Eastland's is make whiskey and weigh cotton for him. Don't no law go there, no revenue go their either."
this quote is attributed to Eastland re people who work on his plantation:
"If they stay out of the ground he'll keep them out of the penitentiary."

The people were very frightened about telling Charlie about the situation, particularly about the fact that people are making boo tleg whiskey there. They are using prison labor to do it.

There is an area called "40-mile bend" which is the most desperate area in Leflore. The average wage there is $2 a day. Most people there did not make any money this winter when they settled the cotton accounts. They can't borrow money from the whites, there are no commodities, children aren't at school because they have no clothes. There is virtual starvation. At least one child has starved to death.