

3210 West Broadway
Louisville, Ky. 40211
May 9, 1968

URGENT ACTION MEMO

FROM: the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF)

TO: Concerned individuals and organizations

On Monday May 13, SNCC Chairman H. Rap Brown will go on trial in New Orleans. He is alleged to have violated an obscure federal statute which prohibits a man who is under indictment from carrying a gun. If convicted, he could be sentenced to five years in prison.

This gun charge is just one of several crimes of which Brown is accused. All of the charges grow out of his arrest for "counselling to arson" and "inciting to riot" after he gave a SPEECH in Cambridge, Maryland last July. A suppressed section of the government's own Kerner Commission report has completely exonerated Brown from any guilt whatsoever of the "arson" and "riot" charges. But he still must stand trial on them -- and on the other charges, of which the gun charge is one, stemming from this basic indictment.

The gun charge was brought against Brown last August, after he had made a trip to Louisiana to visit his mother. The government charges that he carried a rifle, which, it is conceded, was openly checked with Eastern Airlines. The statute on which he was arrested stands in clear violation of our Bill of Rights which guarantees the right to bear arms to every citizen. It also violates the basic right of a person accused of a crime to be presumed innocent until he is proven guilty. In fact, it is the only statute on the books which makes a crime of an innocent act performed by a man alleged to have broken a law.

And this law is so little known that neither Brown nor his attorneys had ever heard of it till he was accused of breaking it.

There is no doubt that this unconstitutional gun statute is being used against Rap Brown because of his political activities.

Brown has been systematically persecuted since he became Chairman of SNCC last spring. The government seems determined to keep him from speaking by keeping him in jail -- because he is a symbol and a leader of the militant black movement.

The freedom of all of us is involved in Rap Brown's case. For freedom of speech and the freedom to organize are the issues at stake.

Please -- act now.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Get this information out to people and groups you are in touch with.
2. Hold protest demonstrations on your campus or in your community. Picket federal buildings and demand that the Justice Department drop the gun charges and halt the persecution of Brown.
3. Send telegrams and letters of protest to Attorney General Ramsey Clark at the Justice Department, Washington, D.C..
4. Complain to your local press about distorted coverage -- or lack of coverage. Write letters to the editor.
5. Attend the trial -- if you live anywhere within driving distance of New Orleans. The federal courthouse is located at 400 Royal St. in the French Quarter.
6. RAISE MONEY and send it to:

H. Rap Brown Defense Fund
c/o SNCC
360 Nelson St. SW
Atlanta, Ga.