

N. GOLDSCHMIDT: Yes - seriously - really extraordinary incidents because we've had an attorney general who says he doesn't want to obey the civil rights law - at least, that's the way I understand it - it's been related to me - and the mayor of the city wants a million dollars to put up a stockade in which he can put Negroes who cause trouble - sort of like Leander Perez - and a series of other things. They have a new bill introduced in the legislature in which a man says it will make enough trouble for people that are trying to register under a separate election procedure now required by the federal - elimination of federal poll tax - so that they'll go ahead and pay their poll taxes - he calls it giving people more opportunity to participate in state government - a series of most really extraordinary things. And now of course they've got a bill to harass us because their selective

campaign has been effective - they have a bill to do that in the legislature. They have another bill that just passed - or it was just introduced - I think it passed one House - that allows the transfer of police personnel from one county to another county, wherever there's a disturbance - it's extraordinary -

RPW: Yes, I read that this morning or last night -

NG: - not a dissent - they don't get a dissent in that legislature.

CE: You see, the thing of it is, as I was telling him before, until this type of thing is stopped - and I keep saying, until

Negroes are given the right and the privilege to register and vote, we won't be able to control this unless

Now, if the state can enact laws that are contradictory to the federal government, what good is a federal government law? Now that's what is happening now. And everything that the federal government says, the state of Mississippi can go right over their head and do something different. And the federal government stands idly by and lets them do these thing.

NG: It takes a long time to litigate these important -

CE: You see - now, you ask what could the federal government do - I should have said this - the federal government - I feel that the Negro in Mississippi is on his own. Number one, he has no local protection, number two, he has no county protection, he has no state protection, and now we find he has no federal protection. Because the only case that we have won in Mississippi against a registrar or any other Mississippian, was down at Hattiesburg against Theron Lynn - who refused to register Negroes. Now then, the federal government had him cold handed and they couldn't put him away. And he's still down there - registering - I mean, he's taking the applications under protest. And

and different ones on the picket on the court house in Hattiesburg.

NG: He's flaunting them -

CE: And I imagine he is. And so you see, then, what future, or

what protection can a Negro - say, well I know someone is with us in Mississippi. So that's what a fight we're up against. And that's why I think that the world should admire Negroes, especially Mississippi Negroes, who are willing to continue to fight for their rights without violence. Because we have no law that says that a Negro can even get a drink of water. I was down to the state building last week, and all over the state building - white, whites, white only, white only - the water fountain, the wash rooms - white - nothing for Negroes. I was down to the city jail - the city police department - everything there said white only - nothing for Negroes.

NG: A really extraordinary example of that was they didn't get a drink downstairs but there's also a restaurant in the basement, isn't there - I hear stories that there's a snack bar some place around there in the capitol, and some people went over there and it said, you know - section for whites, section for Negroes. And the man who runs the place, I guess - this little snack bar - is blind and can't see. It's really very funny. The sad thing is, you see, that anything - anybody who knows Mississippi and reads the laws that the legislature passes, knows that - what they're for. I mean, they're couched in really grand language, but their legal implications are simply as another tool to harass the Negroes. Now, they've just increased some of the fines that can be levied for a minor felony - you know, for minor breach of peace and that sort of thing. It's obviously

directed at Negroes because they're levied by local judges and the difficulties of appealing these are extraordinary high. We paid something like fifteen hundred dollars in traffic fine harassments last fall - on charges - he was pushed through a traffic light and had been given a ticket for it. I mean, people won't believe it, but it happens. We just haven't got the legal tools, with three attorneys in the state that will take civil rights cases.

RPW: Where were you pushed through the traffic light?

CE: In Clarksdale.

RPW: Oh, in Clarksdale.

CE: Clarksdale, yes. And then, another thing, even here, where they tail you. They get right on your tail - right on your tail, and they follow you everywhere you go - everywhere you go. Well, even the - they had the highway safety patrol - he's bound to make a mistake if somebody tails you, right on your tail all the time. You're bound to make a mistake - you're bound not to give the correct - proper turn signal at the proper distance. Or you're bound to, maybe, drive one mile over the twenty mile speed limit - they follow you along on a - or you're bound to stop suddenly because of something to curtail or to prevent an accident. So you see, all the time when they're around he's bound to give you a ticket. And that's why I don't drive anywhere in my car - I usually go in a cab or I

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ride with someone else - because it's a police state - Mississippi is a police state. And it's police against Negroes.

NG: I think that the thing that's going to happen is that the good whites in Mississippi are going to have to learn that the very laws they are passing are actually being used against them

in many ways. Now, we know of one specifically, and I think

liquor law that they don't realize how badly they're losing on it, because what happens is they have - liquor is supposed to be - this is supposed to be a prohibition state, they bring liquor to the state and they tax it. Now, the people who sell it are paying kick-backs constantly to the police. It's one of the most extraordinary extortion rackets I've ever seen. Now, the Negroes do it as well as the whites. But it's a great tool against civil rights because those Negroes who feed civil rights people on credit, those Negroes who will rent their buildings space to them, are immediately pigeon-holed by the police and they say, now look, you're selling liquor, and you're going to lose that liquor and we're going to throw you in jail if you do anything more like that. So they try to shut off all the spigots they can for help in the Negro community and they try to isolate the civil rights movement, and then they say, you see the Negro community won't even support it. But the fact of the matter is they also do this to the whites, to the poor whites and to the whites who don't know any better. And it's really just a very few people in the power structure who would like to keep it this way. Not just Citizens Council people but I mean, you know, there are a few others I'm sure that would like to keep it that way. But it's a very sad situation because they use this as a tool in a police state. It is an absolute police state. It can be used against the whites. As it was, when one of the churches in Jackson

wanted to integrate, they wanted Negroes to come in. They had a vote and they said, let them come in. Now, the mayor of Jackson says we have no special policy of segregation, but when they tried to integrate these churches they were arrested on the steps for trespassing, and it wasn't because the church asked them to be arrested, no matter what the mayor said. ~~xxxxxx~~ Because the people in that church will say so. And we have lost - what - about sixteen ministers in Jackson whose congregations sent them home - sent them out - because they could do that. They didn't want to integrate. We finally had one that voted to integrate, and the mayor said uh-uh. One minute he gets on the stand and says we have no official policy, and the next minute he turns around and arrests anybody who tries to do something about it.

RFW: Do you mean the ministers were sent away because they would not integrate - is that it - or because they -

NG: ~~xxxxxx~~ BOY: They wanted to integrate - when we finally did find one church in Jackson that would - the congregation voted on it - it was close, but the people would have accepted it very peacefully - this is the sad thing - instead of the church interfering in the state - we now - the situation in Mississippi, where the state's policy is interfering in the church, and I think the ministers are becoming very concerned, but it's - you know - it's something ~~xx~~ I don't know what they can do about it. Anything that - any time you mention a bi-racial committee or anything else, you're a communist in Mississippi. Any time you talk about free

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speech you're a communist in Mississippi. Any time you talk about integration, you're a communist. They have this tremendous blind spot about world affairs and about the integration question that just can't be overcome, and religion has just been unable to touch it. And when you do find a situation that will touch it, and the state becomes afraid they've got a chink sort of in the armor, they smash it - they smash it as fast as they can. The parks - I mean, you just name it - anything you say - they say it's open to the public - in fact, the police chief will arrest anybody who tries to use it.

CE: Any Negro.

NG: Any Negro. Well, in fact, any white who is with a Negro - I mean, that's the same goes in. This is the situation we had at the beaches down in Gulfport a couple of years ago - the very same thing - a similar situation.

RPW: I don't want to keep you all indefinitely. This is the end of Tape #2 of Mr. Charles Evers. The other voice that has come in is Mr. Neal Goldschmidt -

CE: He's on public relations.

RPW: Public Relations, NAACP, Jackson, February 12.

(end of interview)