

NEWS RELEASE

STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE

6 Raymond Street, N. W.
Atlanta 14, Georgia
688-0331

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SNCC FIELD SEC'Y ARRESTED FOR "VAGRANCY"
WHILE WALKING ON CAMPUS IN MONTGOMERY, ALA.

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA, JANUARY 9 -- The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee has charged yesterday's arrest of Robert Zellner, a SNCC field secretary, on the campus of Huntingdon College as "fraudulent" and "completely without justification" and asked the Justice Department to investigate.

Zellner was arrested yesterday evening for "vagrancy" and initially held on \$1000 bail. At trial this morning, he was convicted. New bond was held in abeyance until sentencing tomorrow morning.

Zellner, 23, a '61 honor graduate of Huntingdon College, had dinner with a student and another friend on campus yesterday evening. The three were walking toward Zellner's car -- parked on campus -- when an unmarked car began following them. When the car stopped, one man, believed to be Willy P. Paynter, a state investigator and employee of the Alabama Department of Public Safety, jumped out, frisked Zellner, and told him he was under arrest for "conspiracy."

Zellner was taken to the county jail in Montgomery, then transferred to the city jail where the charge was changed to "vagrancy" and bond set at \$1000.

Zellner, a native of Alabama, is the son of a Methodist minister. While a senior at Huntingdon, a Methodist-related school, he was almost expelled along with several other students after they attended Negro meetings in Montgomery. Some months after graduation he returned to Huntingdon to talk with classmates and was attacked by a mob on the campus.

Zellner has been arrested six times previously in Louisiana, Alabama, and Georgia. He and SNCC Chairman Charles McDew were arrested almost a year ago on charges of "criminal anarchy" -- which carries a possible 10-year penalty -- when they went to visit a SNCC field secretary imprisoned in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.