FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Call: Frances Pauley
Office: 525-6468
Home: Dr. 3-6735
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The Georgia Council on Human Relations through its Executive Director, Mrs. Frances Pauley, today called upon Governor Carl E. Sanders to send the State Police into areas where local law enforcement has collapsed.

Mrs. Pauley's letter to Governor Sanders follows:

July 26, 1965

Governor Carl E. Sanders
State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Governor Sanders:

I write to give you an account of the breakdown of law enforcement in Baker County in the past week. My letter comes after numerous attempts to give this information by telephone to you, your aides and the State Patrol. I was unsuccessful in reaching anyone in authority. The last five days have witnessed the ugly spectacle of mob violence against unarmed men, while local law enforcement officers stood by as spectators, refusing to stop the mob or to protect its victims.

Lawlessness is not new in Baker County. Last year, you will recall, two State troopers testified in court that Sheriff Johnson ran them out of the county at gunpoint when they attempted to arrest the Sheriff's kinsman for traffic violations. It is this same sheriff who is in charge of law enforcement in the present situation of Negroes attempting peacefully to gain their voting rights.

This latest drive of Negroes to secure their rights comes after a long history of intimidation and trickery against Negro registrants. In fact, until 1962, there was not a single regis-
tered Negro voter in the County. At that time, pressure from the U.S. Justice Department, including the possibility of a federal court injunction under the Civil Rights Act, plus the presence of a Justice Department observer in Baker County, resulted in the registration of about 500 Negro voters over a two year period. But when the Justice Department observer left Newton, in Baker County, the community went back to its old pattern of intimidation and registration abuses.

Their patience at the denial of their legal rights exhausted, Negroes in Baker County have begun peaceful demonstrations to secure voting rights — asking first for the opening of the registration office for more than one day a month.

What follows is the story of how law enforcement broke down when Negro citizens attempted to exercise the rights guaranteed them in the Constitution of the United States:

On Wednesday, July 21st, Negroes set up a small picket line around the registration place, the Newton courthouse. Members of a white mob beat up four Negroes, while the local police stood by and watched. One of those beaten was Reverend Charles Sherrod, a graduate of Union Theological Seminary, to whom non-violence is a religion. He made no attempt to resist those beating him and received a deep gash on his face.

Another one of the picketers who was beaten collapsed later that night and I drove him to the Phoebe Putney Hospital in Albany. He was unconscious during the entire trip.

On the following day, Thursday, July 22, Negroes again picketed the courthouse. This time, the mob waited until after the picketing was over to beat up a young boy. When the boy's mother went to the courthouse to swear out a warrant against his attacker, she too was beaten up, in broad daylight. Her two daughters were also assaulted. The local police made no arrests.

During Thursday, I was an observer of the picketing on the sidewalk across the street from the courthouse. A group of about twenty men gathered around and threatened me with physical harm if I didn't move away. When I moved, a second group threatened me. Finally, a man with a gun told me that if I didn't leave Newton, I would be shot. When I reported this to local law enforcement officers, they shrugged and told me: "If you want to stay in Newton, that's your business." They made no attempt to talk to the man who had threatened me or to investigate the facts of my complaint.

Frances Pauley, letter to Governor Sanders, July 26, 1965. Frances Freeborn Pauley papers. Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University. 0659-010.tif
On Thursday, Reverend Sherrod and a local civil rights leader were arrested by local police for "fighting". To anyone who knows Reverend Sherrod and has observed his deep commitment to the philosophy of non-violence, such a charge is a mockery of the truth.

On Friday morning, when six Negroes, including Reverend Sherrod who was out on bond, resumed picketing, they were met by 26 whites brought in from neighboring counties. The whites attacked the Negroes, seriously injuring Reverend Sherrod and another man who were taken to the Albany hospital. While the attack was going on, local police walked inside the courthouse and observed the scene from the Courthouse windows.

During these three days of unchecked mob violence, I telephoned your office and The Mansion time after time. I explained to secretaries and aides that citizens were being attacked while local police refused to act; and that as Governor of Georgia you had the power to send the State Patrol into areas where local law enforcement collapses. I was told that my messages would be conveyed to you. I then called your aide Mr. Douglas Bernard, and his secretary informed me that he was too busy to talk with me. I tried to get someone in authority at State Patrol headquarters. I was told that "There's nobody in charge you can talk with and besides we can't do anything anyway." To date, I have received no reply to my messages.

For the moment, Baker County is calm. But all the ingredients for violence are still present: the resentment of long-suffering Negro citizens who are being forced to live outside the protection of the law; the recalcitrance of local officials, including Sheriff Johnson; the blatant disregard for law by local law enforcement officers; the lack of responsible action by state officials and by your office. Given these conditions, it will take only a random spark to ignite an uncontrollable riot.

Once before, Governor Sanders, less than four years ago, virtually these same conditions were present on the University of Georgia campus. And then too, nobody could reach the Governor or the State Patrol in time. What resulted was a riot that made the front pages of virtually every newspaper in the United States and every world capital. "Shame in Georgia", "Another Little Rock", "World Opinion Appalled by Georgia Riots", the headlines screamed.
Must our state be subjected to this kind of humiliation a second time? Can state officials do nothing to protect our citizens when local law enforcement collapses? We turn to you for the answer to these questions, not only for now and for Baker County, but for every community in Georgia. Our citizens need to be assured that your office will guarantee that Georgia will be governed by law and not by mob rule.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Frances Pauley
Executive Director