

## EDITORIAL:

# **From Georgia With Love: The Case Of Julian Bond**

Julian Bond, a brilliant young leader of SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee), having been duly elected to the Georgia state legislature from Atlanta, dared to endorse SNCC's statement attacking conscription and the American war in Vietnam. In so doing, Mr. Bond indelibly stamped himself as a "bad" Negro in the eyes of his legislative colleagues, and was thus barred from his seat in the Georgia House by a vote of 184 to 12.

In the widespread comment on the Bond case, there has not been sufficient emphasis placed on its vital importance, for Mr. Bond's treatment raises the crucial question whether or not America is truly a "free country". In particular, classically there are only two basic routes to fundamental change in a nation's policy: through free elections or through revolution. Indeed, the whole point of free elections is to make peaceful change possible. But elections are most emphatically not free if the legislature can bar or expel a member with whose views it does not agree.

The case of Julian Bond cuts to the heart of the very nature of American democracy. It must not be decided on the basis of the old legal myth that a

legislature is essentially a private club, which may legitimately and arbitrarily decide who sits in its chambers. The case recalls the shameful expulsions of Representative Victor Berger from the U. S. House of Representatives in 1919, and of five members of the New York State legislature the following year, for the high crime of having been members of the Socialist Party and thus having opposed U. S. entry into World War I. All of these men, indeed, like Bond, ran again for their seats, were re-elected, and were again barred by their respective legislatures. But in the case of the Socialists, a stubborn addiction to the alleged right of a legislature to decide on its own membership prevented the victims from testing the whole problem in the courts. Julian Bond fortunately suffers from no such qualms, and will pursue the matter in the Federal courts. They will decide whether or not elections in America are only a mockery.