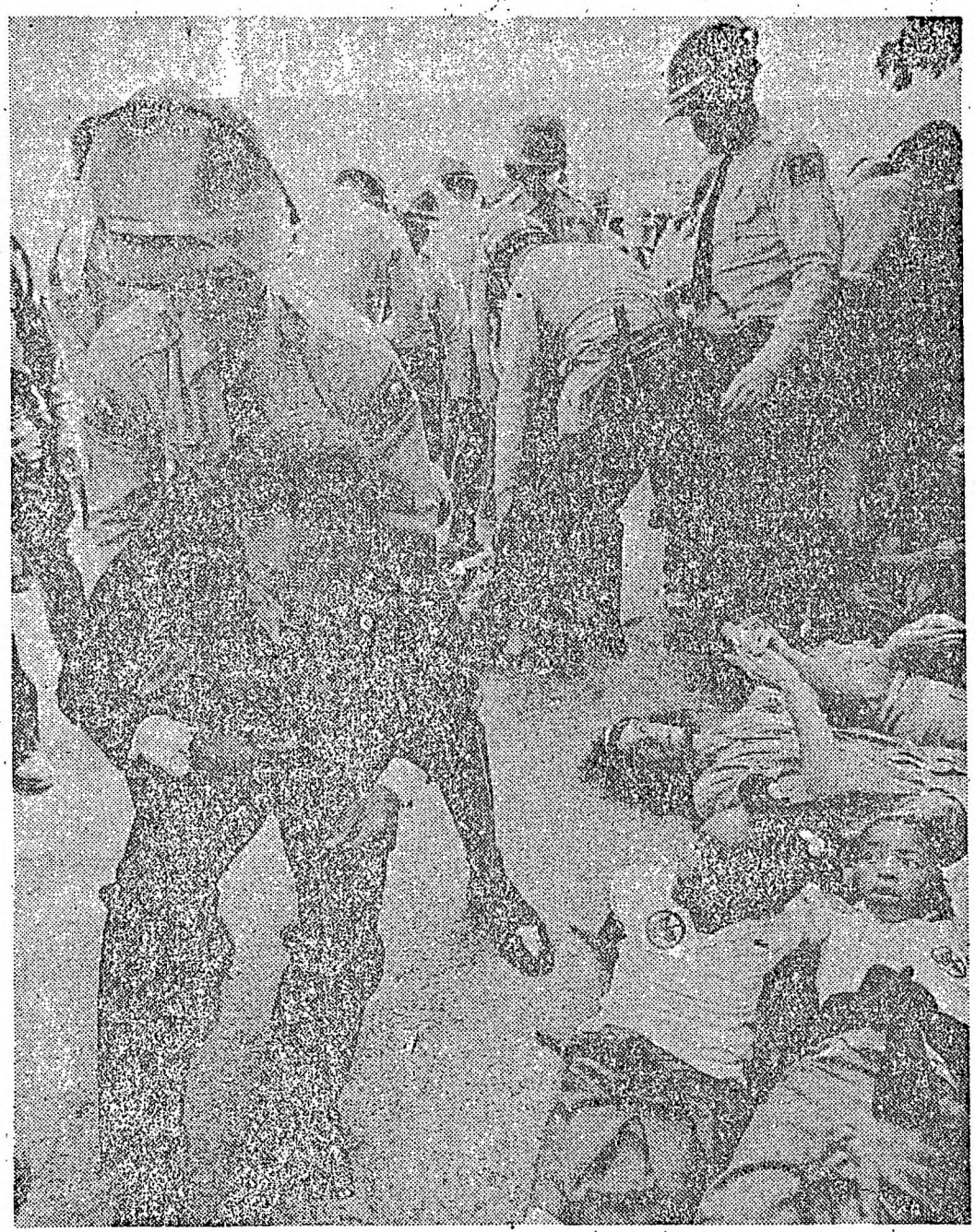

Staff photo by Mike Sargent

State trooper lifts congressional delegate Walter E. Fauntroy from PCB roadblock
...Fauntroy and others were protesting PCB dumping in Warren County

Congressional delegate arrested at PCB protest

By CHARLES JEFFRIES
Staff Writer

AFTON — Congressional delegate Walter E. Fauntroy of Washington was among 114 people arrested Monday as they tried to stop state dump trucks from hauling PCB-contaminated soil to an environmental landfill in Warren County.

Fauntroy was charged with impeding traffic and held under $200 bond after he knelt in front of a truck delivering soil to the landfill. The charge is punishable by a fine of up to $500 and a jail term of up to six months.

Fauntroy and the Rev. Joseph Lowery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, led about 500 people in a protest march against the landfill where the state is depositing PCB-tainted soil from 210 miles of roadsides where it was illegally dumped four years ago.

As they have for almost three weeks since the cleanup began, part of the marchers lay or knelt in front of trucks as they neared the landfill. Highway patrolmen carried the protesters to N.C. Department of Correction buses and encountered the stiffest resistance of the demonstrations.

William W. Phillips, a spokesman for the N.C. Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, said one trooper was bitten and three were kicked by protesters. In one scuffle, a patrolman's foot was run over by a dump truck, but he was not seriously injured.

The escalation of the protests — about twice as many marchers participated than in most earlier demonstrations — marked the halfway point in the state project to clean up the PCBs, which were outlawed by the federal Environmental Protection Agency after causing liver cancer in laboratory animals.

The trucks delivered 431 loads of soil from 13.2 miles of roadside Monday, bringing the total deposit-

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The News and Observer, Raleigh, N. C., Tues., Sept. 20, 1982

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Congressional delegate arrested at protest

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ed to 2,890 from 106.1 miles of road shoulders. State officials initially had estimated the cleanup would take six weeks but since have said they may be able to cut the time almost in half.

The Warren County residents oppose the landfill on the basis that PCBs, which have a long lifespan and tend to build up in the environment, may leak into the county's groundwater supplies. State and federal agencies have assured them the landfill is safe and will not leak.

Nonetheless, the protests against the landfill showed no sign of abating. There have been 391 arrests since the cleanup began Sept. 15.

In two separate incidents Monday, the troopers arrested 56 adults on dual charges of impeding traffic and resisting arrest — by going limp or otherwise interfering with the officers. Another 41 were charged with impeding traffic. Both are punishable by fines up to $500 and up to six months in jail, Phillips said. Local authorities took custody of 17 juveniles arrested. The juveniles were to be released to their parents, many of whom also have participated in the protests.

Most of the adults were released under bonds of $100 to $500. Others were released on their own recognizance after signing a written promise not to participate in further attempts to obstruct the landfill. Legal authorities say violation of the written promise could be used as a basis for contempt of court citations, bringing an immediate sentence of up to 30 days in jail.

Among the adults arrested was Ann Sheppard, the only white and only woman among the Wilmington 10, the group that gained national publicity when it was imprisoned for firebombing a grocery store in Wilmington during racial upheaval in 1971. The conviction later was overturned by a federal appeals court.

Also arrested were Nelson Johnson of Greensboro, a Communist Workers Party leader; Martha Nathan of Durham, widow of a CWP member killed in 1979 during a confrontation with Ku Klux Klansmen and Nazis in Greensboro; and Evelyn Lowery, wife of the SCLC president.

Ms. Sheppard, Johnson, Mrs. Nathan and Mrs. Lowery were charged with impeding traffic.

It was their first participation in the protests that have been conducted primarily by Warren County residents.

The Warren County people have contended that the state's decision to place the landfill in the county was, in part, because of its poor economic base and predominantly (56 percent) black population.

The state has countered that the landfill was selected because soil conditions met federal environmental standards, because it was close to spill sites in 14 counties, because the area was sparsely populated and because the land was available for purchase.

Although the state has said — and a federal judge has ruled — that race was not considered in the site selection, the SCLC representatives have said they accepted an invitation from the biracial local leadership to join the protest in belief that the county's black population was a factor.

The SCLC intervention brought Fauntroy to Warren County in a private plane Monday morning. A member of the Congressional Black Caucus, he also is a member of the SCLC Board of Directors.

Fauntroy urged the crowd to march until the trucks stop running and "until the state of North Carolina says 'We're sorry, we were wrong.'"

After the rally at Coley Springs Baptist Church, the marchers began walking down Secondary Road 1604 toward the landfill 2½ miles away.

PCB-ARCH-EXT0378516