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CLOSE-UP / JULIAN BOND, A MILITANT INSIDE THE SYSTEM

by JOHN NEARY

When you first meet him, it is virtually impossible to believe that, standing here before you in that casual, insouciant slouch, is the very same young man, Horace Julian Bond, who electrified the nation at the Chicago convention.

Yet here he is, 28 years old, a reedy six feet one and a half inches tall, 175 pounds, so fair he once had to show an identification card to prove he should be refused service in a Georgia coffee shop, the descendant of an emancipated slave and her former owner, a child of the civil rights movement, a published poet with a hole in his shoe, a member of the Georgia House of Delegates by virtue of a landmark Supreme Court decision and, by any yardstick of forensic measurement, the clearest, sanest, and one of the most responsible voices from the New Left—which, by the way, he helped to start.

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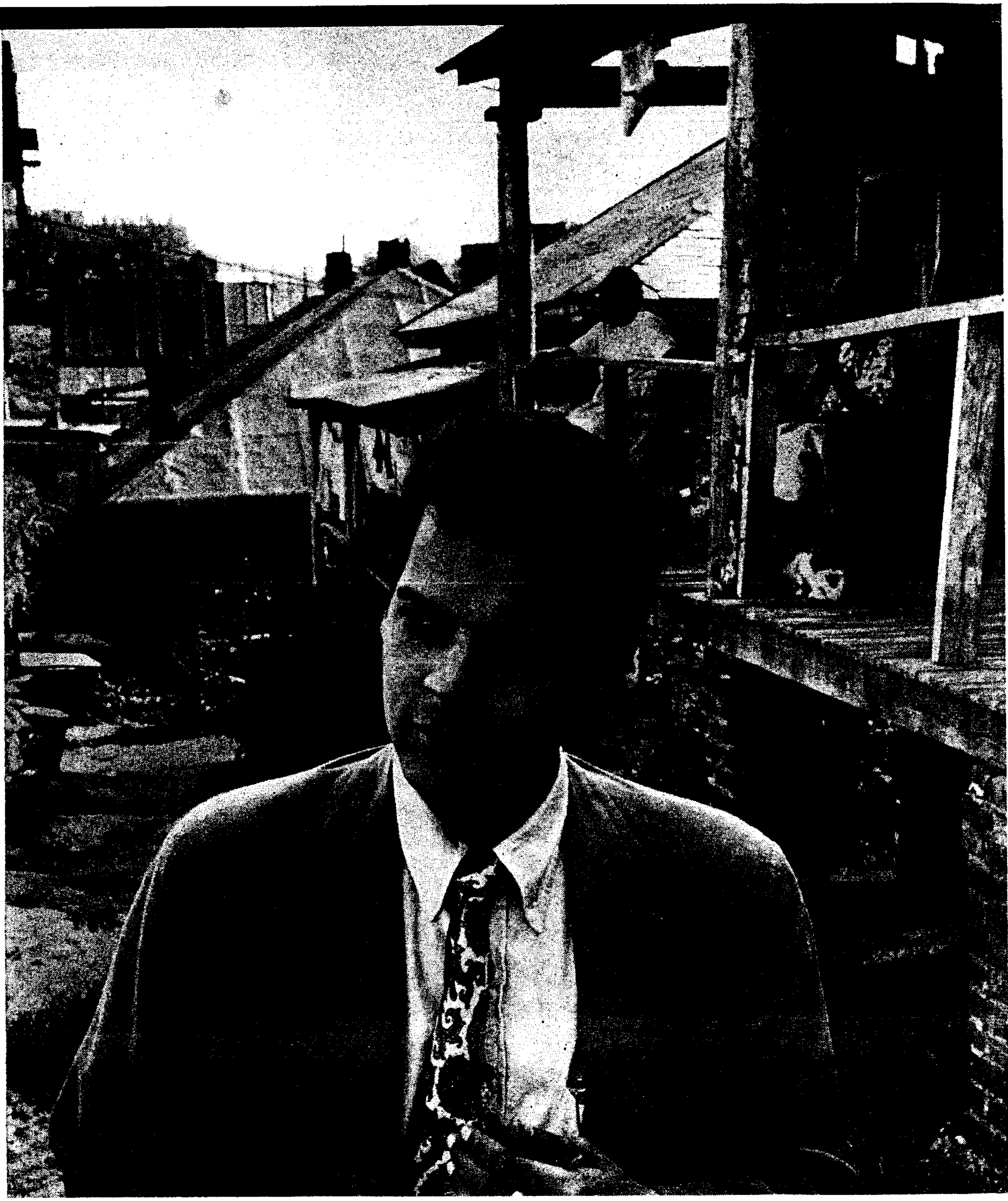

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In Chicago, Bond handled himself with the level-headed self-assurance of a veteran and won acclaim not only for his victories there but for the indomitable cool with which he took them. Hardly had the cathode tubes cooled across the country when people began asking each other who this young man was—and the big-league pols who had watched him work their game and win the huge stakes he had played for asked themselves what he might become.

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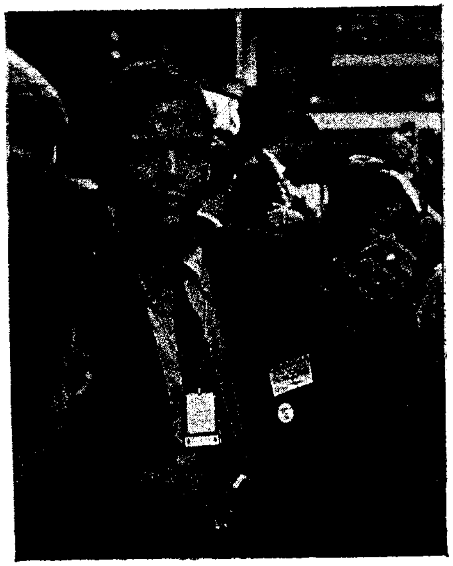
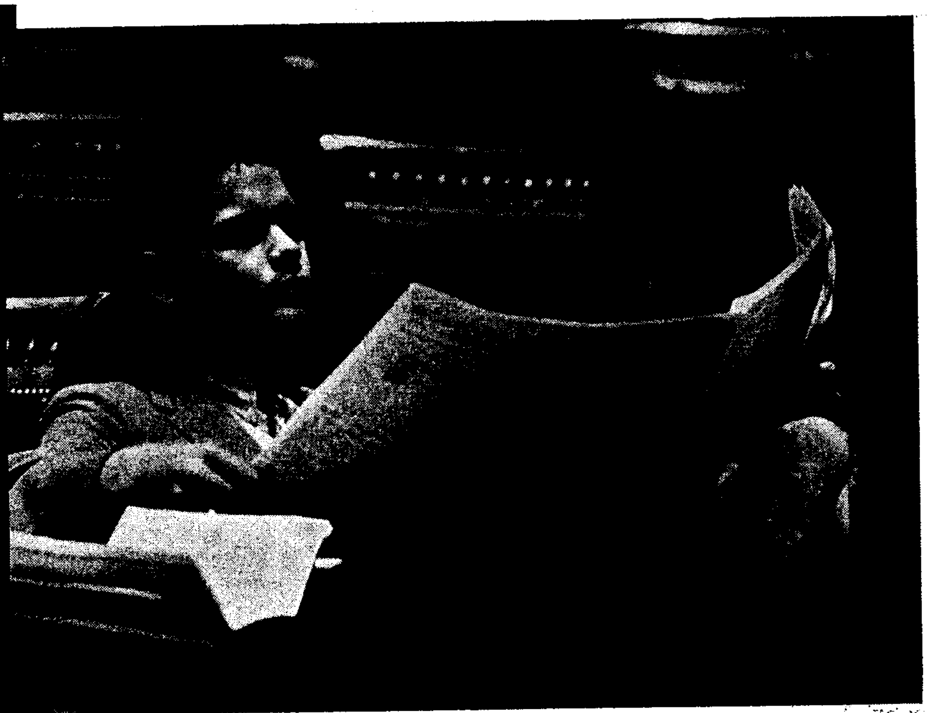
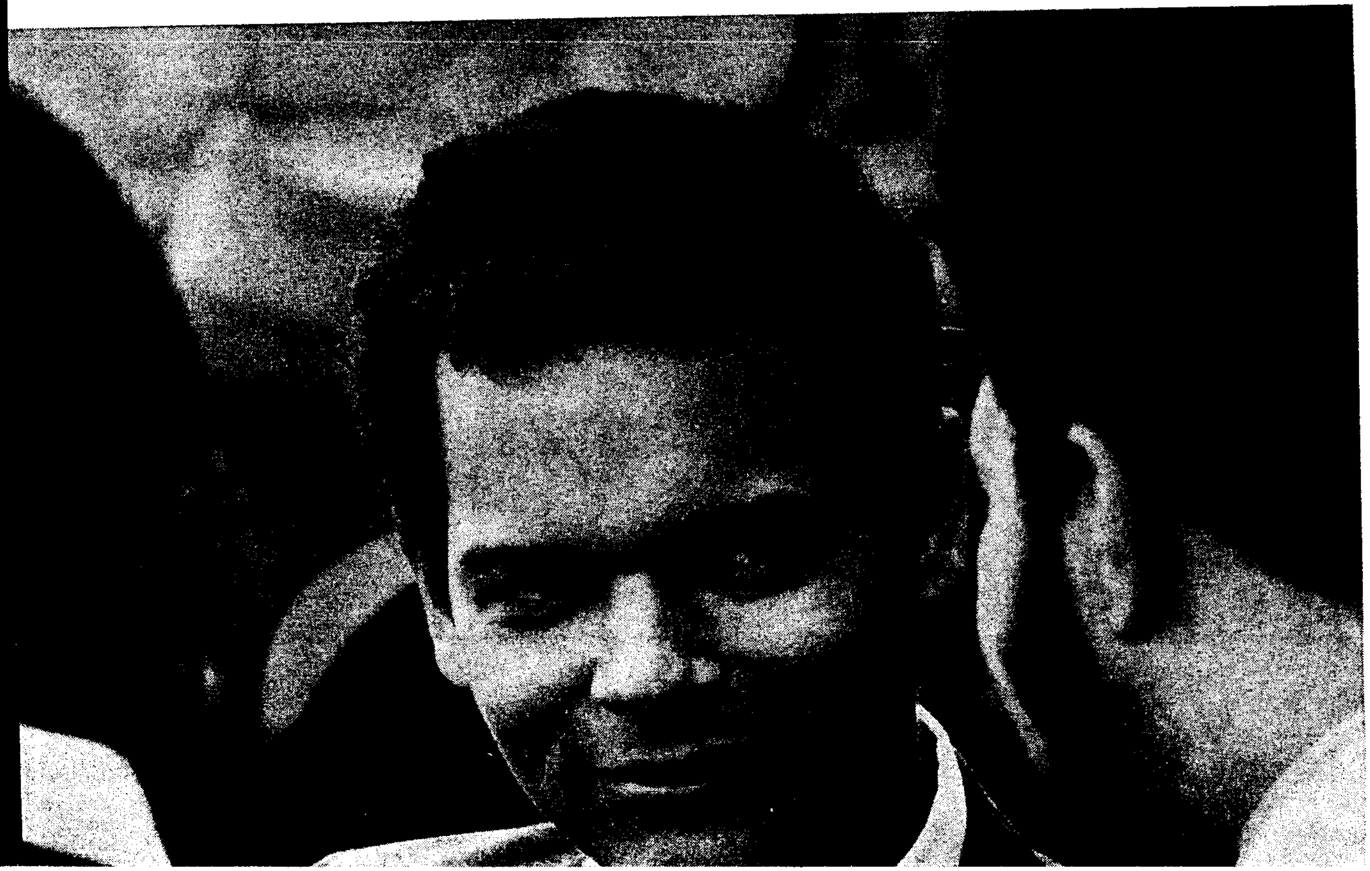


A celebrity at the convention *(left)*, Bond returns to Atlanta and tours a slum near his district

Out of the South, A Hero-at-Large





His cool and jaunty manner was honed by prejudice

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Bond and his band of Georgia irregulars triumphed over the hand-picked crew of the griddle-chef turned governor, Lester Maddox, winning half of Georgia's 42 floor seats and helping defeat the unit voting rule that had stifled dissent at so many previous conventions. This victory and his poised demurral when he himself was nominated for Vice President all marked him as a comer, perhaps the prototype of a whole new breed on the political scene—young, articulate, well-educated and determined Negro politicians who must be included in the political equation from now on.

Bond began developing his determination and control early. As a boy in Pennsylvania, where his father, Horace Mann Bond, was president of Lincoln University, he first ran head-on into race prejudice. When his family moved to Atlanta, young Julian had already developed an abiding fear of Southern whites. Then racism seared him deeply at George School, a Quaker prep school in Pennsylvania, when, as a senior, he was ordered by the headmaster to leave his school team jacket in the closet on the occasions he took his white girl friend along with him into Newtown for a date. "That was just like somebody stopping you and slapping you across the face."

But he learned to conceal his hurt and his outrage behind a facade of cool that he began consciously to erect around himself as a teen-ager. Bond's cool was hardened, tempered and finally burnished to a deceptive patina in the heat of the South where he went to work as a civil rights work-

Worn shoe up on his desk, Bond *(top)* scans a paper in the darkened well of the Georgia House—where he won a seat in 1966 only after an appeal to the Supreme Court. At center, he hears out followers of Malcolm X in Harlem, where he campaigned for Senate candidate Paul O'Dwyer. At left, students in New York's Westchester County surge around him after he urged them to "re-involve themselves in the struggle of the South," and said, "I don't condone violence—but I understand why it happens."

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As a boy he had wanted nothing more than to be a movie director; then as a youth, listening alone to jazz, he chose to become a writer, a poet. By the time he was a senior in Morehouse College in Atlanta, he had been published in four anthologies and several magazines, a poet who could write mournfully of Ray Charles as "the bishop of Atlanta," and exuberantly exclaim in a zany couplet, "Look at that gal shake that thing/We cannot all be Martin Luther King. . . ." His father a respected Negro educator who is now at Atlanta University, his mother a librarian, Bond might well have been shielded by his family stature in the Atlanta Negro community from involvement in the newborn movement that, in 1960, was about to erupt in a six-year-long spasm that would

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As a Snick official, he saw the sit-ins begin—and end

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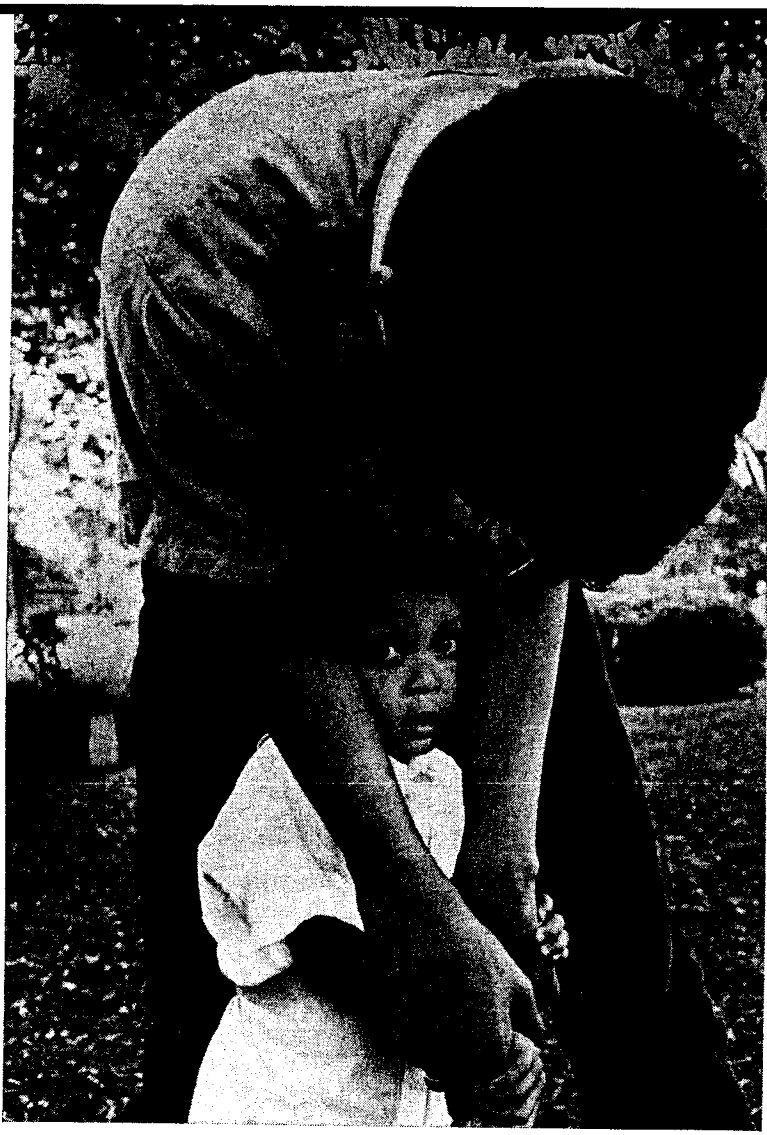
awaken the country and finally change its laws

He chose instead, when the choice presented itself one day in a drugstore, to enlist. A football player named Lonnie King showed Bond a newspaper headline about sit-in demonstrations in Greensboro, N C As Bond recalls it, King said, " 'Don't you think that's great—don't you think something like that ought to happen here?' and I said, 'I'm sure it will,' and he said, 'Don't you think we ought to make it happen?' and I thought, 'Why me?' "

Swallowing his misgivings, Julian Bond joined King and each took a row of booths in the drugstore, telling the other Morehouse students that there would be a meeting outside one of the dorms Thus they began the Committee on Appeal for Human Rights, one of the grassfire civil rights groups that were soon to coalesce into the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee—"Snick" The group had its first sit-in on March 15 and Bond was arrested for the first and only time, so far, in his life: he led the group of demonstrators into Atlanta's segregated city hall cafeteria By the time COHAR, as the students called it, melded with Snick, it had become



month He and his brother James, five years his junior, handled Snick's public relations, a job Julian despised—"I felt like a whore, or a pimp"—feeding tapes to radio stations, handouts to reporters, tearing around the South in Snick's distinctive whip-antennaed Plymouth Savoys. . . . "This is Zero-one, calling Zero-two; I'm 50 miles from Sunflower, and coming in, *VAROOM!*" There were midnight chases by the police, with daring "moonshiner turns"—lights out, a

do that—I can do it faster.' And she does it, and so this girl says, 'Well, hell, I'll never learn how to type if this chick is going to come down here huntin' and peckin' and by the end of the summer, she'll whip back up to Vassar and I'll *still* be here, huntin' and peckin'.' " Resentment grew—along with fear of terrible violence by white racists provoked by the "outsiders."

The final put-down was felt acutely by black civil rights work-

On the lawns of his alma mater, Morehouse College, Bond enfolds his son, Michael Julian, 2, and listens to his father, Dr. Horace Mann Bond, who is a dean at Atlanta University.

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Those were heady, golden days for a boy barely out of high school; at almost the same time, he met and married Alice Clopton, the shy and attractive daughter of a restaurant chef and a major in Home Ec at nearby Spelman College. Babies began arriving, and Bond, needing a job and a more involved existence than being an undergraduate afforded him, left college in the middle of his senior year to work full time for the Atlanta *Inquirer* and the movement. He became managing editor of the paper, then was invited over to Snick headquarters to be information director at $40 a month He and his brother James, five years his junior, handled Snick's public relations, a job Julian despised—"I felt like a whore, or a pimp"—feeding tapes to radio stations, handouts to reporters, tearing around the South in Snick's distinctive whip-antennaed Plymouth Savoys. . . . "This is Zero-one, calling Zero-two; I'm 50 miles from Sunflower, and coming in, *VAROOM!*" There were midnight chases by the police, with daring "moonshiner turns"—lights out, a hard left U-turn on a dirt road, the brakes almost locked, a touch of the emergency brake, a double-clutch down into low and the gas pedal flat—to careen back past the policemen there wondering, "Where'd he go, where'd he go?"

The movement drew volunteers from all over the country, and as they came down to that strange land below the Mason-Dixon line that is so much a part of, and at the same time so separate from, the United States, interior strains and tensions began to mount within the movement. Southern Negroes came up against Northern whites, and the whites tended to take over mostly because of their better education. "I mean, you'd see a Negro girl just learning how to type," Bond recalls, "who grew up in Greenwood, Miss., went to high school there, is just learning how to type on the office typewriter and some chick from Vassar says, 'Let me do that—I can do it faster.' And she does it, and so this girl says, 'Well, hell, I'll never learn how to type if this chick is going to come down here huntin' and peckin' and by the end of the summer, she'll whip back up to Vassar and I'll *still* be here, huntin' and peckin'.' " Resentment grew—along with fear of terrible violence by white racists provoked by the "outsiders."

The final put-down was felt acutely by black civil rights workers, who had so often gone up to elderly Negroes and asked them to go down and register to vote only to be told, vaguely, to come back next week. "But you get a young white kid to come up and say, 'Mister Smith, we want you to go register,' and he'd say, 'Oh, yessuh, captain, yes, suh, be right *down* there,' " and, Bond says bitterly, "it became people doing the right thing for the wrong reason all over again."

Then in the summer of 1964 came a shock so disillusioning it drove many civil rights workers who had previously been willing to work with whites and within the "system" off forever into black militancy. The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, in a move similar to Bond's own successful efforts last summer, had selected its own delegates to the Atlantic City convention of the Democratic Party, claiming that they and not the regulars truly represented the people of the state.

So many members of the Credentials Committee supported the FDP cause that party chieftain Lyndon Johnson, threatened with an ugly and embarrassing floor fight over the Mississippi seats, pushed the muscle button. A high Pentagon official called a delegate from the Canal Zone and spoke softly about the impending loss of a job; California Governor Pat Brown murmured to another delegate about a judgeship that wouldn't come her husband's way if she persisted; Mayor Robert Wagner persuasively urged his Negro secretary to withdraw her support; the White House leaned hard, though unsuccessfully, on Joe Rauh, counsel to the FDP. Finally, committee support was eroded perilously close to the essential number 11—at least that many members were needed for a minority report—and then the Administration forces revealed a compromise settlement—two seats at large. It was, Rauh recalls, "like a Russian torture chamber—they get you scared and then offer you a cigarette."

The FDP rejected the offer despite warnings that if they did, Humphrey would lose the bid for

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Now he is working for a power base—for himself and his race

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the Vice Presidency. "For a lot of people," Bond says, "that was just the end. Political liberals in the party that Snick had always counted on for support under that kind of pressure just couldn't stand up to it. They wilted away, and that was the last straw. People said, 'Well, we're not going to get it in politics; you can't count on white people; they'll fink out at the last minute'; and that was it."

Embittered as he, like his friends, was by Atlantic City, Bond nevertheless chose to stay within the "system," and in 1965 ran for a new seat in the Georgia House that had been created by the Supreme Court decision on reapportionment. It is this very fact that Julian Bond did *not* quit the game in disgust, that he chose instead to become a politician, still a militant but one alone, outside militancy, and able to recognize the politician's necessity to compromise, that makes him so perplexingly interesting. With some help from Snick, he won the primary by a resounding margin, and six weeks later the general election, drawing 82% of his district vote. He seemed headed for a seat in the very legislative chamber from which he had been ejected just three years earlier when he tried to integrate its visitors' gallery.

On a speaking tour which has him booked until Christmas, Bond tells a New York high school audience U.S. should end "racist" Vietnam war.

But then Bond endorsed a position statement by Snick that condemned the war in Vietnam, and compounded the political damage by applauding the courage of draft-card burners. House members got up petitions against his seating, feeling no doubt a good deal like Huck Finn's father when he met a "free nigger from Ohio." Old Pap recounted, Mark Twain tells us, indignantly: "And to see the cool way of that nigger—why, he wouldn't'a' give me the road if I hadn't shoved him out o' the way. I says to the people, why ain't this nigger put up at auction and sold?"

A special committee recommended against permitting him to take the oath of office; and on Jan. 10, Bond watched with blurring eyes as the big electric tote board recorded the house vote—184-to-12 against seating him. Up in the gallery, his wife told him later, she had barely been able to keep from screaming, and his father said not long ago, "I didn't know he had it in him when they had that kangaroo court; I was sitting up there getting furiouser and furiouser, but *he* kept his cool."

Bond took his case to federal court and lost and then, on Dec. 5, 1966, the Supreme Court granted Bond, the third member of his family in three generations to be a plaintiff before the high court, his seat, declaring the legislature had no right to stifle the voice of a member. (Bond's grandfather in 1908 had been, as a member of the board of trustees of Berea College, a co-plaintiff in a case that unsuccessfully attacked a Kentucky law requiring separation of the races in school. In 1954, his father helped prepare the brief in the historic case that struck down the notion of "separate but equal" schools.)

In the House, a legislative body where, says Charles Morgan, lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union in Atlanta, "Hitler would be a middle-of-the-roader," Bond admittedly has not been notably effective. But he still prefers his job to that of, say, being mayor of a city ("What will Lindsay be able to say at the end of his four years; what will he point to? I can point to little sidewalks—maybe in 50 years, they'll call it the 'Julian Bond Memorial Sidewalk'"). And while his 1965 campaign platform of a minimum wage law, elimination of right-to-work laws and the state's capital punishment law remains unfulfilled, Bond, unopposed in this year's election, plans to stay in the House for another four years. By then, he hopes, his congressional district will have been halved and he expects to be carried into the United States

In a way, although he hasn't written a couplet in years, Bond is continuing with his poetry, but now it is a verbal kind of troubadouring, using his poet's imagery and language to deliver, in his deceptively languid, hoarse, soft, smoker's voice, an admonishment, a cajolery, a stern warning to his audiences; as poets can sometimes do, he is roaming the country spreading the unpleasant news that America's future is now.

Julian Bond doesn't hand out any aspirin to either whites or blacks. He sees "just a lot of turmoil from now on," terrorism, black sabotage of power plants, white police brutality, sees a country which is deciding now which of two ways it will go: toward concentration-camp-like ghettos or "brotherhood, peace and light." He sees the election as "two road shows on tour, speaking from the same script. The title of this year's extravaganza is Law and Order, or, How to Sell Out to the South without Once Saying 'Nigger.'" The answer, as Bond can best see it, is for "those least affected, least involved, the great mass of black and white middle-class Americans, to involve themselves . . . that action replace slogans, that rhetoric be replaced with reality."

Dividing his time between a raft of speaking engagements and political guerrilla missions down South and around the country, he frets that he has no immediate hope of using the impetus he gained at Chicago and that he has so far not developed any political power base of his own. This he will try to remedy in time to run for Congress in 1972 and has plans as well to help other Negroes in the South build the organizations in disgust, that he chose instead to become a politician, still a militant but one alone, outside militancy, and able to recognize the politician's necessity to compromise, that makes him so perplexingly interesting. With some help from Snick, he won the primary by a resounding margin, and six weeks later the general election, drawing 82% of his district vote. He seemed headed for a seat in

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In the meantime, this sometimes uncertain young man, who carries a heavy gold pocket watch in his vest and has an antique cameo letterseal dangling from the watch chain, ponders the swell of fan mail he is getting after Chicago. (Two people wrote him that he had evoked in them feelings they had experienced only once before —when John F. Kennedy appeared at the convention in 1956.)

Despite this sudden adulation, Bond is picking his shots carefully, figuring angles with the precision of far more experienced pols, venturing north for a Paul O'Dwyer, into Atlanta for a Charles Weltner (the former congressman who jumped off the ticket in 1966 rather than run with Maddox) and appearing at so many colleges he is gone from home most of every week—to the dismay of his wife, who hates politics and laments that she *thought* she was marrying a writer.

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And as for his personal political hopes, when the crowd chants over and over again, standing on the seats to applaud him as he leaves the stage, screaming it out, "Julian *Bond*, Julian *Bond*," you remember Charles Weltner in the living room of his Atlanta home, mulling over what he saw ahead for this upstart friend of his, Julian Bond—that he had, power base or no power base, a great future in store. As *what?* he was asked, and Charlie replied, "Oh, I don't know—maybe just as hero-at-large!"