

\$240,000 judgment to highway patrolman

NAACP legal official calls ruling 'legal lynching'

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — An NAACP legal official Tuesday attacked a \$240,000 judgment against his organization and state appeal procedures as the "latest form of legal lynching" in Mississippi.

Nathaniel R. Jones, NAACP general counsel from New York, told a news conference the black rights organization had to borrow money to post a \$262,000 bond in order to appeal the judgment rendered earlier this year.

Jones said the bond was required under a state law which provides that a party appealing such a judgment must post 125 per cent of the amount of the demand.

A Hinds County jury in Raymond earlier this year awarded the \$240,000 to Mississippi Highway Patrolman Robert E. Moody in a slander and libel action brought against the NAACP and its local officials.

The case stemmed from alleged remarks by NAACP officials following Moody's 1974 arrest of a black man on a speeding charge

near Utica.

Jones, who appeared at the news conference with the Rev. Emmett Burns, state field director for the NAACP, said the national organization had obtained an emergency loan from a New York bank Monday in order to stay in business and to challenge the "clearly unjust and illegal judgment which a Mississippi jury rendered against the organization..."

He said the bond requirement was designed to "frustrate appeals" and "it practically insures that unfairness will go unchecked and uncorrected."

"The NAACP is not going to take this latest form of legal lynching lying down," Jones said. "The NAACP is too important to the black people of Mississippi and to the nation to be driven out of business or bankrupted by the illegal processes still permitted here."

The attorney said the appeal was filed with the Mississippi Supreme Court but that his group was prepared to take the case to the U.S.

Supreme Court if necessary.

Jones criticized the jury's decision to level a judgment against the NAACP while removing its local officials, including Burns, from liability.

"If you can figure that out, you've got the wisdom of Solomon," Jones said.

He said NAACP legal officials would challenge both the judgment and the bond law.

"To those responsible for the law that forces the NAACP to teeter on the brink of disaster in order to appeal this unfair and illegal judgment, we say that law has got to go and we intend to do what we can to insure that all people in this state have easier access to the appellate forms in order to remedy injustice," Jones said.

When asked if the judgment could result in the bankruptcy of the NAACP, Jones said that while the organization lacked funds to cover the demand, it would survive.

South Mississippi Sun, Prep
Pascagoula



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Jones with Emmett Burns