

EDWARDS INTERVIEW

That meeting with Edwards had taken place late in March, about a week or so before Pat Sonnier's execution. The small group of us meeting with him had expected a private conference. We knew that he was personally opposed to the death penalty. We hoped to appeal to him in a very personal way to save the life of Pat Sonnier. We hoped to appeal to a law higher than the cry of the populace. We hoped that he would use his power to save a man from death even though it would not be politically "smart." No doubt, he had the power.

But when we had walked into the designated room in the state capitol building it was clear this was to be no private meeting. There were a clutch of reporters and t.v. cameras. This execution was the first Edwards faced. It was clear that he planned to use this occasion to state his policy for this and future executions. I was sitting almost directly across the table from him. Millard Farmer, Pat's attorney was there, and Catholic Bishop Stanley Ott, and several other religious leaders. Edwards was perspiring. His face, especially his forehead, looked shiny under the white t.v. lights. The exchange did not last long. He patiently heard us out, but then stated how he was personally opposed to the death penalty but that as governor it was his obligation to carry out the law, and the death penalty was clearly the desire of the people and the "law of the land." He urged us to use our energies to educate the public, to change public opinion, to change the law. It was over. The t.v. cameramen were