



Staff Newsletter

~~Fayette County, Tenn. EST. 1961. VOL. 1, NO. 1~~

Negroes in the southern districts of Fayette County are getting ready to act to get jobs at the Troxel Plant, the biggest factory in the county. It is located on route 57 near Moscow. The Troxel Plant, which makes bicycles, seats, employs from 400 to 500 men and women. Of these, only eight are Negroes. The jobs are almost all unskilled; any one can do the work. For years qualified Negroes have been applying for jobs. The plant manager lets them fill out applications but almost never calls them back. He says they are not hiring, which means they're not hiring Negroes. Instead they hire whites from Mississippi. More than half of the worker at the plant are from Mississippi. They all make \$1.33 an hour, which is about \$50 a week. The people in Districts 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 are now holding mass meetings to decide what they should do to force the plant to give them jobs.

There is a lot of talk in West Tenn. now about jobs and people are very interested in following the trend started by MFLU :

"Do just like the people in Mississippi. They human just like us. They all stuck together, started early. They started just like we're starting now. Got tired of working for nothing, no rights. They got together, had lots of meetings, decided to strike. They went around to other places before they strike said don't come in here, don't scab, strike your own self. Its time to do it when the man need you, when the grass is high. They was making \$5-7 driving tractors, \$3-3.50 chopping and they went on strike. We can do the same thing least I think we can.

ADULT LITE ACY MARY VARELA

On August 17th the State of Mississippi did away with its literacy test. In July of this year the Federal Government announced a 7 million dollar poverty program grant to the Diocese of Natchez-Jackson for the purpose of doing adult literacy work. Adults will be paid to go to school.

This year I would like to emphasize an entire adult education program with the creation of tools to assist people in developing their own system of communication across the blackbelt. If a particular community is really interested in developing an adult literacy program I will assist them. But in view of the new developments in the voting tests, federal registrars and literacy poverty programs, I see no sense in my killing myself to get to every county to see if they want to teach literacy when the poverty program may get there and offer people \$35 a week to go to school. I am interested in contacting the people who have done things --for example the Batesville Co-op-- and talk to them about how people in other counties and across the blackbelt would like to know --step by step-- how Batesville built its co-op, the mistakes made, the successes. Instead of having people write the book --they would talk it (one technique is to bring up other people who want to start a co-op and have these people ask questions). The session would be taped and then transcribed and edited.

Its my feeling that a booklet (with pictures and large type) made out of people's conversations about how they did something is much more readable and informational than the material dug out of government publications. Such booklets also need to be done on the Poor People's Co-op, the Freedom Labor Unions, the Quilt Co-op, the Issaquena County School Bycott, the ASCS Elections, etc. These booklets are not the only or even the main tool in an adult education program. They are only a supporting tool as personal contact through workshops and speakers at the meetings are a much better means of communications.

Filmstrips are also another tool. Bob Fletcher and I intend to try to develop a library of filmstrips.

ASCS Workshop - Alabama

On Friday, 19 farmers attended the workshop. After Mr. Wasserman (National Sharecroppers Fund) talked about the history of organizing farmers in the south, they went on to discuss the ASCS, FHA, and other related subjects. Each county was represented, all of the farmers owned anywhere from 10-50 acres of land. They had come to take back to farmers in their counties any information that we could supply. On Saturday, Mr. James Mays held a very informal meeting with those present. They talked about their crops and the specific farm problems they had. For example, one of the brother's non-profit okra crop was beginning to plague him since he could only get $2\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ per lb. Mays told him about a cooperative in Mississippi composed of black farmers who get 5¢ per lb. A suggestion was made that he plant corn instead; since this is a cash crop and especially with the introduction of large scale cattle ranches. Needless to say, that cotton is still their best crop and especially since Negroes own land. They apparently had all voted in ASCS elections before, and had not been too interested in them. This time they planned to run candidates from their communities and will continue to have weekly meetings of farmers. Mays volunteered to attend meetings in each county to answer further questions and if need be go down to the ASCS offices with the folk. Whether win, lose or draw, the important thing is that folks are really interested in the elections and see ways of attempting to get their own people elected.

HARLEM ACTION PROJECT BILL HALL

I think that we (SNCC) are in a new phase of the movement, which means a recognition of national and global problems. It appears as though some are in the vanguard of this new phase, while others of us learn from our predecessors. There has been some talk about trying to hook-up the problems of the South with the problems of the North, which means broadening our base of operations. Until recently we have treated the North as a separate entity used only for political and economical support, while steering from the social evils in the Northern cities.

I plan to return to New York this fall and work in Harlem on what I hope will be a SNCC pilot project. My ultimate objective is grass roots political action. I don't know how detailed I can be in the absence of certain experiences (Northern organizing, fundraising in Negro communities, etc.)

Let me try and develop exactly how I see my time table working: Firstly, educational and fundraising are closely tied-up to one another. I feel that the type of fundraising in the Negro ghetto will be a lot smaller but more permanent, when our other resources dry out. This type of fundraising may also help to relieve some of the guilt feelings that some members of the Northern staff are experiencing. The picture of suppression is more relevant to people with similar problems, which means that you don't have to look for ghastly stories to tell in order to get money. The $3\frac{1}{2}$ cents a day or dollar a month idea can be gotten over to people in Harlem. Now what I am doing is using fundraising as a tool to educate people around their own needs. It's what I call the "expanded freedom school concept", you talk about the conditions of others until someone stands up and says let's talk about the conditions of our own community. What should follow is a community organization that can bridge the gap between the North and the South and see similarities in their problems. Now we are ready for some political education which will lead finally to political action.

EUFULA, ALABAMA SCOTT B. SMITH

Eufaula is in Barbour County, a typical Black Belt County in many ways. The median schooling of the Negroes in the county (52% of the population) is 4.7 years; the white median is 7.5 years. But these statistics fail to tell the whole story. There are two highschools in Eufaula: Eufaula High and McCoo High. In the past, the schools have been segregated, but this year in order to qualify for \$415,000 in federal funds, Eufaula High will be integrated. The school board has picked four Negroes to attend. These four Negroes will be very fortunate, at least in terms of physical facilities: they will have a full library available for their use instead of 500 books for 2000 students; they will have a typewriter for each student in their typing class instead of ten (10) typewriters for a class of fifty (50) to sixty (60); their

science lab will have equipment instead of one fishbowl; their sewing class will have a sewing machine for each student instead of one for a class of thirty-five (35); they will be able to take courses in Latin and trigonometry if they wish, and in all their classes they will be assured of getting a desk.

Another benefit which the new students from McCoo will have at Eufaula is a football stadium and if they play football, new uniforms. The students of McCoo were concerned with the poor uniforms and stadium for their team, as well as their poor library, and they began to raise money to do something about it. In a town where the median income for Negro families is \$1155 per year (the white median is \$4400) raising money isn't easy, but the students began holding dances, selling candy, running raffles, etc. In the past three years they have raised well over \$15,000 (Maybe as much as \$45,000). But conditions at the school still remain unchanged. The students at McCoo think that their share of the new federal money will disappear in the same way. Scott B. has no reason to disagree with them.

One might ask, "Why can't the people of Barbour County vote in officials who will better conditions and provide better schooling?" Scott B. put a similar question to President Johnson on August 12th:

After an extensive survey of the potential voters of Barbour County, Ala., we now request federal registrars. This county was not specified as a county to which a federal registrar would be sent. We would like to know from your office if this is due to the fact that this is Gov. Wallace's home county and the registrars office is in his home town (Clayton). The people here believe this because of the lack of federal support and the fear of intimidation.

No replay was ever received. Perhaps the federal government is still looking into the facts to see if the county is as bad as SNCC claims. It is clear that the federal government already has some information, however. On April 21, 1964, Rep. Frank T. Bow (R.-Ohio) of the House Appropriations Subcommittee asked Burke Marshall, then head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, for a list of counties in the south "where the right to vote is denied to thousands of Negroes". On Marshall's list was Barbour County. According to the last statistics available to the Civil Rights Commission, white registration in the county was 96% of those eligible while Negro registration is 7.8%. The Negroes of Barbour County have marched for the right to register, and suffered for their courage.

MADISON COUNTY

There has been a lot of activity in Madison County (Valley View and Canton) around the school desegregation issue. Some parents who have sent their children to the white schools, have complained of continuous harassment, intimidation and violence, but they say they will still send their children to the all white schools. Complaints are being filed in Washington.

On September 15, 1965 people from all across the county gathered for the dedication of the new Madison County Community Center. The Center will service the County in any number of ways (recreation, freedom schools, meetings, etc.) The people thought that this was a good time to talk about ASCS elections, schools, and other program areas. They all left the meeting prepared to go back to their areas to disseminate information and work hard for the coming elections.

JACKSON COUNTY -- FOREST COUNTY 9MISS.) GEORGIA MARTIN

Our work has mainly been centered around voter registration, school desegregation and testing public accommodations. The MFDP is strongly pushing voter registration. We have organized a community action group on school desegregation, and a group that is dealing with job problems in the county. In Jackson County they have been testing public accommodations. So far they have closed down three city swimming pools and integrated a movie theatre in Moss Point.

People in the counties are now vigorously talking about running for public office in the coming elections.

BERTIE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA, Alma Bosley

I am living in the town of Colrain, about twenty miles from the county seat of Windsor, which has a population of about 2600. The Negro voting age population in the county outnumbers the white by about two to one. The second largest town is Ahoskie, which has about 1000 people. There are eight large plants and companies that employ more than 100 people. They appear to be discriminating against Negroes. They are all covered by the minimum wage law and the Fair Employment Act. Most Negroes in the county own their own land. Those that do not work for white farmers 14 hours a day for \$4.00. The Negro farmers pay their hired help \$6-8 a day. Our actions will be centered around these things along with some federal programs such as co-ops and credit unions, and school desegregation and voter registration. People here have told SCOPE that they don't want them to work here any longer because of a mess they made before, but instead of leaving they have been spreading rumors that King is coming to town.

CAMBRIDGE, MARYLAND

APRIL, 1965

Employment-

Various programs have been brought into Cambridge and the county to deal with the problems of unemployment (Negro unemployment -29.5%, white-15%) such as ARA (Area Redevelopment Act), MDTA (Manpower Development and Training Act) and OJT (On the Job Training); however, these programs have proved inadequate to meet the needs of the community, and furthermore there has been discrimination in the selection of candidates for the programs offered. Members of the Cambridge Human Relations Council, the Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations met with CNAC representatives, and they are meeting with officials in the Department of Labor in two weeks, to present their grievances and demand that this situation be rectified.

JUNE, 1965

A meeting was held in the CNAC office with representatives from the Maryland Medical Committee for Human Rights, members of SNCC and CNAC, and Dr. Fassett, who is the only Negro doctor in 75 mile area. The primary reason for such a meeting was to uncover facts for an investigation of the Cambridge Hospital's discriminatory practices in patient placement, eating and toilet facilities. The MMCHR will conduct an investigation. CNAC is planning a court suit to force the hospital to desegregate, rather than filing a suit under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This is because the Cambridge Hospital serves a very large area and we want to avoid placing hardship on needy patients, which would be the case if federal funds were withheld. According to the hospital records, 90% of the State Aid patients are Negroes. The MMCHR was asked if they could aid needy patients in and around the county (migrant workers, the physically handicapped, small farmers and all those not covered by public health services. They said they would look into the possibility of a medical mobile unit, to serve outlying areas in the Eastern Shore.

Several attempts have been made to have a meeting with Airpax Electronics. Although they have defense contracts Airpax has only three Negro employees out of a total work force of 250. Two of them have janitorial positions and the third is a blue collar worker. Our main concern is that Airpax is not on the list of Plans for Progress Companies, working with the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity.

One day we took clothing to a migrant camp. The people were obviously

Cambridge, Md. cont.

in dire need of clothing, as many had no shoes or sweaters, despite the cold rain. We spoke to the camp contractor, Tully McNeill, who had brought the group up from Florida, about meeting with the workers. Tully was very receptive to the idea, and we held a meeting. There had been no organization of the people before, and they were only barely aware of their rights. Each family has one room and they pay up to \$4.00 a week for it, even though the walls are far from airtight and there is no running water. Four spigots serve the whole camp. They have been here for two weeks and there has been only two days work per person, at less than a dollar a day. The grocery store where the migrant families must purchase their food charges three times as much as we pay in Cambridge for the same goods. They must also purchase their kerosene for the stoves. Because of their poor diet many children have chronic digestive trouble and low resistance to infection. There was no medical care for the workers, despite the fact that one girl was pregnant, several of the children were very ill, many of the adults and children had running sores and nearly everyone had a cold. We discussed government programs, employment, housing, recreation and education with them, as well as possible ways for getting better wages. The migrant workers were amazed to hear how Mississippi workers had dealt with their situation. They began to see how they could bring about change by acting as a unit. They named themselves # Poor for Progress and formed committees for employment, housing, recreation and education. The men were far more interested in improving their educational level than in bringing in recreation. Many of them were barely able to write their own names. Tully agreed to contact other migrant groups in the County. These people are anxious to better their lives and seem willing to make sacrifices if necessary in order to do this.

KENT NARROWS, MARYLAND

Kent Narrows is just outside Greenville, Maryland, and is a Negro community of about 2000 people. It is five miles from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. Last fall the AFL-CIO Packinghouse Workers Union went into Kent Narrows to organize the workers for unions in the seafood packing houses, the only industry in the community. The CIG of Baltimore has been working to develop simultaneous civic programs around the issues of housing, recreation, unemployment and welfare. Vernon Thomas of the AFL-CIO asked SNCC to come in to work with CIG on community interest programs, and to give support and manpower to the community. Two of the Cambridge staff spent a good deal of time there, working to lay the groundwork for community programs, along with local people and CIG. John Battiste was requested to attend a meeting of county, state, and federal officials to discuss available to Kent Narrows through the Office of Economic Opportunity and the War on Poverty. The results of the meeting were a public housing project, a Food Stamp Program and MDTA training programs. The programs were fully sanctioned by Governor Tawes. We have supported demonstrations in the Narrows, and have done some work there, but have made no commitment to the community as SNCC, but only as concerned individuals. At present John is working with community leaders to initiate action for federal programs similar to those that have been brought into Cambridge and have been effective in the community.

SHAW, MISSISSIPPI, BOB WEIL

... It was not clear at every moment what my relations should be to Shaw and the MFLU. We did not just walk out of Shaw. We tried to go through a transition that would leave the town without the need for staff. Necessarily, such a transition means that staff will have less to do as time goes on, and so there is some wasted time while this is happening. I spent the week before Tennessee trying to show people more about how to use files, Atlanta, the mimeograph, etc., but I did have some time on my hands. At this point I did not consider myself working with Shaw. I am not acting as staff here. I am working with George Shelton and others on some problems with the union as regards coordination between union areas, communication with the North, legal problems, financial records, etc. Voter registration and FDP seem to be going very well in Shaw under Mr. Hawkins' leadership, and without my doing more than help chauffeur, etc. By the way, at all times during the traveling I've done, I have been with union people and working with them, including lobbying in Washington--there were about 25 people there from Shaw.

ROSDALE, Miss (Bolivar Co.) LISA VOGEL

... This is a rural area, with a lot of plantations and a few small independent farmers. We've had two meetings so far. At the last one about thirty people and assorted children came. Some people from the rural
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ROSEDALE, MISS. cont.

area around Merigold came over for the last meeting; they are interested also, but don't get to many of the Cleveland or Rosedale meetings. So you see it seems that there might be a base for a totally rural operation.

The focus of activity here hasn't yet really gotten fixed. There is a lot of interest in the union; quite a few of us are going to try to go over to Shaw to the state wide workshop tomorrow, and one carload visited Shaw for the union meeting last week. Because the plantation owners are "taking out" for social security (\$1.00 on a weeks wages) some people are going to write to the social security administration to check whether anything is being sent in; this is a first step, before deciding what to do about it. We are about to start a voter registration campaign.

COAHOMA CO., JAMES WILSON JONES

On April 29th at a mass meeting in Clarksdale, it was announced that the state executive committee of the Freedom Democratic Party did not recognize the executive committee of Coahoma Co., that the executive committee of Coahoma Co. was not set up correctly, and that all members on the committee did not and do not represent the five supervisory districts, and that this committee does not function. This statement was made by Mrs. Odessa Brooke. Since making this statement there has been a lot of opposition toward me, Mrs. Brookes, Rev. Coleman and Mrs. Johnson on the grounds that we are trying to divide the community. My position in any community where there is so-called leadership is to work with that particular community. We have been successful in killing "bigwig leadership" and set up a tentative committee in the county to divide up FDP activities. The past activities in Clarksdale have been centered around public accommodations, testing all places open to the public. These activities were carried out by the Mississippi Student Union. We were able to get eight restaurants to open their doors to Negroes.

Tentative executive committee is trying to register Negroes in all the Coahoma towns. We are also working the plantations. There is a team of five persons which picks a plantation, goes there on the labor bus as if they are going to chop cotton and, when they get there, each person takes a house and encourages the residents to go down to the county house and register. The next day it is my job to go out on the plantation and pick up the people that agreed to go. Now the NAACP is talking about working the plantations. They plan to send letters like this to the owners: "Dear Mr. X, We know that you have heard off about the NAACP's Summer Voter Registration Project. We are concerned only with voter registration. We can assure you that we are not connected with any activities of (then follows a list of several organizations). We are awaiting your reply."

The tentative committee is also soliciting membership for the MFLU, so now a rumor is being spread through the community that their so-called leaders are now "tomming" to the white folks. We are now able to move more freely throughout the community. Th

MARKS, MISS. JULY 27 th

The FDP of Quitman Co. called a public meeting to discuss policy and to work on new programs in the communities. The following programs were adopted: stop split-session schools; desegregation of all public facilities, get materials on the poor people's corporation; set up a county MFLU board and build up membership. At the meeting were delegates from Lambert, Falcon, Vance, Sledge, and Hinckcliff. Total attendance was 150.

MADISON COUNTY, MISS.

The Madison Co. sewing firm began in a precinct meeting last winter when some Negro women brought up the question of jobs and the movement--first, what can people do who have lost their jobs because of participation in the movement and second, what can people do to reduce the dependence of the Negro women on the power structure, specifically her "job" as maid in a white home at \$10 or \$15 a week. This dependence, as the women pointed out, has been at least partly responsible for the failure of urban movement in the South, even in a city as small as Canton.

Some of the women involved in the meeting had had some sewing experience both at home and at the factories operated mostly by the county's worst racists. In the face of considerable derision and minimal support from most of the community, eight women and one man met regularly with civil rights workers. The women ran record hops and canvassed the Negro community for capital to get started, and made sample shirts to show potential buyers. Meanwhile, a group of Northern supporters raised \$1500 for operating capital. The women worked out a contract with the Child Development Group in Edwards, Miss. to manufacture

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snacks and other clothes for the Mississippi Headstart Program. The firm went into partnership, arranged a two-year lease with a sympathetic Negro businessman on a building just outside the city limits to avoid zoning and licensing problems, cleaned up the building, installed bathrooms, lighting fixtures, fans and some machinery donated by the Headstart Program. There are now sixteen people on the payroll, and if markets can be opened, the firm plans to expand and incorporate into a direct attack on the maid system. The firm was plagued by many problems from getting a sewer installed to the fact that the machines they are using are inadequate. Capital is scarce and managing experience is limited. The group also has marketing problems, and at present must find some replacement for the Headstart contract once that is fulfilled.

In spite of these and other problems, the Madison Co. Sewing Firm has managed to retain the original purpose of the group. Four of the first six people hired the morning the factory opened were on their way to work in white homes. Today (June 21st) eight more people are being hired from the waiting list of 53 who had lost their jobs because of work in the movement; five were working in kitchens. The 24 members of the Firm need the support of groups throughout the nation to find markets

ALABAMA

At the state-wide staff meeting the state agreed that the local people throughout the state should become familiar with all aspects of the ASCS elections. The importance of local people confronting the county ASCS officials was discussed. However, the staff realized that another, equally important aspect of the elections was being carried out from the state office here in Selma--that being the researching of technical and legal matters connected with the elections. To insure that local people have a first hand knowledge of all aspects of the election, it was decided by the staff, that local people from each of the counties in which SNCC ~~has~~ is working should come to Selma for a trainee-ship workshop type program.

Questions were raised at the staff meeting like what a sharecropper? Can all members of the family over twenty-one vote if they work the land? to whom or to what office to we complain when local officials cheat during an election? where and how do we get information about these and other problems. and about the elections in general?

The program would hopefully aid local people in learning how to research these problems and to get this and any other information necessary to carry out the elections. Local people would get an opportunity to find out how the information that we already have was obtained, and to have contact via mail and if necessary personal visits to ASCS offices above the county level.. People who attend the workshop will then return to the counties and disseminate this knowledge, and share those skills learned by setting up and leading meetings and other workshops.

Other possibilities for this type of program would be the establishment of a state-wide organization designed to deal with the political and economic problems of rural people, via discussions, workshops, the setting up of cooperatives, credit unions and the possible use of direct action on a state-wide basis. The possibilities are almost limitless, and will develop as people begin to work together.

A SHORT NOTE FROM ATLANTA

AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THE ABOVE REPORTS, WHAT WE ARE MOST INTERESTED IN IS NOT CHECKING UP ON YOU, BUT IN WHAT IS GOING ON IN YOUR PROJECT AREA. THIS INFORMATION CAN BE VALUABLE TO OTHER PROJECTS, BY GIVING THEM NEW IDEAS FOR PROJECTS AND WHAT HAS WORKED AND WHAT HASN'T, AND ALSO VALUABLE FOR YOU, BY GIVING US A BETTER IDEA OF THE GENERAL NEEDS OF YOUR PROJECT. JUST IN CASE ANYONE THOUGHT THEY WERE UNIQUE, EVERY PROJECT ASKS US FOR MONEY; THE ONLY WAY WE CAN ARRANGE PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS--IF WE EVER HAVE ANY, IS BY YOUR BACKGROUND REPORTS. PLEASE SEND IN IF YOU HAVEN'T YET AND IF YOU HAVE, PLEASE CONTINUE TO DO SO. THANK YOU.

ATLANTA, Oct. 1, 1965

Jon Steinberg
JON STEINBERG

TELETYPE BOARD
FOR
ALABAMA STATE SCLC STAFF MEETING
TUSKALOOSA, ALABAMA
OCTOBER 7, 8, 9, 10

THURSDAY, October 7

Arrive

12N Lunch

1-5 Dialogue with Atlanta based staff
Report from Project Director

Dinner

7-- Dialogue until we get tired

Friday, October 8

9 Begin promptly-- attempt to crystallize our position
in Alabama affairs. Talk about program possibilities

THREE MEALS, OF COURSE

SATURDAY, October 9

(SCLC and other local organizations and representatives
present)

9-12 Minnis' research

DIALOGUE

SUNDAY, October 10

End meeting with SCLC staff (only) attempting to
come to some conclusions

MEMO

RE: ALABAMA STATE SCLC MEETING

... We have made several attempt to hold such a meeting in
Alabama, but have not succeeded. The meeting has been called
off because of lack of funds and because of lack of sufficient
plans to make it a success.

... So in Alabama realize that there are many things that we
must discuss and resolve to some extent if we are to continue
to be of any benefit to the people with whom we work, we
have talked and we know that we must get together.

Some of us have expressed a desire to share ideas with
people other than SCLC staff who work in the field, that is,
with SCLC and any other organizations presently in Alabama.

In such instances we have been careful to realize that we can
have much more meaningful dialogue without the executive staffs
of those organizations being present. We have also expressed
a desire to share program ideas with the local people with
whom we work. Because we feel that we must meet these two
groups of people in an atmosphere suited to dialogue, we
are providing space in the meeting for them to be present....

(with love from Silas)

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Parts of this newsletter were typed at two different times

The first part by Sharon Jackson. The second part by
John Steinberg--

PROGRAM DEPARTMENT