

HISTORY



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
President

The magnitude of our social struggle is great. It cuts across all areas of our lives, social, economic, religious, political and sociological. If we would succeed we must examine the task, plan our course, weigh the obstacles and measure the costs. Then we must enlist the aid of those with the special knowledge, abilities and experience which will meet the needs of our plan.

This has been done.

With the blessing of God, dedication to nonviolence and faith in the morality of our cause . . . success is inevitable.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Inc. was originally established as the Southern Leadership Conference, as a result of a meeting held in Atlanta, Ga., Jan. 10, 11, 12, 1957, which saw leaders in the struggle for human dignity present from 10 southern states — a total of 110 persons, 14 of which became charter board members of the newly formed organization.

Following the Montgomery Bus Boycott led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and inspired by its success, many organized protest groups appeared throughout the South. They sought information and advice of Dr. King.

Further indication of the need for such an organization as this was the fact that its initial meeting was interrupted by dynamite blasts that wrecked and damaged homes and churches in Montgomery, Ala., the early morning of January 10th.

The first executive director of the new organization was Dr. John L. Tilley of Baltimore, Md. Dr. Tilley served in this capacity on a parttime basis for a period of one year (May, 1958-May 1959), when it became necessary for him to return to a full-time pastorate of his church. Miss Ella J. Baker who was serving as associate director under Dr. Tilley was asked to assume the directorship on a temporary basis until a permanent one could be obtained — a position she held from Oct. 1959-Aug. 1960, when Wyatt Tee Walker of Petersburg, Va. became the new and permanent director. Under his directorship, it is felt that SCLC will fulfill its potential, and through this organization, cooperating with others in the field, the Negro will at last attain the freedom promised him almost 100 years ago.



ERNESTINE BROWN, office secretary of SCLC, is a graduate of David T. Howard High School; Carver Vocational School of Business, and has done further study at Clark College, Atlanta, Ga. She is a native of Atlanta, a wife, and the mother of two children.



JAMES R. WOOD, administrative assistant to Dr. King and director of public relations, SCLC, is a native of Washington, D. C. He was educated in the Washington-New York area and has attended both Hampton Institute and New York University. He has worked in the labor movement as an organizer with the United Mine Workers and the United Automobile Workers. Mr. Wood has worked in the political organizations of both the Democratic and Republican parties. His experience includes fund-raising for the Catholic Charities of greater New York and writing and programming for Radio broadcasts. Prior to joining the staff of SCLC, he was Data Processing Chief of IBM unit at Virginia State College. He too, was an integral

WYATT TEE WALKER, executive director of SCLC is a double graduate of Va. Union University at Richmond, having earned both a B.S. in Chemistry and Physics, and a B.D. in Theology with highest honors. Mr. Walker served as minister of the Historic Gillfield Baptist Church at Petersburg, Va. His career in human relations is marked by his parallel service as Branch President of the Petersburg Improvement Association that in 1960 succeeded in desegregating the lunch counters of local variety stores and the restaurants of Trailway Bus terminals in six states.

Mr. Walker, an intense student of Gandhi, has applied the Gandhian philosophy by electing to remain in jail with four others in the Petersburg Library protest. From Petersburg, the idea of civil disobedience spread to many other protest centers as a new dimension of the nonviolent struggle. Mr. Walker was the organizer and leader of the first Pilgrimage of Prayer in Va., protesting the closing of schools in that state. He has been acclaimed as one of the outstanding civil rights figures of this generation.

part of the Petersburg Improvement Association (Life Magazine, Sept. 12, 1960) serving as Editor of the Newsletter and administrative assistant to the president.



DOROTHY COTTON, administrative secretary to the director, is a native of Goldsboro, N. C., a graduate of Va. State College and Boston University, having received an M.A. degree in Speech Therapy. Mrs. Cotton has been closely identified with the work of NAACP and CORE in Va. Most recently, prior to her joining the staff of SCLC, Mrs. Cotton served as secretary of the Petersburg Improvement Assn. (LOOK, August 30, 1960), the center of civil rights protest in Virginia.



RALPH D. ABERNATHY, fund-raiser of SCLC is also president of MIA. He is a graduate of Alabama State College; a well-known lecturer who gained international acclaim for his work with the Montgomery Bus Boycott; pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, and is married and the father of three children.



HARRY BLAKE, field secretary of SCLC, is a native of Shreveport, Louisiana, a graduate of Bishop College, Marshall, Texas, and an interim pastor of Elizabeth Baptist Church. He has played a strategic role in fighting the infamous 'purge' of the voting rolls in North Louisiana. The Civil Rights Commission hearings of 1960 in New Orleans were the culmination of many months' work of Mr. Blake and his associates of the United Christian Movement of Shreveport. He remains undaunted by the harassment and frequent jailings for his effective work in voter-registration.



LILLIE M. HUNTER, bookkeeper of SCLC, is a graduate of Tuskegee Institute High School, Buck-McCray School of Business, and has done further study at Tuskegee Institute. She is the mother of two children, and is a native of Tuskegee, Alabama.

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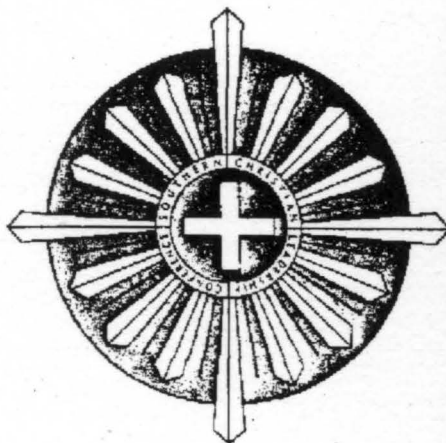
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