

(a first draft report 4/9/63)

[April 9, 1963]

Leflore County, Mississippi--Statistical Profile¹

(Introduction)

Leflore County is situated in the middle of the Mississippi Delta. The county seat, Greenwood, is located 100 miles north of Jackson, Mississippi and 134 miles south of Memphis, Tennessee--the largest city between these two points. Greenwood, Mississippi is the center of the largest concentration of population in the state. Over 600,000 persons (30% of the state's population) live within 60 miles of it. Greenwood is the wholesale and retail center for most of these people.

Leflore County, like the delta as a whole, is predominately agricultural with cotton being the primary crop in what could fairly be termed a one-crop economy. Industrial development is being encouraged in Leflore with increasing success in recent years. Most of the new industry are branch plants of concerns with home offices in the north.

12,000
.85
600,00

47,143
.65
23,571.5
23,571.5

In 1960, the population of Leflore County was 47, 143 with 64.6 per cent classified as nonwhite. The population dropped 9 per cent between 1950 and 1960, and is presently about evenly divided between urban and rural farm residences. Less than 20 per cent of the eligible population cast votes in the 1960 presidential election--less than 5 percent of the eligible non whites cast votes. The "unpledged" electors received 45 per cent vote, the Republican electors 28 percent, and the Democratic electors 27 per cent. The town government and all Leflore representatives in the state government, however, are Democrats.

1. (Income)

The total income of all families from all sources in Leflore County for 1959 was 40 million dollars. The average income for all families in Leflore was little under \$4,000 verse \$7300 for the United States. The median income for all families in Leflore was about \$2300 verse \$5660 for the United States. The median income for white families was about \$2300 verse \$5660 for the United States. The median income for white families was about \$5200; for nonwhites about \$1400. Of the nonwhite families; 35 per cent earned less than \$100; 71 per cent earned less than \$2000; and only 11 percent earned over \$3000. Leflore County overall is relative poor, but the white families largely as a result of systematic economic discrimination

against the Negro population, have incomes approaching the national average. The larger gap between the median income and the average income for Leflore as compared with the U.S. as a whole is evidence that a larger percentage of the income in Leflore is earned by persons in the top brackets their total income having a far greater effect upon the average than their number of income receiving units has upon the median. The structure of incomes in Leflore starts with the few very high income families at the top and ends with the majority of families clustered at the bottom. At the top, 15.4 per cent of the families earned 47 percent of the total income. At the bottom 46 per cent of the families earned 12.6 percent of the total income. Furthermore, at the top, 0.35 percent of the families earned 33.5 percent of the total income; 1.8 percent earned 18 percent of the total income; 5.5 per cent earned 29.5 per cent, and 7 percent earned 33.5 percent. While at the bottom 23 per cent of the families in Leflore County earned only 4 per cent of the total income.

There are 36 families in Leflore County with incomes reported to be over \$25,000. The average income for this group of families is over \$100,000. The total income of these 36 families is more than the total families income of the 3600 families at the bottom of the income scale in Leflore County.

(Education)

Adequate figures with regard to educational opportunity are only available for the population grouping of those over 25 years old. These figures give a good indication of the education training received by those who now are concerned with earning a living in Leflore county (except that the group from 14-25 years old that is part of the work force probably has a lower level of educational training and should lower the median levels), but that do not however, give any reliable indication of the educational training being received by the youth of Leflore County at the present time.

The median year of schooling completed for those over 25 years old was 6.1. For whites it was 11.2; for nonwhites 5.1. Over 70 per cent of the nonwhite population over 25 years of age had not completed seventh grade.

(Occupations and Employment)

The differences in the occupation concentrations between the white and the nonwhite populations is striking and is shown in the table below:

| Type of Occupation | The Percentage of All Employment Persons In that Occupation | |
|--|---|----------|
| | White | Nonwhite |
| Managers, Officials, Proprietors except farm | 16% | 1% |
| Clerical workers | 18 | 1 |
| Sales workers | 12 | 1 |
| Craftsmen, Foremen | 13 | 5 |
| Private Household workers | 0 | 17 |
| Other Services workers | 6 | 10 |
| Farm Laborers and Foremen | 3 | 39 |
| Laborers except farm | 1 | 7 |

Unemployed levels also reflected the economic discrimination against Negroes in Leflore. 7 per cent of the workers force in Leflore County was employed in 1960. White unemployment was 4 per cent; nonwhite was 10 percent. This high unemployment level existed in Leflore despite the 9 percent reduction in population between 1950 and 1960 that was previously mentioned. As is usual workers in the lower income occupational levels were the least secure in their works and jobs. Of those who were unemployed; 40% (99% non white) had been farm workers; 21 percent (95% non white) had been service workers; and 7 percent (General Survey of Leflore County Economy).

Leflore County, as has been mentioned before, is predominantly an agricultural area, although this is tempered by the wholesale and retail facilities in Greenwood that serve Leflore and several of the surrounding counties and the growing interest in Leflore attracting more industry.

The percentage of employed persons that are in each of several industry groups (with 90 percent of the employed persons accounted for) and shown below and give a rough of the allocation of labor resources in Leflore.

| | |
|--|-----|
| Agriculture | 32% |
| Wholesale and Retail trade | 19% |
| Private Household and Personal Services | 13 |
| Professional and related services | 10 |
| Manufacturing | 8 |
| Transportation, Communications and Utilities | 5 |
| Public Administration | 3 |

Agricultural production accounted for over 23 of the 40 million dollars in income earned by residents of Leflore County in 1959. There were 1/3 as many farms in Leflore in 1959 (1688) as there were in 1954 (4938), while total farm income rose 40 percent from \$3,600 to \$13,800.³ The number of farms in the largest category--100 acres or more--increased in this period from 73 to 89 and the total number of acres or more--increased in this period from 150,766 to 192,542 while the total land in farms decreased 10,000 acres.

Land owners in Leflore is largely reserved to the whites. 551 white farmers operate 90 percent of the land. 1162 non white farmers operate 10 percent of the land. Farm land ownership in Leflore County is even more stratified than income levels. At the bottom, 70 percent of the farms (those with less than fifty acres) have less than 6 percent of the land.

At the top, 15 percent of the farms (those with 260 acres and over) have over 65 percent of the land. 6 percent of the farms (those with 260 acres) have over 75 percent of the land. 2 percent of the farms (those over

2 percent of the farms now over 2000 acres have 33%. Although the percent of tenancy as a trend (for the whole South) has decreased, the white farming population has been the chief beneficiary of the decrease. Between 1954 and 1959 white tenancy dropped from 46% to 30% of the white farms. However, the full or non white tenancy in 1959 was 92.5% with no comparable 1954 figure available unfortunately, the full breakdown of farming by ownership is as follows⁴

| | |
|-------------|----|
| Full Owners | 16 |
| Part Owners | 6 |
| Managers | 1 |
| All Tenants | 76 |
| Cash | 6 |
| Cropshare | 8 |
| croppers | 56 |

The total value of crops sold by farm units is broken down by the census report as follows:

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| 9 percent of the farms sold over | \$40,000 | in farm products |
| 5 | between \$20,000-39,999 | |
| 3 | 10,000-19,999 | |
| 16 | 5,000-9,999 | |
| 39 | 2,500-4,999 | |
| 28 | 50-2499 | |

The "crop speciality" of farms is broken down by the census report as follows.

83% of all farms specialize in cotton and account for 93% of all farm products sold

| | | |
|----|---------------|------------|
| 2 | cash-gain | 1 |
| 1 | livestock | 4 |
| 1 | poultry | 2 |
| 12 | general farms | negligable |

The 9 percent of the farms that sold over \$40,000 of farm products each account collectively over 3/2 of the farm products sold in Leflore county in 1959.⁵

of these 131 farms, I would estimate (as an interpolation guess from acreage and livestock on hand figures) that the breakdown by crop specialty is 120 cotton, 7 livestock, 3 poultry, and 1 forest products.

The average amount of products sold for these 131 farms I would estimate at over 120,000.

A final note should be added to these figures for products sold. The sale of products represents only one of the two major sources of income to the cotton, and for the larger farmer it is sometimes the smaller of the two sources. The source of income is payable from the federal government for land owned on which cotton is not planted (under the Soil Bank Program). The figures for soil bank payments are not available at the present time. But the census reports do include figures as to the percentage of cropland harvested in farms of different sizes. The percentage of cropland harvested in 1959 over the total land in farms for all farms was 57%. For farms of less than 260 acres, it was 63%. For farms of over 1000 acres, it was an even 50%. Whatever may be reasoned, large farms are in a position to take greater proportional advantage of the soil bank program.

3. (manufacturing)

Although manufacturing only accounted for 8 percent of the employment workers in 1958, its importance has increased since then for Leflore County probably will continue to increase in the near future. The 8 percent figure most likely has risen to 12-15 percent by 1963.

The five largest manufacturing employers in Leflore, in 1963, were:

Balwin Pianos (300 employees) plant began operation in 1963, and recently expanded its operations

Supreme Electronics (200 employees) guidance and sophisticated electronics products

Harrington Mfg. Co. (197 employees) farm machinery

Conmar Products Inc. (167 employees) manufactures zippers

Medart Lockers Inc. (150 employees)

Other major employers include a lumber mill (60), a manufacturer of picture frames (75), a dairy products plant (60), and 3 cottonseed processing mills (57, 75, 60). Four of the big five employers are branch manufacturing units of corporations whose main office and center of operation is in the North.

Balwin Pianos—Cincinnati, Ohio; Supreme Electronics (Heckik Electrical Instrument Co.)—Cleveland, Ohio; Conmar Products—Newark, New Jersey; Medart Lockers—St. Louis, Mo.

The branches of these four "northern manufacturing concerns employ approximately half of the manufacturing workers of those plants in Leflore that employ ten workers or more. Two "southern" concerns outside of Mississippi employ about five percent of the workers of those plants that employ ten workers or more.

The attraction of Leflore for Northern manufacturing concerns is to be found at least in part of a state-wide Mississippi program called Guild Agriculture with Industry (BAWI). As the Leflore County Chamber of Commerce explains it: "Under the (BAWI), a community may float bonds construct (according to industries specifications.) and provide an industry with a building in which to locate. The bonds can be amortized over a period of 20 to 25 years by the industry in the form of rent. This enables the industry to charge the cost as an operating expense. Further, if the industry so desires the building may be leased for 99 years in the original contract. Under this plan, the building and land are not subject to city and county ad valorem taxes...."

In return for this, under the BAWI program, the industry agrees to maintain a minimum level of employment.

1. The figures used in this outline unless otherwise noted are simple abstractions from the following sources:

United States Census of Population, 1960, Mississippi--General Social and Economic Characteristics prepared by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census
 United States Census of Agriculture, 1959, Mississippi (counties) prepared by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census

Mississippi Manufactures Directory Prepared by the Mississippi Industrial and Technological Research Commission, Jackson, Mississippi

2. Family income are broken down in the Census report into \$1000 unit (i.e. 0-999, 1000-1999, 2000-24999 and 25,000 and over. The number of families in each income category is given as is the total income earned by all families.

I took the midpoint figure for each category (except the 0-999, for which I arbitrarily took 700) that had both lower and upper limits given, and multiplied that figure by the number of families who were listed in the category. I added up the resulting products (which include what I think are fair estimates for the total amount earned by families in each of the income categories up to \$25,000) and then subtracted this total from the total earnings for all families. The result of this subtraction is what I believe the total income of the 36 families who earned over \$25,000. The 36 families by my total earned \$4,200,000 or about an average of \$116,000 each.

3. The definition of a "farm" used here, and hereinafter, is a partially misleading one that is used for all the Bureau of the Census Agricultural Statistics. Where one large "farm" has several subdivisions worked by separate tenants, each of the subdivisions and the farm itself (excluding the area worked by the tenants) is counted as a separate farm unit. Neither the acreage nor the crops sold of land directly worked by the tenant is included in the totals for the farm that actually owns the land, even though the owner of the land usually is receiving the majority of the income derived from the land. The existence of so many large farms under these definitions may be accounted for by the significant amount of hired labor as opposed to tenant labor that is employed in Leflore County. In 1959, \$980,546 was spent on hired labor as against \$730,002 in 1954, with 36 farms paying out between \$2500-4999, and 41 farms paying out over \$5000.

4. A full owner owns all the land he farms. A part owner owns part of the land and rents part of the land he farms. A manager supervises the farming of land owned by someone else. Cash Tenants pay a fixed cash rent for the land they farm. Croppers pay a share of the crops, but not of the livestock or livestock products, grown on the land they farm. Croppers are defined by the census as "... tenants whose land owners furnished all the work animals or tractor power. They usually work under the close supervision of the landowners or their agents, or other farm operators. Also the land assigned to them is often merely a part of other farms. Croppers may or may not also pay cash rent or a share of the crops,

livestock, or livestock products." It might be added that the most common arrangement is to let the dropper use less than an acre for producing food for his own family (and possibly an animal too) and then take the rest of products for the cropper work. In return, the "landowner" pays the cropper what he determines to be the worth of the crops taken (and most croppers never learn how this determination is made) after subtracting the medical expenses and other charges the cropper has outstanding against him at the end of the harvesting period.

5. The number of farms in each of the following classifications by value of products sold is given by the census: "50, ~~2000~~ 2499, 2500-2999, 5000-9999, 10,000-19,999, 20,000-39,999, and 40,000 and over. I arbitrarily took as the average value of products sold for the classifications listed above respectively: \$20,000, 35,000, 7500, 15,000 and 30,000. I multiplied these figures by the numbers of farms in each classification and added up the products of these multiplication. I subtracted the resulting amount from the total amount, I believe, is a good estimate of the total value of farm products sold for the 131 farms that sold over \$40,000 of farm products each. The average amount of farm products sold for each of these farms is thereabout estimated at \$120,000.