SURVEY: CURRENT FIELD WORK

SPRING, 1963

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
6 Raymond Street, N.W.
Atlanta, Georgia

SNCC FIELD WORK IN SOUTHWEST GEORGIA

This project--now operating in Terrell, Lee, Sumter, and Dougherty Counties--began in October, 1961, after Charles Sherrod and Charles Jones went to Albany to set up a voter registration program. Albany is the only significant urban area in a predominantly agricultural section of Georgia which traditionally was the slave trading center for the state; it is in the Georgia Black Belt, a traditionally violence ridden area. Albany was seen as the center for operation in the rural areas around it and early activity there led to the events of violence and protest of last year.

Now the project involves twelve full-time field secretaries who rotate from the central office in Albany to each county. The Albany office at 504 S. Madison, houses four of the field secretaries, functions as the main communication and coordination center, and acts as a secretariat for production of field reports, financial reports and recordings, and other secretarial work. The house has four very small rooms, no hot water, and a kerosene stove. The other field secretaries, with the exception of the two who live at the interracial Koinonia Farm in Americus, live with local people in the counties.

Sherrod supervises the entire project from Albany, conducts voter registration work in Dougherty County, and maintains communication between the counties. In addition to Sherrod, the other field workers in this area are:

Prathia Hall, 22, Negro, from Philadelphia, divinity student at Temple U.
Jack Chatfield, 20, white, from Bradford, Vt., student at Trinity College
Carver Neblett, 19, Negro, student at Southern Illinois University
John Churchville, 21, Negro, from New York City, student at Temple U.
Joyce Barrett, 24, white, from Philadelphia, graduate of Temple U.
Don Harris, 21, Negro, from New York City, graduate of Rutgers University
Ralph Allen, 22, white, from Melrose, Mass., a student at Trinity College
Eddie Brown, 20, Negro, from Albany, Ga., student at Monroe High School
Faith Holseart, 20, white, from Brooklyn, N.Y., a student at Barnard College
Alphonzo Hubbard, 17, Negro, from Albany Ga., a student at Monroe High School
Joni Rabinowitz, 20, white, from New Rochelle, N.Y., a student at Antioch

The techniques of operating in each county are much the same. All workers hold mass meetings at least once a week in local churches (and in tents, too, where the churches were burned last summer) for several reasons: to initiate people in voter registration work, to bring speakers, to sing, to share fellowship, and often to mitigate fear. They hold voter registration classes at least once a week to teach people to answer the various questions which will confront them on the registration form and to fill out forms. They canvass from door to door, a time consuming process of encouraging people to register--- often spending afternoons with one or two individuals getting to know them and creating the feelings of trust and confidence which are the necessary first steps for registrants. And then going back again and again until the person will finally come to a meeting or a citizenship class or go to the registrar. As in nearly all SNCC projects, efforts are made to meet and organize young people, a particularly important job in Georgia where the voting age is 18. They are then recruited to help canvass and help with other aspects of the project. Special efforts are being made to reach the teachers, a group with a tradition of hesitancy because their jobs are directly dependent on the state and local officials (white) but a group which could register and could assume leadership if they could be reached. And, of course, the local ministers and other leaders are involved as much as possible in the day to day work of the project. All of these mean time and effort and more hope than the situation often seems to warrant.

Canvassing in rural areas was being done on foot; now cars are available in the counties. Workers often travel 200 miles a day, mostly on rural roads.

A great deal of time is spent just getting people out of jail, documenting stories of threats and losses of jobs on the part of applicants, and dealing with the other problems of working in this part of the South. on this kind of project. The staff hopes that harrassment will stay slow enough to allow expanding the staff and moving into Baker County in the summer.

Statistical Outline of Counties (1960)

	Dougherty	Sumter	Terrell	Lee
Population total	75,680	24,652	12,742	6,204
% Nonwhite	36%	52.8%	64.4%	62.7%
Eligible Negroes who are registered	2,858	501	51	29
Median family income				
All	$4401	2950	2057	2434
Nonwhite	2430	1598	1313	1648
Median school years completed				
All	10.5	8.4	7.6	6.9
Nonwhite	5.9	5.0	4.5	4.0
% Nonwhite families earning under $1000	20%	28%	40%	20%
2000	40%	64%	70%	50%
3000	60%	84%	87%	78%
% Farmed land owned by				
Whites	74%	72%	52%	48%
Nonwhites	26%	28%	48%	52%
% of farmers who are tenants--White	8.7%	13.5%	17.4%	15.4%
Nonwhite	44.5%	62.5%	77.7%	63.5%

Sources for Further Information

Albany, Georgia, by Howard Zinn. An account of activities in Albany up to the middle of last spring. Available from the Southern Regional Council 5 Forsyth St., Atlanta, Georgia.

Albany, GeorgiaII by Howard Zinn. An updating of events there through last summer and an analysis of the role of the federal government in Albany. Same source.

U.S. Civil Rights Commission Reports, especially, the volume on Voting. Available from the U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C. ($1.00)

SNCC FIELD WORK IN SOUTH CAROLINA

In December, 1962, Reginald Robinson, a Baltimore, Maryland, native who has been working with SNCC for two years in Mississippi, Maryland, and Georgia, went to Orangeburg, S.C., to help with voter registration in that city and to make contacts for SNCC in the state.

Orangeburg was a center for the sit-in movement in 1960 and 1961. The two colleges in that city, Claflin College and South Carolina State College, produced many young leaders, including SNCC Chairman Charles McDew. However, the state soon began to crack down on S.C. State, even building a fence between it and the more liberal and privately owned Claflin. Students did remain somewhat active in voter registration, however. This year a statewide program has been developed by various civic groups and clubs as part of the emancipation centennial program of Negro groups in the state. Reggie went to work with this united effort at registering voters in Orangeburg.

Besides doing basic ward work and organization, Reggie has acted as cam pus contact in the state. Hopefully the students he has reached can come together later for a statewode SNCC conference. The hope is that they will return to campuses which will then provide leadership for voter registration work in the areas where they are located and perhaps develop direct action campaigns.

Negroes register with little difficulty in Orangeburg, but the county has received little attention as yet. Funds are needed for an additional worker for the county.

Statistical Survey of Orangeburg County

Population total	68,559
% Negro	60.1%
Negroes registered	2,220)1958 figures
% of Negroes registered	11.6%)
Median family income	$2,603
% of population with income under $3,000	56.0%
Urban	20.2%
Rural farm	30.5%

Two additional facts of interest: The county is one of the traditionally Republican counties in the state.

The only union we have been able to discover is at Hygrade Food Products, a United Packinghouse Workers local. It is an integrated local.

SNCC WORK IN CENTRAL ALABAMA

In early fall of 1962, Bernard Layfayette went to Selma, Alabama, to investigate the possibility of a voter registration workshop in Selma, a center of an agricultural district in central Alabama, a black belt area much like Southwest Georgia. The local community proved receptive and in February, 1963, three field secretaries began work: Bernard Layfayette (an ordained minister, student at Fisk University, former Freedom Rider and leader of the Nashville Movement), his new wife, Colia Liddell Lafayette (former voter registration worker in Mississippi and student at Tougaloo College, a native Mississippian), and Frank Holloway (a former leader of the Atlanta University students).

They set up shop and living arrangements in a small apartment and began bi-weekley voter registration classes. Thus far, about 150 local residents have attempted to register.

As with many SNCC projects, one of the most successful aspects of the project has been work with young people. Building on an alre .y existing gang structure, the staff has developed a democratically controlled group of high school age students who have aided with registration and held their own weekly citizenship training meetings. With the help of these students and a group of interested adults, the entire town of Selma has almost been canvassed for the first time. Several of the students came to the SNCC conference for their first interracial group experience, an experience whihh in itself developed new leadership and new expectations.

Until recently, police harrassment was minimal. In fact, meetings were being held in a house directly opposite the police station. However, while the staff was at the SNCC conference, one local resident's house received a shotgun blast. A taxi driver was recently arrested for possessing a voter registration manual, and rumors of intimidation against Negroes interested in the drive have begun. It is likely that open violence will begin soon in this Negro majority area.

The project was envisioned as serving the town of Selma and, later, Dallas and Wilcox counties, rural areas of high Negro concentration. Word of the arrival and work of the three SNCC staff members spread rapidly and Negro farmers in Wilcox County have asked for help. Bernard and Frank took six applicants to the county courthouse in Camden in late March; this was the first time Negroes had tried to register in this county in fifty years. Work will begin in the rural areas on a regular basis when canvassing in Selma has been completed. Visits to Wilcox County have already introduced the staff to many small communities, including some which have remained so isolated that living conditions and technical knowledge remain approximately the same as before slavery was abolished. Rural area work has been hampered by the lack of a car, even though supporters in Selma have been generous in loaning theirs.

Selma houses several Negro schools (junior colleges and nursing schools) which will probably provide valuable leadership for the community when the heads of the schools can be convinced to risk some of their security for the benefit of the less fortunate Negroes in the area.

Statistical Survey of Counties

	Dallas	Wilcox
Population total	56,667	18,739
% Nonwhite	57.7%	77.9%
Eligible Negroes)	.9%	0%
who are registered)	130	0
Median family income		
All	$2846	$1550
Nonwhite	1393	1081
Median school years completed		
All	8.7	6.7
Nonwhite	5.8	5.5
% Nonwhite families earning under $1000	37%	45%
$2000	69%	76%
$3000	83%	87%
% Farmed land owned by		
White	78%	86%
Nonwhite	22%	14%
% Farmers who are tenants		
White	15%	11.3%
Nonwhite	72.7%	61.5%

Sources for

Sources for Further Information

U. S. Civil Rights Commission Reports, expecially Volume I, Voting.

Since 1958 the NAACP has been under injunction in Alabama, so there has been little ongoing action or information gathering. Other groups, also, have maintained little program there. We hope to make more information available as the project progresses.

SNCC FIELD WORK IN ARKANSAS

In October, 1962, the Arkansas Council on Human Relations requested that SNCC send a field secretary to Little Rock. They felt there was a need for someone to organize the students there who had done nothing since their unsuccessful sit-ins in 1960. Bill Hansen, a student at Xavier and a veteran of the direct action campaigns in Albany and on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, was sent.

In November students from Philander Smith College and Shorter Junior College formed the Student Freedom Movement with Bill's help. They began sit-ins at Woolworth's, Walgreen's, and McClellen's lunch counters. The racial crisis surrounding the integration of Central High School in 1957 had led to a marked decline in the economic development of Little Rock. An active White Citizens Council was threatening violence. These factors led to the city being willing to talk with the students. However, the city was not willing to yield, and sit-ins began again in December. Worth Long (SNCC executive committee member and chairman of the Student Freedom Movement) and Hanson were arrested. They chose to stay in jail and the white powers finally agreed to work out a plan for the opening of lunch counters and other facilities and the increased employment of Negroes if the two would leave jail. On January 2, 1963, three lunch counters, one restaurant, a bowling alley, and several hotels desegregated. The Student Freedom Movement is continuing negotiations.

With Little Rock reactivated, Hansen moved to Pine Bluff, where he met with students at Arkansas A.M.&N University, a Negro state school. Sit-ins began in Pine Bluff on February 1 at the local Woolworth's. Eight days later 15 students were expelled from AM&N.

Eight of these 15, with Hansen and Ben Grinnage (a SNCC staff member and former student at Philander Smith College), formed the Pine Bluff Student Movement. As adult and community support increased, the Pine Bluff Movement was formed. This community wide organization developed an all out attack on segregation. Their projects have included private restaurants as well as lunch counters, two movie theatres, and hotels. Over 50 people have been arrested during demonstrations there since February 1, 1963.

Hansen, Grinnage, and the eight expelled students live cooperatively in two houses in Pine Bluff. They hope funds will be available this summer to continue the direct action program and begin a voter registration drive in Pine Bluff. Poll taxes can be paid through August for the November elections. If the staff can be maintained, including the students who were expelled and would like to continue with the movement, and if a car can be found, work can begin in surrounding counties which will lay the groundwork for the development of Voters Leagues and voter registration programs in the winter. The abolition of the poll tax will pave the way for a strong program in registration in Arkansas.

Jefferson County (Pine Bluff)

Population: 81, 373
% Negro: 43.6%
Distribution: 57.4% urban, 10.8% rural farm
Eligible Negroes registered: 6,589 (37.6%)