

REPORT TO NATIONAL ACTION COUNCIL

"The laws of this state ban discrimination"

(E. Arris Bryant, Governor of Florida, summer of 1963)

STATE: Florida remains a "tight-white state" despite a "facade of relative racial calm," was the report of the Florida Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. A white power group keeps the doors generally locked to Negroes. There is an insensitivity to civil rights problems and a "tokenism" approach to desegregation in Florida. There is a "dual" system of junior colleges, and the "pupil placement laws insure segregation in most public schools. There is discrimination in apprenticeship and employment programs and discrimination in public employment of Negroes; lack of proper training for jobs in private industry excludes Negroes from these jobs also. The report supports the fact that there is much Negro apathy fostered by fears of intimidation and financial reprisals. The committee believes that most people in the state feel that Negroes are entitled to their citizenship rights but that public officials are not willing to progress with these changing feelings. The report singles out St. Augustine and Tallahassee as areas in which the fuse of "the segregated super-bomb" is short. Finally, the report cites the refusal of the governor to work with it and the very low or non-existent Negro registration in many counties in the state.

OCALA: With the arrest in Dunnellon of Zev Aelony and his subsequent incarceration and maltreatment in the Marion County Jail in Ocala, the activities of the NAACP there began to pick up. Several of us from Tallahassee went to Ocala where we organized a mass march to protest this arrest at the County Jail. About 40 of us were arrested there. Outraged Negro citizens then began coming to local NAACP meetings en masse, and the Ocala group, despite threats, physical violence and many arrests, has a large group (over a thousand) meeting every week. Picketing was halted with arrests, but these are being fought in court.

DUNNELLON: A Dunnellon CORE Chapter was started (this town is about 25 miles from Ocala). Betty Wright, a Tallahassee CORE member was able to organize nearly all of this town's Negro population which attended summer meetings and raised some funds. That group began picketing at local establishments.

ST. AUGUSTINE: This town, the "oldest city in the United States," has been the scene of violence and very strong police resistance to any sort of progress. Negro children have been sent to detention homes when their parents refused to prohibit them from picketing. Civil Rights groups are fined and members incarcerated when they hold public meetings or demonstrate. A suit seeking to enjoin St. Augustine officials from interfering with anti-segregation demonstrations has been filed by the NAACP legal defense fund of New York. A local doctor and integration leader was beat up at a Klu Klux Klan meeting and then charged and fined for assault. His home has been fired into. A white man was killed as he rode through a Negro area with a loaded shot-gun. Negro residential areas and businesses have been bombed and strafed, and alleged retaliations have occurred. Civil Rights groups are seeking to obtain the prevention of federal funds to be spent in connection with a quadricentennial celebration to be held next year. The situation there is very tense and called by the Civil Rights Commission the "worst in the state."

JACKSONVILLE: A mass march of two thousand demonstrators took place the weekend of September 14 in this city. Some token school desegregation has occurred, but NAACP leaders plan further extensive protests and negotiations in the downtown area.

TAMPA: Field Secretary Robert Saunders of the NAACP is asking that the state NAACP endorse a plan to picket the Florida World Fair exhibit unless the state acts positively to ease racial tension in St. Augustine and other cities.

GAINESVILLE: After summer picketing by a fairly strong youth council (NAACP) group, the Student Group for Equal Rights (a University of Florida group of about 300 faculty and students—mostly white) has carried on with picketing, tutoring and a plan for school desegregation. A bi-racial committee has been set up there, but communications between the whites and Negroes there are limited.

MIAMI: In Miami the people are apathetic about voting. Some consider this city unlike the rest of the south, but this is not true. Major problems include housing, school desegregation and knowing where you can go.

TALLAHASSEE: Tallahassee CORE was organized in October of 1959—the group was and is interracial. Although largely composed of students from Florida A. & M. and FSU, we have had instructors from both schools participating. Very few townspeople other than ministers participate. During the past summer we picked up more and more white townspeople, but we seem to be losing them now. This is because the program has not expanded off campus sufficiently to include these townspeople. There is a great need for community leadership and backing. Townspeople are very reluctant to join when students are leading, but they refuse to lead themselves. We need more community leadership and moral and financial support. We have had many projects in Tallahassee. These include (1) testing buses (2) sit-ins. Due to the sit-ins we were able to open five lunch counters—Sears, Walgreens, Woolworths, McCrorys and Neiseners, in January of 1963—we started in February of 1960. (3) bus stations opened after several arrests and a million dollar suit. (4) the airport opened after arrests and a U.S. Supreme Court decision. (5) the courtroom was supposed to be opened after a million dollar suit by a gentleman's agreement, however, only CORE or NAACP people are allowed to sit on the white side. (6) there was a wade-in at a city pool which resulted in arrests. (7) Howard Johnson's restaurant is opened, but not

its sleeping facilities. (8) stand-ins and picketing at local theatres. Because of mass demonstrations a restraining order was drawn up on May 29 limiting the number of pickets to 18 at the Florida Theatre two abreast and 15 at the State Theatre single file. Pickets were to walk 8 feet apart. Amendments and modifications of the amendments later issued; at present there are no numbers in the order except that of 8 feet apart for picketers. Voices are to be kept at a conversational tone, and relief personnel and pickets captains are allowed. As a result of misunderstandings of the latest order on the part of police and other officials, 157 persons were arrested at the Florida Theatre on September 14. 91 other students were arrested the same night on disorderly conduct charges for protesting these arrests at the county jail. Two days later 104 students were arrested on trespassing charges for a sing-in, pray-in at the county jail protesting the earlier arrests and the segregated jail facilities for demonstrators. As a result of the first theatre arrests, the 119 students who pleaded "no contest" received suspended sentences of \$250 fines or 45 days in jail. Of the 37 who pleaded "not guilty", Ruben Kenon and I received \$1,000 fines or six months in jail; 22 students received \$500 fines or 3 months; 13 received \$250 or 45 days. These sentences were given on the "basis" of the person's supposed participation in the demonstration, Kenon and I being called leaders, the second group "second offenders," and the third "bent on assisting in the disorder." The 119 were considered to be "victims of faulty leadership." The trespasser-group was found guilty and fined \$50 each with a suspended jail sentence of 30 days--these students had pleaded "not guilty." The disorderly conduct group pleaded "no contest" and were released on "good behavior." As a result of the convictions, Ruben and I were suspended from A. & M., and the 28 other A. & M. students were put on probation. All five of the FSU students were placed on probation and restricted to campus. The two U. of F. students were also placed on probation. The 37 theatre demonstration cases are being appealed. A grand jury has been impaneled to investigate the 37 students and Prince McIntosh--president of the student body. The two suspensions have been protested by sleep-ins and burnings of effigies at FAMU. The NAACP of Jacksonville is planning to picket the Florida Classic football game in Jacksonville in protest, and it is asking Miami NAACP to picket the Orange Blossom Classic there. Protests have come from several groups. Because of these arrests, Tallahassee CORE had to borrow about \$11,000 to pay fines and appeal bonds, although some fines were paid by parents. The FSU faculty is attempting to raise funds, although Rep. Russol is urging Board of Control people to disapprove of this action. There is little academic freedom in Florida--Mr. Haley was fired in 1960 because he participated in civil rights activities, and many other professors are afraid to participate in any way. In a period of 4 years, Tallahassee CORE and National CORE have spent nearly \$20,000 in Tallahassee. Very little money has come from the community itself--this problem is primarily due to the fact that the CORE group is mainly student and hasn't had time to take full advantage of community resources. Some efforts are being made to raise funds in the community, however. During trials white only restrooms were often locked, and Attorney Simons finally called for a mistrial until facilities should be opened to all--this request was heeded by the judge. Thousands have participated in Tallahassee CORE projects, but the program has been sustained over the four years by just a few people and sometimes not sustained at all. We have met with continued police brutality in the form of kicking, hitting, dragging, etc; prisoners have been segregated and harassed while in jail. Although we have taken our grievances to city officials, commissioners and asked for police protection, these attempts at negotiation have been to no avail. For the November 6 meeting of Tallahassee CORE, I suggested to Prince McIntosh the following items: (1) the need for an office and mimeograph machine (2) the possibility of getting 12 persons in the community to say they would each pay a month's rent on an office (3) the possibility of getting one person to pay for a regular telephone with the group paying for all non-local calls. (4) getting persons to donate old cars in working condition (5) the possibility of obtaining a p.a. system which could also be placed on a car (6) the possibility of the donation of a dictaphone (7) the possibility of finding part-time volunteers to run the office from the community.

VOTER DRIVE: Many persons feel that a North Florida voter drive would be an extremely valuable project. Lafayette and Liberty counties, with nonwhite populations of 11.9 and 15.2 per cent have no registered Negro voters. Other counties, such as Jefferson, have a greater percentage by population of potential Negro registrars (such as, 3,901 whites and 5,641 Negroes) or Gadsden with 24,944 Negroes and 17,038 whites, or Madison County (which is more representative of the usual situation in North Florida (7,430 whites and 6,723 Negroes). [1963 Chamber of Commerce Census]. Further because of the very poor apportionment situation in Florida, only 14% of the House and 12% of Senate are necessary to elect a majority in those houses. Because of this very poor apportionment situation, the most votes in North Florida count from 10 to 100 times more than a vote in South Florida--that is, a congressional district in North Florida with only about 9,000 persons, for example, has the same number of representatives as the large Dade County district (Miami) which has 900,000 persons. Thus until a fairer reapportionment legislation is enacted, a drive in North Florida would be highly efficient for these reasons. It would also have the effect of gaining support in Miami (on the assumption that these new voters would not support the traditional "Pork-chop" gang), and it would serve to hasten the much needed reapportionment legislation. Three other goals, equally important, would be the education of voters newly registered as to the power and great need for their vote and would they could do with it in eliminating undesirable things. Further, these persons could also become acquainted with the philosophy and objectives of CORE, and they might then feel

more like lend^{ing} their moral and financial support to a group which they know something about. In such a drive we would need a team of persons, an office, transportation and the part-time services of a lawyer at the very least. There is a possibility of my going to New York during Christmas to look for support of such a project.

MARCH ON TALLAHASSEE: A committee has been set up to speak to the Governor asking him to issue an executive order banning discrimination in this state. If this should fail, we are already making efforts to contact civil rights groups in the state to gain their support for a march on Tallahassee. This march would be similar to the March on Washington. For this, we estimate we would need a minimum of \$15,000 and several full-time persons to help with the project. We feel that a march at this time would be very important. The Governor is making many attempts to attract new industry and foreign as well as domestic tourists to the state. He continually whitewashes problems here, and a march would show that there is discrimination in the state and that "Negroes..." do not "come to Florida because they like it there." This summer, after shootings, beatings and mass arrests, the Governor proclaimed in London that "We haven't had one single incidence of violence... We in Florida have no problem of integration because the laws of our state ban discrimination." On his return from a three week trip to Japan, after several killings, mass arrests and very extreme tension and violence in St. Augustine, the Governor spoke last week about bond issues and the fine and alert police protection the city of St. Augustine has at its disposal. We feel that such a march would illustrate the negligence and need for action on the part of state officials.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) More full-time people working in Florida in direct action and voter drives
- (2) Persons needed to organize communities
- (3) More workshops on the philosophy and objectives of CORE
- (4) Need for national leaders to visit groups in Florida
- (5) A committee needed to get task force workers from Florida universities
- (6) A speakers bureau for the state to make speakers available to groups wishing to know about the movement and CORE
- (7) The need for a lawyer who would advise people in direct action projects--often very moderate or conservative advice inhibits groups unnecessarily. We have to go 500 miles for a lawyer, and have had to in the last four years.
- (8) We know that Florida is not unique, but with a well organized program we can eliminate many of the problems we have. The recommendations, we feel, would aid in organization and in an effective program geared at eliminating our problems.

Thus, you see some of our problems and accomplishments. Without more organized community support and effective projects, our program will not be able to survive. A concentrated voter drive will solve many problems at once, and the march on Tallahassee will serve to awaken the whole state to the now existent problems in Florida .

Yours in Freedom,

Patricia Stephens Due
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Southeastern Representative
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