

that is southern before it has changed beyond all recognition.

These aims will be accomplished through a series of detailed picture essays that reveal the texture of everyday experience rather than dwelling on the exceptional or sensational occurrence. This documentary approach was brought to a high level of eloquence by the remarkable team of photographers that worked with the Farm Security Administration during the thirties. The present project will carry on that approach, giving it new forms appropriate to the needs of our times.

The project will search for answers to some of the following questions: How does segregation, so bound up with every institution and social gesture, form Southerners and shape their actions? Why do southerners, even those who reject segregation, so deeply love their culture? What are its special characteristics and what can it contribute to our national culture? What is special about the way children are raised in the South? How does it feel to be a Negro in the South? A poor white? What is happening to Negro character as the struggle against segregation gathers momentum? How does a "new" Negro look and act and feel differently from a man still bound up in the traditional patterns? Where is the "new" white southerner, and what does he look like, and how is he different? By what means can any of these questions or their answers be made visible in photographs?

These questions will form the backbone of a series of picture essays about representative southerners in different regions of the South. The essays will focus on meaningful details of everyday life: work and tools, family relationships, possessions, houses and household articles, gestures, movements, and expressions that

suggest the unique pattern of each individual, and at the same time touch those common features which mark him as a southerner. Here is a speculative list of subjects for the essays: a white tenant farmer in Tennessee, a Negro field hand in the Mississippi delta, a Jackson businessman, a Negro schoolboy in Selma, Alabama, a Baptist minister in Baton Rouge, a delta planter, a Negro lawyer from Atlanta, a white student at Ole Miss, a SWCC field secretary in southwest Georgia.

In addition, other essays that do not fit this pattern will be undertaken. Here are some subjects that are being considered:

- 1) A documentary on labor conditions in the South--automation in farming, patterns of unemployment, the effects of industrialization, the influence of unions, etc.
- 2) A portrait of a southern town which will examine the qualities of small town life that have all but disappeared from the American scene.
- 3) The aftermath of a Klan murder (there have been five in southwestern Mississippi in recent months). One photographer will photograph from the point of view of the community, another from the point of view of the bereaved family.
- 4) The story of a Negro family migrating from the South. The essay would start with a portrayal of their native town and follow them into the urban environment of Chicago, Philadelphia or Los Angeles. The photographer would trace in their faces and actions the search for a place to live, what it takes to find a job, how it feels to join the relief rolls--a chronicle of whatever happens to a Negro family that is forced to migrate.

Such a project can be of great value to a wide segment of the American public. In the interests of completeness and objectivity, how-

ever, comprehensive publication should wait several years until a series of volumes encompassing the major work of the project can be brought out. Meanwhile, picture sequences of current interest could appear as yearly picture books in inexpensive soft cover format. Educational television and magazines offer other possibilities for viewing the work.

At the end of the project all the photographs should become part of a permanent file to be preserved in the special collection of a major university, a museum or the Library of Congress. As such they should form an invaluable record of an extremely important period in our national life. They would be available as a research tool to historians, social scientists, teachers, editors--anyone with a legitimate use for them. With the passage of time, the file will continue to be of great and even increasing value.

It is our hope that the Southern Documentary Project will serve as a pilot project for efforts already underway to establish a national documentary group to photograph American life in the sixties. While no formal tie with these efforts is contemplated, the experience of the Southern Documentary Project, its triumphs and failures, should prove an invaluable guide to future enterprises.

The Southern Documentary Project will begin in July, 1964, with an interracial team of six carefully selected photographers and a project director. Project headquarters and laboratory facilities will be established in Atlanta. The project will continue for at least three years. At the end of the first six months the work will be reviewed by a panel of social scientists, photographers, and editors appointed to evaluate the project. The project director will submit

a report to this panel, and the panel will make recommendations for the future operation of the project.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee has played an important role in the development of this proposal. For more than a year SNCC has maintained a photographic department on a modest scale, with one or two photographers in the field and a meagerly equipped but workable darkroom in their Atlanta office. SNCC photographs have been used in hundreds of SNCC publications, as well as in national newspapers, magazines and books, by the Department of Justice, on the floor of the Senate and in court. Plans for the documentary project are in part a result of the demonstrated potential of this operation.

The documentary project would maintain close communication with SNCC, drawing on the information gathered by its research department, and the contacts established by SNCC field secretaries throughout the South. In return, the project would cooperate with SNCC in the publication of a series of educational pamphlets and, under special arrangement, might provide photographs for other SNCC publications.

#### RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

An undertaking as ambitious as this one will inevitably depend for success upon the efforts of exceptional photographers--men with determination and some courage, willing to travel all over the South, and live under conditions of hardship in order to complete their assignments. They must, moreover, be men who see supremely well--and have the insight to interpret and understand the events that unfold before their cameras. If they are successful, the images they produce will have significance long after the struggle for civil rights has passed into our history books.

This is a big order. We believe it can best be filled, not by recruiting seasoned professionals with established reputations, but by enlisting talented young photographers who already have a commitment and preferably some experience working in the South. These men will be shaped by the demands of the material before their cameras and by a carefully worked out program of visual and technical training. The basis of the training will be intensive analysis of actual assignments and a series of visual exercises designed to bring the photographer into closer contact with his own work.

Approximately once a month the photographic staff will gather in Atlanta to look over the month's work, and plan future assignments. At regular intervals the project will invite outstanding teachers, editors and photographers to lead discussions in their special areas of competence.

THE BUDGET                      When the project was discussed before the American Society of Magazine Photographers a few weeks ago, individual members responded with gifts of equipment and money totalling nearly a thousand dollars. Promises of more equipment, money and significant trade discounts have been given, and a number of leading photographers have indicated their interest in taking part in the educational aspects of the project. This heartening response will help to establish a darkroom and get certain other aspects of the project off the ground, but the plan as a whole will have to depend for its main support upon major grants.