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SELMA AND DALLAS COUNTY, ALABAMA: A STATISTICAL ROUNDUP

Selma, Alabama is a town located fifty miles west of the state capitol, Montgomery. It has a population of 28,385, of which 49.2% -- or 13,969 persons -- are Negro. Its Chamber of Commerce likes to inflate figures a little, and so makes the claim that 34,000 people live "within its police jurisdiction." They chose the wording. The population of the town has grown 24% since 1950. Part of the reason for this growth lies in the relative prosperity that exists in Selma; half of the people make over \$3,555 per year and half make less than this. It takes no imagination to guess at the racial composition of these two groups. Selma also boasts of sound housing for people living in about 56% of its homes, and unemployment is only 7.2%. And there is an upper crust in Selma, 559 families (out of a total of 6,650 families) who have incomes over \$10,000 a year.

The town is attracting industry and has good growth potential. In 1960 it was able to spend 20% of its city expenditures on its police department. Growth is so spectacular -- especially with the new multi-million dollar Hammermill Paper Co. plant going in -- that nearly everyone has forgotten about the eleven recorded lynchings of Negroes that have taken place there since 1882.

Dallas County forms the pastoral setting for Selma. 50% of the county's 56,667 inhabitants live in rural regions, the rest reside mainly in Selma. No other town has more than 1,000 souls. It has the ninth largest county population in the state, and its Negro population of 32,687 (57.7%) is among the highest in the state. People do not fare so well in the county as they do in Selma, and 5,418 (or 15.4%) left for other counties or for cities in the period 1950-60. There are good economic reasons for this migration. Annual family income for 38% of the black people in the county was less than \$1,000, and 84% of the black people made under \$3,000 per year. Only 3% of the whites made less than \$1,000, and 19% made under \$3,000. 53.6% of employed Negroes find work as laborers, as domestics in private households, or in other service capacities. About 10% of employed whites are in a similar situation with regard to these low paying jobs.

On the other hand, an elite of 6% of the county's 12,457 families thrive on an income in excess of \$10,000 yearly. These are the folks who do not migrate from Dallas County; they stay and bear witness to all that happens there -- and incidentally grow wealthier.

There are other reasons why people, especially black people, move out of the county. Take education, for instance: 55% of the Negro population over twenty-five years old has only completed six years of elementary school; 7% of whites have been so affected. The number of Negroes with this extremely low level of education is ten times the number of Negroes who finish high school. Nearly 4,500 whites have completed high school, while only 700 Negroes have been so lucky. The schools are, of course, segregated -- separate but equal education in Dallas County.

Or take housing, where 79% of the Negroes rent the places in which they live. Only 46% of the housing in the county is classed as sound, and 25% is dilapidated. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, this means the kind of housing that "does not provide safe and adequate shelter and in its present condition endangers the health, safety, or well-being of the occupants."

When we remember that 6% of the county's families, 747 families, holds the wealth of the county; and when we keep in mind the great distance which separates these wealthy from the mass of the poor who are mainly black, we begin to see the meaning of why black people want the right to vote. And the small voice that Negroes would like to raise in this wilderness is suppressed. Negroes are 51.2% of the county's voting population. In 1962 only about 1.7% of this group of 15,115 people were voters. On the other hand, 63% of the 14,400 whites of voting age were on the books of the voting registrars.

We need to consider one more statistic, the number of "happy and satisfied" Negroes in Dallas County. According to the testimony of Sheriff Jim Clark, this group is so numerous you can't throw a stone in any direction -- or swing a billy club -- without hitting at least one.