

[1965]

WHO RUNS SOUTHWEST GEORGIA?

One of the most important things in a man's life is his job, the nature of which determines his standard of living, the sort of education he aspired to when he was young, and ultimately how much he has to say about the issues which concern him. The man he works for not only hires and fires him, but also, as we shall see, decides who will pay the tax bill and what it will be spent for, whether he will be allowed to vote, where he can eat a hamburger, and just what he can expect from a police-

Businessmen themselves occupy many of the most critical positions in state and local government, from president to mayor, and representatives of business interests occupy a large part of the remainder of the political seats in this country. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was president of Ford Motor Co., with a salary in six figures, before he came to the Pentagon. Secretary of Commerce John Connor came to Washington from the president's seat at Merck & Co., a chemical manufacturer. The family of Treasury Secretary C. Douglas Dillon, who recently resigned, holds controlling interests in investment companies which channel funds to South Africa. President Johnson himself owns radio and TV stations, land near Selma, Alabama, and bank stock in Austin, Texas.

Look at southwest Georgia. The mayor of Americus, a town of 15,000 known for mass arrests and brutality in August, 1963, owns a nail factory in the town. When representatives of the local movement there went to talk with the mayor, however, he sat in a corner behind a more powerful businessman, Charles Wheatley, who did the talking for him. Wheatley is a true monopolist. He owns the land and buildings to the city hospital, bus station, the town's largest factory, four of the town's five supermarkets, one of three banks and 25 or 30 dilapidated houses which he rents to Negroes. He also owns one of the town's two construction companies. His role in politics? He is the City Engineer, who decides what company will get city construction contracts!

The local state prosecutor, who tried to "solve the race problem" in the town by charging four SNCC workers with the capital crime of insurrection, is an aristocrat of sorts, whose wife's family owns a dairy concern in the area and whose father is a former Congressman. The foreman of the grand jury convened at that time to draw up additional indictments against civil rights workers--the foreman is an insurance man well-known for his rabid statements on civil rights. The judge in the court where the indictments were prosecuted is part owner of a local bank, of which his brother-in-law is president. Perhaps a third of the county offices are occupied by members of one family, which owns several thousand acres of land worked by Negroes who, to put it mildly, have trouble registering to vote. Members of this family hold the offices of voting registrar, sheriff, postmaster, agricultural agent, county commissioner, state public service (utilities) commissioner, and three state patrolmen, all stationed in Americus. Two of the county's three members in the state legislature are businessmen.

The Congressman from that area, Third District Congressman Howard "Bo" Callaway, is a textile manufacturer. His family owns Callaway Mills, which employs over 3000 in LaGrange, a town of 23,000. Callaway also sits, with two members of the Morehouse College Board of Trustees, on the controlling board of directors of the Trust Co. of Georgia, third largest bank operation in the state, and of Georgia Power Co., the state's utilities monopoly. Callaway's political attitudes? He is a director of the Freedoms Foundation, a well-known right-wing group, and his campaign for Congress was a virulent attack on the civil rights movement, complete with promises to get the Civil Rights Bill of 1964 repealed. His town LaGrange recently got War on Poverty money to train "home-making aides" (maids), who could, according to a supporter of the project, earn as much as \$20 a week when they finished their training.

Now, who are the men who control the jobs of people living in southwest Georgia? About one-fourth to one-third of the jobs (4600-6600 out of 20,000) in manufacturing are controlled by companies owned out of the state. Many of the remaining companies are partially controlled by absentee owners. One of these absentee parent companies is the Minerals and Chemicals Philipp Corporation, the Chairman of which is C.W. Engelhard, who has sizeable holdings in South Africa. Engelhard seems to like the sort of operation you can conduct in a racist area.

Many big companies are controlled by families. Lykes Brothers, a meat packing concern, for example, has 12 people on its board of directors, eight of whom are members of the Lykes family. This firm, based in Tampa, is almost identical with the Lykes Brothers Steamship Co. and it has large holdings in two Tampa banks and one New Orleans bank. Members of the board of directors also have holdings in railroads, utilities companies and marketing firms. With this type of setup the Lykes group can pack meat in Albany, ship it to Tampa, provide electricity for their offices and warehouses, ship it overseas, and finance the whole process--all conceivably without letting it get outside the family.

Some firms in southwest Georgia, of course, are home-grown and home-owned. Some are family-controlled. In Moultrie, for instance, a town of 15,000, the Vereen family controls two companies which together employ 550-600 workers--the Riverside Manufacturing Co. and Moultrie Cotton Mills. In Pelham, population 4600, the Hand family controls two companies employing 200 people--the Pelham Phosphate Co. and Pelham Oil and Fertilizer. They also have holdings in several other smaller companies.

We could go on endlessly with examples of business control in politics and with family control of business, but the examples here should at least support the idea that if you want to change things, you have to look at who owns what, for businessmen are the ones who really swing the billyclubs.

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