

Report on Albany, Georgia.....July 17, 1965

Barbara Pfeffer Fishman

Most of the Scope activity in Albany is centered on the Freedom School. The building was acquired by SNCC, and they are paying the rent. Betty Dougherty, a SNCC worker is in charge of the school; it is staffed by the eight Scope workers, one local teenager and two part-time local teenagers. Betty teaches Negro history and a workshop which gives instruction in techniques of non-violence and demonstrations. The SCOPE workers are teaching art, drama, reading and mathematics. In the evening the two nuns give classes in reading and writing for adults. Two to four men and women have been attending these evening classes regularly. The nuns had intended to give evening literacy classes (on a larger scale) for adults and daytime classes in reading, writing and language skills for teenagers planning to go on to college. This has not materialized and they feel quite frustrated about this.

~~There~~ has been friction between SCOPE and SNCC as to the educational approach that should be applied in the school. The SCOPE workers have favored a more structured, conventional approach, whereas the SNCC workers feel that there should be complete freedom in class attendance, use of the building and classroom procedure. SNCC workers favor permeating all activities with movement "awareness", whereas SCOPE workers prefer to teach the classes with less to no emphasis on Civil Rights, etc. There seems lately, however, to have been a certain modus vivendi established between SNCC and SCOPE workers, with the exception of the two nuns.

The nuns object quite strenuously to SNCC's political and educational approach. Given their background, I think the reasons for the friction are obvious. They have been tireless and devoted workers but do such things as: giving drawings that the children have done marks,

lining the children up to receive apples that someone brought, etc. The friction between the nuns and Betty Dougherty seems to be growing.

There is an additional problem: the nuns are in close contact with the Catholic church. Their mother superior has requested that they not go to Mass meetings, or be seen in public. However, they are beginning to do a bit of VR work on their block. They have been in contact with the Albany Catholic church (white), have raised some funds from the congregation for fans, etc and yesterday two white men from the church came to the school and painted the outside wall. It appears that they are doing these things out of concern for the nuns rather than for the children. The relationship seems to me to have a "missionary" flavor. Betty Dougherty has, I believe, objections for this reason/

Three of the SCOPE workers spend half a day on VR, two are on VR full time. However, as of the moment, only eleven people have actually been registered by SCOPE workers. Sixty per-cent of the NVAP in Albany are registered. Many of the people who are not registered are illiterate and unaware of the character test. Some have tried to register and have had bad or embarrassing experiences. Apparently they are reluctant to go down alone, but say they would be willing to register if they had a worker accompanying them to the court house. Reverend Wells had suggested going around to the homes in the evening, getting three or four families together from one block for political education once a week. It seems to me that his method could also be used to teach people the answers to the twenty questions that they will be tested on as part of the character test.

The SCOPE chapter has not had the local leadership that was expected, since Slater King has been exceedingly busy (and discouraged?) and Reverend Wells was in Demapolis. He returned two days ago, however, and a meeting was held. Problems regarding SNCC, a local co-signer for

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the bank account and stepped-up VR will hopefully be worked out in the near future now that Reverend Wells is back in town. Wells suggested also that after the summer the local churches each contribute ten dollars montly to the Freedom school rent.

The SCOPE chapter has as its leader Bob Mullins, who is not exerting any real direction and leadership.

The library, which has been set up in the Freedom school, is a great success. Books are taken out, not only for the children themselves but also by the children for their parents.

A Freedom school newsletter has just been printed(I am enclosing a copy.) The school has also been written up in the local Negro newspaper.

Mass meetings are held every monday night. They have been poorly attended (twenty -thirty people) until last monday when Dr. Anderson spoke and drew an estimated 150-200 people.

Sunday an attempt to desegregate Tiff's swimming pool will be made. Slater King, SNCC and a few of the local teenagers from the Freedom school will be involved.

Police harrassment has been stepped up lately. SCOPE workers have been stopped when driving and yesterday Bob Mullins was arrested for reckless driving (totally false charge), and put in jail ~~and arrested~~ until bond was posted twenty minutes later. He is in touch with C.B. King about his appearance in court.

Midge Maroni, one of the SCOPE workers from St. Mary's is writing an articly for the September edition of her school newspaper(there is no summer edition) on the SCOPE project and the four girls from that school who participated. Bob Mullin is writing articles for his school paper(Indiana State Univ.) He will send a copy to the SCOPE office, but is not willing to send the original to SCOPE and have SCOPE then send out the articly to the paper.

On a broad level, the problems seem to be:

1) SNCC is functioning on a rather competitive level with SCOPE, despite the fact that much of the animosity has subsided.

2) The school's resources and potentials are not being sufficiently tapped. The children gather here and are happy to have a place to play and to meet. However I don't think it has been adequately emphasized that this is their school. Having their names or pictures posted on the wall, making them responsible for its upkeep would seem like a good idea. Then, they seem so hungry for adult attention and more activity, whether its games, new songs, learning how to make a drum, or sitting around and talking, whether it's a workshop on civil rights demonstrations and non-violence, or a discussion on how to fight on that battlefield that they are all standing in the middle of. They are so eager and so hungry and so receptive, and yet they hang around the school, left very much to their own resources as they have always been.

Some of the teen-agers are wonderful with the younger kids. If they could be tapped, if the program at the school could be geared to involving the kids in continual activities that they care about, need and want, all their energy wouldn't be dissipated on waiting on something that isn't coming through sufficiently. Also it would seem like a good idea to involve the many teenagers who attend the school in the VR program.

3) The VR program has not been more effective (aside from the reasons that are peculiar to Albany in light of its recent CR history) because:

a) During the first two weeks the SCOPE workers devoted all of their time to setting up and putting into operation the Freedom school. b) The people who are being canvassed are the hard core resisters, who either don't know of the character test, or are not willing to register, regard-

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down.

c) Only recently have the SCOPE workers returned to the home to pick up the people and take them down to the courthouse and this has only been done by some of the workers. Otherwise they have been leaving it up to the people to go down on their own and then checking back to see if they have done so.

d) More classes in political education, either in the Freedom school for the young people in the daytime, evening classes for adults, or sessions in the people's homes, as Reverend Wells had suggested, seems to me to be of vital importance and should be added to the program.

The girls in the SCOPE chapter have shown a great deal of maturity. Some have taught their classes in a rigid, uncommunicative fashion, but others have tried and succeeded in provoking discussions on pertinent subjects. They have gained the confidence of the SNCC workers, which took some doing and have developed a commitment and involvement with the movement which, I think, will stick once they are back in the north. One girl has written to her parents asking if she can stay in Albany for the coming year to work in the movement. They seem sincerely motivated by a desire to work and establish a good relationship with the children and their co-workers in SNCC (they have no contact with adult members of the community), rather than being out for "kicks".

A very important meeting was held last night. All SCOPE workers, SNCC workers (both from Albany and Baker county), Slater King and Reverend Wells attended. It was requested that we (the reporter's team) not attend the meeting and so we are not able to report the proceedings of what I assume to have been a vitally important meeting. Our only explanation of why we were not permitted to attend the meeting is:

Roy Shields, head of SNCC in Albany had an exceedingly negative reaction to our arrival in Albany and said that SCOPE was continually sending teams down from Atlanta to meddle and interfere. We assume that he insisted that we not be present. The nuns, however, are the ones that requested that we not attend, saying that it would inhibit discussion between the SNCC workers and SCOPE workers. Our inability to report on the meeting, may outdate this summary to a considerable extent.

John Watts(the other member of the reporter's team) has taken many photographs and is sending the film on to you.

Publicity:::News Report

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Albany, Georgia. July 17, 1965. In this hot and humid black belt town of 90,000 people, 38% Negro, famed for its history of prejudice and suppression and the recent struggle of the black man to win his freedom, four college students from St. Mary of the Woods^{College}, Terre Haute, Indiana are spending their summer working in the Civil Rights movement. They are participating in a SCOPE project (Summer Community Organization and Political Education) which is the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's summer program involving 500 students in Civil Rights work in the south. The four girls, plus two nuns and two students from Indiana State University are working on voter registration and running a Freedom school which is attended daily by 100-150 children between the ages of three and eighteen. The SCOPE workers teach classes in art, reading, music, drawing and arithmetic. The girls came down here because of their concern with poverty, prejudice and the debilitating effects of both on a goodly percentage of the people of this nation. Their concern, commitment and dedication to the condition of the Negro has deepened considerably since they began working here. It is difficult to confront the misery and injustices here and then forget them when one returns to the fold of a privileged existence. Consequently one of the girls has written to her parents asking if she can stay on through the coming school year to continue her work here. Another plans to return next summer. One of the girls hopes to join the Peace Corps in the fall, another plans to return home and try to convey to her school and community that as a citizen, Christian or above all as a human being, ignoring the brutalities of the Negroes plight in this country is tantamount to participating in these brutalities. One of the girls said that nowhere had she made such a quick and easy adjustment to a new environment as here, working in the Negro

community in Albany. Which is an ironic commentary on what a Negro would feel trying to make an adjustment to a white community in Albany or, indeed, Terre Haute, Indiana.