

NEWS OF THE FIELD # 3

Alabama

As the county freedom organizations continue to grow across the black belt counties, there is beginning to be increased interest in the situation here, on the part of the government and by national news agencies. This week, Selma reports there was an investigator from a federal housing agency in Selma and in Lowndes County, asking questions about housing conditions and looking around for himself.

In Macon County, the Tuskegee Institute Advancement League (TIAL) began a picket line downtown in Tuskegee last Saturday. They are picketing the A&P store and also an entire downtown business block, including the Alabama Exchange Bank. They are picketing everyday, and there have been no incidents as yet. TIAL is demanding that stores and businesses adhere to a policy of fair employment. They are asking businessmen to fill out statements saying they are complying with the fair employment requests. TIAL is picketing and publishing a list of the places which refuse to comply.

TIAL is also compiling a list of the candidates for office in the coming elections. Their policy now is that they will support the best candidate running for an office. If there is an incumbent who is unopposed, they are going to put up a X candidate, but otherwise they will support the best.

There seems to be a general conflict in Alabama between SNCC and SCLC because of the county freedom organizations, which are independent. SCLC is supporting the Alabama Democratic Conference, Inc., (ADC) which is a coalition between moderate whites and middle-class Negroes. SCLC says that county freedom organizations will split the black vote. SNCC says that the black vote will always be split if people vote in their own interests.

Mississippi

In Clay County (West Point), evictions continue. (Evictions seem to be becoming the latest answer by the segs to voter registration.) Seven people have moved into the Clay County MFDP Center. John Buffington says they are trying to obtain mobile homes for evicted families. The United Packinghouse Workers' Union is trying to get mobile homes with government help, and also with the union's "Democracy Fund." Last Saturday, Charlie Gray, the MFDP candidate, lost the election for the school board trustee. John says he was defeated because they didn't have enough time (only two days) to run a campaign.

Federal registrars are now in Oktibbeha County (Starkville) reports Roosevelt Vaughn, and he expects to start a voter registration drive next week. That makes federal registrars in 18 Mississippi counties. Only 64 to go.

There was a "sleep-in" in Clarksdale, but as of now, we have no more information about this, except that two New York clergymen were among the 20 people arrested.

At Mount Beulah, Mrs Ida Lawrence was confident that their "land deal" is going through. They are buying about 400 acres in Washington County (?) so that the people now staying in Mt Beulah will have a place to live and to do small-scale farming "if they want." Mrs Lawrence says there will be a man from Australia living with the people and teaching them various things about farming. The land they are buying also includes five tractors, a couple of decent houses and "a few shacks."

Arkansas

Arkansas reports this week that they have requested the U. S. Civil Rights Commission to send observers to the coming elections - both the primary on July 27th and the general election in November. They have also requested, along with the State Advisory Board to the U. S. Civil Rights Commission, that open hearings be held as soon as possible to investigate charges of voting frauds, for which Arkansas is becoming famous. ("We'll let 'em vote, but we won't count their ballots.")

Mitchell Zimmerman says there is a conflict between the State Advisory Committee and the Commission itself. The State Advisory Committee wants to conduct open hearings, and the Commission wants them closed. The U. S. Commission says that people testify more freely in closed hearings.

Washington D. C.

The "Free D. C." movement is gathering momentum, which started with a successful one-day boycott of the busses in January. The "Free D. C." movement is considering a boycott campaign against merchants who don't support Home Rule.

Atlanta

There is a small Tent City now right in the middle of the Markham Street area. It is housing families who have been evicted from slum housing. The Atlanta Project is publishing a newspaper, the Nitty-Gritty, and the movement in the Vine City area is gathering momentum also. (Both areas are in Julian's 136th District.)

To date, four SNCC workers have been arrested, all when they started moving furniture back into homes while people were being evicted. Another man was arrested in January for "trespassing" while passing out blankets during a cold spell.

National

Last week, the U. S. Department of Justice filed a petition with the Subver-Activites Control Board, which was set up under the 1950 McCarren Act. (President Truman vetoed the McCarren because he ~~did~~ thought it was unconstitutional and repressive, but the Congress passed it over his head.) The Justice Department is asking the Board to require the W. E. B. DuBois Clubs register as a Communist-front organization. Many organizations, including SNCC, and individuals are support the right of the DuBois Clubs not to register. John Lewis asked, "why (is) the Justice Department (not devoting) its energies to increasing the registration of Negroes in the South rather than compelling the registration of the W. E. B. DuBois Clubs?"

The DuBois Clubs national headquarters was bombed last Sunday with an estimated pounds of dynamite, demolishing the structure. (San Francisco) DuBois Clubs members were mobbed and beaten in Brooklyn, N. Y., while cops stood by laughing. Six Club members were arrested when one of them pulled out a gun in self-defense.

NOTE: If your project has not been contacted by the WATS line since we started making out these reports, it is probably because we don't have a telephone ~~X~~ number for you. Also, the reason we have started making regular phone calls is because we generally don't get reports from the field unless there is an emergency.

These reports are being compiled on a weekly basis by Dottie Zellner, who spends most of her time on the phone to various projects, asking what they are doing. Because people working in the field tend to look at their projects and their work on a routine basis - that 75 people registered to vote last Monday - they also tend to think that this routine work and activity isn't important. It is.

So that is why we're making these phone calls and writing these reports, to get detailed information of what's happening in the field so that we can send this information to projects across the South.

Written reports by projects are also important for compiling "News of the Field" and we appreciate any written reports we get.