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soul force

"REDEEMING THE SOUL OF AMERICA"

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The Southern Christian Leadership Conference
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Note to Editors

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Dr. King and SCLC-- Powerful Action for Change

Everybody knows Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., but what about the organization he leads -- the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, also called SCLC? Without the staff and supporters of SCLC, Dr. King always says, he could never have reached the position he holds today.

Here are some facts about SCLC:

SCLC, now 11 years old, was founded in 1957 after the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-56, which was led by SCLC's top two officers, Dr. King, the President, and Dr. Ralph D. Abernathy, Vice President & Treasurer.

SCLC is known for aggressive nonviolent action, such as the Birmingham Movement of 1963, the Selma March of 1965, and this year's Poor People's Campaign in Washington.

SCLC has worked closely with other human rights organizations. For example, SCLC's leaders helped organize and support the student sit-ins, and SCLC provides help to many civil rights causes.

SCLC carries out quiet programs of community leadership training, economic development, and voter registration and political education.

SCLC staff organizers have worked in every Southern state and in numerous Northern cities. For the Poor People's campaign, staff members are assigned in 10 big cities and five rural areas.

SCLC has about 270 local Affiliate chapters across the nation. These Affiliate chapters share SCLC's basic beliefs in human rights and nonviolent action, and many of them have their own active community programs.

SCLC is a non-profit organization supported by thousands of people from all walks of life, by churches and other local groups, by foundations, by artists and public figures who believe in our work. SCLC has always welcomed the active participation and financial aid of people from all faiths, colors and nationalities.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, based in Atlanta, Ga., has grown in 11 years into a national organization. At present SCLC has about 100 staff members.

SCLC policy is determined by an Executive Board of Directors, experienced men and women who follow the philosophy and practice of direct action for peaceful social change. Dr. King, Dr. Abernathy and Rev. Andrew Young, Executive Vice-President, carry out the board policy, and an Executive Staff is responsible for following this policy in SCLC programs.

The main activities of SCLC now include:

THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN FOR JOBS OR INCOME, which will begin in Washington, D.C., in April. This campaign will involve thousands of poor people in massive protests, expanding in numbers and militance if necessary to make the nation respond to the evils of poverty and racism in America.

VOTER REGISTRATION AND POLITICAL EDUCATION, to develop political power so that poor people, including the oppressed black people, will be represented by their own leaders and will reform the systems that exploit them.

OPERATION BREADBASKET, SCLC's economic development program which began in the South five years ago and is now organized in a number of big cities. Breadbasket not only produced new and better jobs for Negroes but also works for total economic control and development within the black community. SCLC Breadbasket is now growing into a nationwide network of economic power.

THE CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAM, which trains local adults in community leadership, education, human rights and citizenship responsibilities, economic development, and Negro heritage. Since it became an SCLC program in 1962, CEP has trained more than 2,700 Southern adults who went on to reach 25,000 others in local citizenship schools.

URBAN LEADERSHIP TRAINING. This year SCLC has a new program for developing community leadership in the ghettos of 15 of the largest cities. Ten ministers from each of the cities have been recruited for development of their leadership qualities and preparing active programs to better the lives and conditions of the poor people in their neighborhoods.

AFFILIATE ACTIVITIES. The 270 local Affiliates of SCLC not only support this organization, but also work on their own community projects, such as citizenship schools, voter registration, improvement of education, Operation Breadbasket, and direct action against racial injustice.

NONVIOLENT EDUCATION AND ACTION. SCLC staff and Affiliates continue to teach both the philosophy of nonviolence and the power of direct nonviolent action for human rights. For example, at this time the SCLC organizers in the Poor People's Campaign are mobilizing poor people for massive nonviolent action in Washington this spring.