

STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
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STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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MADISON, WISCONSIN 53706

TWO CHURCHES
FIRE-BOMBED

GREENSBORO, ALA. - St. Mark's AME Church here in Greensboro and Elwood AME Zion in Acron were fire-bombed the evening of July 17.

Rev. Arthur T. Days, pastor of St. Mark's and President of the Hale County Movement and Rev. Farredin, pastor of the Elwood AME Zion are active in the civil rights movement.

Cleophus Hobbs, civil rights worker, says "the people are very afraid, and some young men in the community now guard Rev. Days because of threats on his life by local whites."

The day of the church burnings, a meeting was held between white businessmen, Mayor Bill Christian and members of the Hale County Movement, including Rev. Days. The Hale County Movement presented its demands, some of which are improved educational facilities, paved streets and better hiring policies. Representatives from the white community accepted the demands and promised that something will be done in an effort to satisfy the Negro community. Rev. Days said, We'll give them a chance to meet the demands, but we won't wait forever.

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FREEDOM SCHOOL
IS BIG SUCCESS

ALBANY, GA. - More than 100 Negro students ranging from pre-school to teenagers, are now attending the new Freedom School here.

Miss Betty Dougherty, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee volunteer from Georgetown, University, is coordinator of the school.

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Freedom School (cont.)

The teachers include nuns from St. Mary-of-the-Wood in Chicago, Ill. and students from Indiana University, St. Mary-of-the-Wood and Union Theological Seminary.

Some of the courses taught are reading, arithmetic, Negro history, literature, dramatics and the arts.

The teachers alternate their time so they can participate in voter registration activities. Sisters Mary Jean and Alma Louise are teaching an adult literacy class, using an experimental phonic program. If successful, persons who have had two or three years of schooling would be brought up to a sixth grade equivalency within five weeks.

Miss Dougherty says, "We are quite enthusiastic about the progress and talent shown thus far. The students have been writing a great deal and some of the older students have begun to put out a newsletter of their poems and writings.

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MFLU BRANCHES OUT

GREENWOOD, MISS. - A chapter of the Mississippi Freedom Labor Union is being organized here. Elsewhere in the Delta the already active MFLU is asking plantation owners to comply with the federal minimum wage law of \$1.25 per hour. Laborers are now paid \$3 per day for 10 hours of work, about 30¢ an hour. Workers have gone on strike for their demands. The organizing attempt in Greenwood began at a mass meeting at the Union Grove Baptist Church on July 17.

Silas McGhee, project director for SNCC, said, "If we can get a strong union in Greenwood, it will help to mobilize the rest of Leflore County."

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MFLU (cont.)

Response to the union was enthusiastic and 25 local people signed up as organizers. Union memberships and firmer plans will be set at the next mass meeting.

Mrs. Bertha Austin, 87, voiced her support of the venture: "I can't work in the fields anymore, but I'm behind the Union 100%. I'll do whatever I can to help it succeed."

The MFLU has been successful in various parts of Mississippi in organizing new members. This new labor union was first organized in Shaw (Bolivar County) Mississippi. Membership spread to the surrounding counties and there are now approximately 1000 farm workers, mostly cotton choppers, in about six counties in the Delta.

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NEGRO HOMES RAIDED IN ARKANSAS

GOULD, ARK. * The homes of five Negroes here were raided by police after they had taken part in civil rights demonstrations on July 17. The five were part of a group that picketed the Lincoln County courthouse in nearby Star City to protest the closing of a voter registration office in Gould which had been open for only three days.

Members of the Gould Citizens for Progress, which sponsored the demonstrations, feel that the closing of the office was in response to heavy Negro registration. The office had been opened on Monday, July 12 and was closed again on July 14. During the three day period 300 Negroes and 16 whites were registered.

Lincoln County Clerk R. A. Goyen announced that he had to close the registration office because the Gould Lions Club, in whose building the office had been located, had voted to remove the office from their premises. Members of the Citizens for Progress point out that Goyen could have easily relocated the registration office in any of a number of public buildings in town.

Demonstrations protesting the closing of the office were held in Star City, the county seat, on July 16 and July 17. On Saturday afternoon, after the demonstrators returned to Gould, the homes and business places of five of them were raided by city, county and state police. In some cases police had search warrants authorizing them to look for illegal liquor. In other instances, police made the raids without warrants. In at least one case, they raided property in the absence of the owner. (more)

Homes Raided (cont.)

One of the men whose home had been raided was told by police that he was under arrest, but he was never notified of the charge nor was he given a formal arrest slip. Civil rights workers feel that this may be due to the fact that Gould Police Chief, Harold Pearson, who made the arrest, can neither read nor write.

Two of the men whose property was raided had previously been warned by police that they would have trouble as long as they had anything to do with civil rights.

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FOLK FESTIVAL
IN MISSISSIPPI

MILESTON, MISS. - A folk festival featuring Negro singers from the Delta, a jazz group and performers from Africa will be held here on August 6 through 8. Mileston is a small community in the heart of the Delta, an area rich with a history of noted blues singers.

Co-director of the first Northern District Mississippi Folk Festival is Sam Block. Block said a full range of local talent has been located for the event, which will emphasize ethnic folk music of the Negro in Mississippi. "We'll have everything from rock and roll to spirituals, from jazz to freedom songs",

The idea for the festival was developed by Block and Willie Peacock, both former SNCC project directors in Greenwood. Peacock is also a former member of the SNCC Freedom Singers. Originally the pair had hoped to form a Mississippi Freedom Choir, but the idea was discarded in favor of the Folk Festival. "We discovered that the local adults knew many old songs that were part of our heritage" Block said, "and we wanted to present them to the people to show what a great story the songs tell." Every place we've gone, we have found all kinds of talent; we never come away empty-handed. We've

(more)

Folk festival (cont.)

found singers, joke tellers and dancers, whose stunts run from balling the jack to the twist."

As the idea for the festival emerged, Block and Peacock began making contacts outside of Mississippi. The response was overwhelming. Folk singer Pete Seeger termed the festival "one of the greatest ideas that could have been established" and pledged financial support.

Guy Carawan was so impressed by the idea that he has offered to leave California and move to Mississippi to help with the co-ordinating of the program.

Mrs. Carolyn Reese of Detroit, Michigan, is locating African performers for the festival. The African atmosphere in the festival will bring "an appreciation of our rich heritage and cultural ties with black Africa, thus giving black people in the South and through out the country a new identity in which all black people may share in common", Peacock explained.

African music, games, dances, and food will be featured in the festival in addition to a fashion show of African costumes.

The other half of the program "Performers from the Delta" will bring a wide range of background, talents and experiences to the festival. Billy Johnson, a Greenwood civil rights worker, has formed a jazz group devoted completely to African music. An 84 year old man will sing slave songs he learned as a youth in the cotton fields of Mississippi. John Jones, carves flutes from the fishing cane that grows wild in the Delta. He has been carving and playing his flutes for over 40 years. Brother Crainey who has been playing blues on his harmonica in Itta Bena, Miss. for 50 of his 67 years will also take part. Brother Crainey, a veteran of Mississippi civil rights activities, was arrested in June in Washington, D. C. for taking part in a sit-in on behalf of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Congressional Challenge.

Sam Block, says, "Our only problems are ones of finances. We have more than enough talent."