

A Chance for Power In Fayette Election

By JOY FENSTON
(Assistant Editor)

SOMERVILLE, Tenn.—County elections are more significant this summer than they ever have been before for residents of Fayette County.

Black Power—the power to make for themselves the decisions that influence their lives—is a possibility for the first time, if enough registered voters turn out and the August 4 elections are fair.

By the time this issues goes to press, residents of the West Tennessee county will have cast their votes for Quarterly Court magistrates. If 19 of the 21 candidates running are elected they will form a majority.

Candidates are also being fielded in neighboring Haywood, Tipton and Hardeman counties, although not enough to win a majority in any of those areas even if all were elected.

These elections are the real key to taking power in the area, for in West Tennessee it is the Magistrates' Court which makes laws for the county, assesses taxes, runs elections and appoints members to the school board.

The idea of taking over control of county offices is not new for the Movement as a whole. Nor is it new for West Tennessee; organizers there have seen it as their long-range goal since the fall of 1963.

An interesting thing about the progress toward Black Power in West Tennessee, however, is that it has developed under the stimulus of a predominantly white, northern student group. But their concepts and techniques are the same as those used in most Black Belt areas by Negro organizers.

Members of the West Tennessee Voters' Project are trying to make the people aware of what power means. And they have abandoned the traditional technique of sending in large numbers of civil rights workers to organize an area, in favor of letting the people do it themselves.

One of the things local organizers will have to do to win is to bring out up to 95 per cent of those registered to vote—as the project did in a limited number of districts in the 1964 elections.

Another is to make sure that the problems which lost the last election in spite of what seemed to be Negro majorities—people spoiling their ballots because they didn't know how to mark them properly, and numerous election violations—don't happen again.

The only way to do this is to have Negro election officials, not just poll-watchers, appointed says Hardy Fry, a SNCC worker who is now coordinating the project.

The Southern PATRIOT

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This sign says that Union troops were stopped here by Confederate forces. One hundred years later SCLC conducts this march, which wasn't stopped. (Photo by Les Jordan)

King's SCLC Enters Mississippi

Which Way in Grenada?

By ROBERT ANALAVEGE
(Assistant Editor)

GRENADA, Miss.—There are many small towns still in the South that have not been touched by the Movement. These towns continue to live in traditional, unreconstructed quiet.

They have much in common. Usually there is a black population of 50 per cent or more.

The city officials are of the ignorant, brutal type personified by Jim Clark, the ex-sheriff of Selma, Alabama.

And, most obvious of all, these towns are totally segregated and the black people live in social, political and economic bondage.

Such a town is Grenada, Mississippi, whose population of 8,000 is divided almost equally between black and white.

Only now there is a movement in Grenada. It started when the Meredith March passed through and stirred the black people to move and strike out against the fear and oppression that had ruled their lives.

What kind of movement it will

be, what gains it will secure, how it will alter this bastion of white supremacy, may well be an indication of the future course of the Southern freedom movement.

Grenada's reaction to the Meredith March could not have been more disarming.

The city police protected the marchers. Speeches were delivered at the base of the Confederate Memorial in the square. The police even stood by while one marcher placed an American flag on the memorial.

City officials hired six black registrars and allowed 1000 Negroes to register to vote.

When the marchers departed, the six black registrars were fired. The 1000 Negroes whom they registered suddenly discovered they had no proof they were registered, because someone had conveniently forgotten to issue them voting slips.

Organizers from both the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Com-

mittee (SNCC) returned to Grenada at the request of the local people.

Nightly rallies were held and a program for the town was debated and discussed.

Hosea Williams of SCLC argued for a traditional movement, one that would have as its goal total integration and have as its rallying cry the familiar phrase—Freedom Now!

(Throughout the march, Williams consistently opposed using the phrase "Black Power.")

Stokely Carmichael of SNCC argued against the SCLC program with its emphasis on integration and urged the people to work for Black Power and rally around that phrase.

(During the march Carmichael had reiterated that efforts toward integration cannot be achieved unless black people have their own power first.)

The position of Williams and SCLC was accepted by the people largely because of the great personal influence of Martin Luther (Continued on Page 3)



CANDIDATES IN THE WEST TENNESSEE ELECTIONS discuss their campaigns at a pre-election meeting. A total of 39 persons are running for county offices in the four counties. (Photo by John Spragens, Jr.)

"We can't win without them. Only the election officials can show people who don't know how to read where to mark their ballots. And last time poll watchers couldn't do anything about numerous cases of fraud; they were kept away over in a corner."

The demand for Negro election officials was met by Fayette County officials after a week-long march through the four counties which wound up July 29.

The march also made people aware of the elections and protested violence in Brownsville, the largest town in Haywood County, which has been terrorized by the Klan since last summer.

For in West Tennessee, as elsewhere in the Black Belt, what progress has been made has been in the face of white violence and economic retaliation.

The violence is most intense in Haywood County, where an organized Klan chapter has been terrorizing the people for a year. The people "are being brought to a state of pervasive fear," in the opinion of Cornell University professor Douglas Dowd, who visited the county in early June.

(Continued on Page 4)

Shuttlesworth to Retire as ACMHR Head

(By Staff Correspondent)

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.—The Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth announced recently that he would retire in the fall from the post of president of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR). This is the organization he has led since it was organized 10 years ago; ACMHR led the freedom movement in Birmingham over the past decade.

The ACMHR is planning a week-long program October 17-22 to honor Shuttlesworth. At that time, a program for the future—"next steps" in the struggle for freedom in Birmingham—will be projected.

Shuttlesworth said he would continue his activity in the Southern movement as president of SCEF and secretary of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

In announcing his retirement from the Birmingham post, he said: "I have kept the faith so that

now the movement can see victory in the distance. . . . I believe that you will now allow me to step down from the role of leadership and turn it over to the capable hands who are now trained for that purpose."

A recent editorial in the Louisville Defender commented on Mr. Shuttlesworth's retirement as follows:

"The last ten years have been turbulent one for Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth. Through them, he has emerged as a civil rights leader of bravery, determination and distinction. . . . The challenge faced by Rev. Shuttlesworth from 1956 up to 1964 was a tremendous one but never did he falter and because of his sacrifices and the sacrifices of his associates and followers, Birmingham is a better place to live.

"He is a valiant man who fought a valiant fight in trying times."

'Stand Up For What You Believe'

Seven Fast For Peace

(By Staff Correspondent)
NASHVILLE, Tenn. — White people, Jody Palmour decided, have got to do what Southern Negroes have done: they've got to stand up and start making decisions for themselves.

For Palmour, this meant that he had to oppose the war in Vietnam and express his opposition publicly.

So, when the U.S. bombed Hanoi and Haiphong, he went to the War Memorial building in Nashville and began a five-day fast. The War Memorial is across the street from the State Capitol.

Palmour is a young white Southerner who has been active with the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC) and other groups. He was one of seven young people who undertook the fast and round-the-clock vigil in July.

Like many white Southerners of his generation, Palmour's life and thinking have been deeply influenced by the civil rights movement. How this has affected his view of the world and of his relationship to society is explained in a leaflet he issued stating his reason for the fast:

"A Negro, James Meredith," the leaflet said in part, "just marched against fear in Mississippi. There, the people called niggers decided not to be children any more and not to be afraid of deciding things for themselves. They are going to build a society in which rich and poor get the same treatment at the courthouse and in school. Where nobody is forced to be poor and everyone has power to make decisions for himself.

"The Negro civil rights movement is building men out of niggers.

"Right now we're acting like niggers and letting the government do with us what it wants. . . . To be a nigger is to be convinced that you are powerless and haven't the right or the education to decide basic questions for yourself. . . . We allow the government to send us to fight in Vietnam without our ever deciding to have the war. . . .

"This is our country as Southerners and Americans. Every single one of us is involved in this war. Yet the President, who says he must make all the decisions now, hasn't really told us what the war is about. . . .

"Our government representatives should ask us what we think about this war that we have to



WAR MEMORIAL STATUE SHADOWS NASHVILLE FASTERS who protested the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong until local police disrupted the demonstration July 7, four days after it began. Above, the seven fasters are interviewed by wire service reporters. (Photo by John Spragens, Jr.)

fight. They should ask all of us, and not just the people who own factories and are making money on the war.

"In America we've begun to think leaders and experts should decide by themselves questions that concern us all. That means we've let them make niggers out of us.

"Perhaps what we need is to march as Negroes have—a march against the fear that is keeping us from asking questions and stopping this war. . . ."

Palmour and his six fellow-fasters acted as individuals and not as representatives of any organization. But the Nashville Committee for Alternatives to War in Vietnam supported them, and a number of other peace advocates joined their vigil at the War Memorial for brief periods.

The fasters distributed leaflets and had generally friendly discussions with crowds who turned up at the scene. There was only one incident, a short scuffle over a guitar.

But the fast was not allowed

to continue for the planned five days.

The Nashville police force carried a step further the analogy that Palmour had sensed between what he was doing and the actions of civil rights workers. They arrested Palmour and the others with as little respect for legality and civil liberties as police forces all over the South have shown during civil rights demonstrations.

On the fourth day of the fast, police swarmed into the Memorial at 10 p.m. They ordered everyone to leave and arrested nine people, including all seven who were fasting.

A young sailor who had come to argue with the demonstrators was also arrested, but he was released shortly afterwards.

Police treated the demonstrators very roughly. Later, supporters who came to the police station to bail them out were also arrested and charged with loitering. Among those arrested were Mrs. Sherri Myers, director of SCEF's Operation Open Debate, and her husband Bill. Operation Open Debate was started in January to stir debate throughout the South on foreign affairs, especially the war in Vietnam.

But again there was a parallel with civil rights demonstrations. Because a few people had had the courage to stand up for what they believed, many people in Nashville were discussing an issue they had swept under the rug before, this time the issue of war and peace.

Trial of those arrested was set for late in July, but before the date arrived, police announced that they would not prosecute the cases.

Civil Rights Documents

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.—The University of Tennessee has started a collection of historic materials relating to the civil rights movement. The collection will be housed in the Estes Kefauver Library at the university and will be available to students, historians, and other interested persons.

Buford Posey, who himself has made considerable history as one of the first white Mississippians to give open support to the civil rights movement, is in charge of the collection. Posey is from Neshoba County, Miss., and is a member of the SCEF board.

The university is asking that any person who has documents, tape recordings or other material of historic interest on the civil rights movement donate it to the collection. Material may be sent C.O.D. to: Civil Rights Collection, Estes Kefauver Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tenn. 37916.

Book Notes

Letters from Albany Jail

Prison Notes by Barbara Deming (Grossman Publishers, 125-A E. 19th St., N.Y.C. 10003, 1966, 185 pages, \$4.95) is an amazing personal account of an intense, determined struggle by a group of modest heroes who took a stand for peace and the nonviolent way.

The time is 1963, the place, the Albany, Ga., jail, a stopping off place on the Quebec-Washington-Guantanamo Walk for Peace and Freedom. Barbara makes real the agony of fasting for weeks confined in cramped and filthy cages under the thumb of Chief Laurie Pritchett and his deputies.

All they wanted was the right to walk through downtown Albany and hand leaflets to the people. For weeks the city preferred to force-feed the resisters and give vitamin injections rather

than their civil liberties.

She also makes real their victory day when a band of Negro and white men and women, bound together by struggle and suffering, walked out, into the streets of Albany, this time with the respect and support of thousands of people in the Albany Movement and across the country.

This is a book you won't put down until you've read every word. Much of the story was printed serially last year in LIBERATION magazine—this is the first printing in book form.—c.s.

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Clothing Needed

With schools reopening next month, the Appalachian Relief Committee in Pleasant Hill, Tenn. (Cumberland County) is asking for donations of clothing for schoolchildren in distressed areas of the Southern Mountains.

The committee also has made arrangements with various charitable organizations, whereby three children can be outfitted for \$1, fifteen for \$5.

Send goods and money to the Appalachian Relief Committee, Box 113, Pleasant Hill, Tenn. 38578. They ask that the clothing be sent sorted and marked, if possible.

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THE SOUTHERN CONFERENCE EDUCATIONAL FUND, INC.
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Two Court Appearances

The Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth faced court appearances in two different cities in the same week recently, as a result of his civil rights activity.

One case involved an old charge of blocking a sidewalk during a demonstration in Birmingham in 1961. It had been on appeal ever since then and was recently returned to the lower courts by the U.S. Supreme Court. It has now gone back to the federal courts.

The other case was in Cincinnati where Shuttlesworth now has a church. He and others were arrested while picketing the Drake Memorial Hospital this summer protesting employment practices at the hospital.

He was placed on one year's probation—which has been the usual sentence for persons charged in Cincinnati in connection with civil rights activity—and is appealing the decision.

In the meantime, Shuttlesworth said, demonstrations at the hospital are being intensified.



"America owes a bill that she must pay. The bill must be paid, even if it must be paid in blood. If Americans will not yield to non-violence then they are going to have to deal with the nationalists or Black Power." (Photo by Les Jordan)

'It May Be the Last Time'

(Continued from Page 1)

King which exists in the southern rural areas.

Thus, for the time being, SCLC won the opportunity to demonstrate whether non-violence and the traditional movement approach can be a workable factor in bringing about significant changes in the South.

Carmichael and SNCC, which have worked in Mississippi for the last four years, left Grenada.

In parting, the SNCC chairman said: "When they get tired of marching we'll be back with our program."

Williams and SCLC, which had never organized in Mississippi before, began to put their program into effect. Williams called for an 'open city' with full integration into every aspect of the city's life. The city was presented with 51 demands.

To this, Grenada's power structure replied with a determined—no!

Suggs Ingram, the sheriff of the county and a man who both symbolizes and enforces the old order, said "There will be no concessions of any type or degree made to anyone whatsoever."

"They had it so easy during the march," he said, "they thought they could come back and take over. We are not going to put up with that even if it takes force."

—The force came with 66 arrests of Negroes during the first week.

—The force came with the burst of a sub-marine gun fired at two civil rights lawyers, which riddled an SCLC staff car with bullets.

—The force came from the gun butts and billy clubs of state troopers who scattered protesting Negroes.

The movement countered with a 'withdrawal of patronage' campaign which would be called a boycott except that it is illegal to boycott in Mississippi.

Groups of pickets appeared daily at all white-owned stores and fully 90 per cent of Grenada's black people 'withdrew their patronage'.

Public accommodations were tested also and Negroes began showing up at downtown cafes and the library, and swimming in the Grenada lake as the whites withdrew from the water.

On Sundays they attempted to integrate the services at several white churches. When they were denied entrance they held prayer sessions on the front lawn hoping to shame the white Christians.

Then Williams began to use the dangerous tactic of staging nightly marches through both the black and white communities to the Confederate Memorial in the center of town.

The marchers' numbers ranged from 400 to 1000 on different nights.

They filed through the black areas first, clapping, chanting, singing such familiar freedom songs as "Never in the World There Is Too Much Love", "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round", "It May Be the Last Time".

When they got to the white residential areas the clapping and the chanting and the singing gave way to silence and the muffled sounds of feet marching on the concrete.

When they arrived downtown they were greeted by groups of



Weary after a day of picketing and marching, a young girl listens to a speech delivered at a Negro church. (Photo by Les Jordan)

whites clustered on the sidewalk who jeered and hurled curses at the marchers. An occasional missile would be thrown from the crowd.

State troopers and city police stood by with tear gas and sub-machine guns. When the marchers stopped at the courthouse to make their speeches the cops fixed bayonets and held them pointed at the group. The speeches contained much of the same material and were repeated over and over again, night after night.

Williams addressed all of Grenada when he said "It's all over in Grenada, Miss. The Sheriff might as well know, the mayor might as well know, Paul Johnson might as well know, the Ku Klux Klan and the White Citizens' Council might as well know—it is all over in Grenada."

Whites hooted and howled and shouted back that it would never be over in Grenada.

Williams continued: "This country is closer to being destroyed than I ever thought possible. This country is closer to doom than I ever thought possible."

"Negroes are tired. They are tired of being lied to. They are tired of being brutalized in the South. They are tired of being

kept in Ghettos in the North.

"I believe if the black people don't save America she is lost to history. America can tell nobody and no nation anything any more, because nobody believes her any more."

"America owes a bill that she must pay. The bill must be paid even if it must be paid in blood."

"If whites will not yield to non-violence then they are going to have to deal with the nationalists or Black Power. The choice is yours!"

And night after night, day after day, the struggle goes on with white Grenada determined to resist change and black Grenada determined to create change.

How well SCLC's drive for integration in Grenada will succeed and how much change it will bring into the lives of the black people living there, could well decide which direction the entire Movement takes.

Will it continue to work toward integration as a method for correcting the misuses of 'white power' or will it renounce integration altogether, and instead concentrate on building power in the black community as the only realistic counterbalance against white power?

Part of the answer to this question may be found in this little Mississippi town.

Victory for Civil Rights and Academic Freedom

(By Staff Correspondent)

RICHMOND, Va.—A court ruling which helps establish the right of teachers to be full citizens has been handed down in the case of Mrs. Willa Johnson.

The ruling will help protect more than 100,000 Negro teachers all over the South from arbitrary firing for civil rights activity. Most Southern states have no "fair dismissal" laws; in fact, some states threw them out after the 1954 U. S. Supreme Court decision in the School Segregation Cases.

Mrs. Johnson was fired by the Halifax County, N.C. school board in June, 1964 after she and her husband became active in successful attempts to register Negroes to vote in the county.

With the help of John Salter, then a SCEF field organizer in the area, she filed suit in U.S. District Court, asking the court to order her put back to work; enjoin the county school board and other officials from similar firings in the future; and grant her \$250,000 damages.

The case was lost at that level and Mrs. Johnson appealed it to the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which on June 6, 1966 ordered her to be reinstated and her damages determined.

The appeals court said: "The only reasonable inference which may be drawn from the failure to renew Mrs. Johnson's contract in the face of her splendid record of 12 years . . . was the board members' objection to her racial activities."

It is not known if the school board plans to appeal the decision.

Mrs. Johnson was supported in the action by the Halifax Voters' Movement and the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF), which helped spark voter work in the area.

She was represented by Attorney Philip Hirschkop of Alexandria, Va. and his colleagues, SCEF lawyers William Kunstler and Arthur Kinoy. The National Education Association (NEA) supported the case with expert testimony and raised money for the brief.

The case began at a time of intensive work on voter registration in northeastern North Carolina, a Black Belt county.

Mrs. Johnson was deeply involved in the movement—her husband, A. Reed Johnson, had just run for state senator in the 1964 elections and her father, Thomas Cofield, had run for state representative. Head of the Halifax Movement then and now is her uncle, A. C. Cofield.

She was "one of the very few teachers in that whole northeast section of the state who took a positive public stand on civil rights," Salter said recently.

He said the circuit court decision was "a tremendous victory for both civil rights and academic freedom."



Night after night between 400 and 1000 people march through Grenada's black and white areas in efforts to win concessions from the town's power structure. (Photo by Robert Analavege)

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SPEND YOUR MONEY WHERE YOU CAN WORK picketers urge, during a boycott of some white-owned stores in the West Tennessee town of Collierville. The boycott was to support demands that the police force hire two full-time Negro constables. (Photo by John Spragens, Jr.)

Negroes May Win Majority

(Continued from Page 1)

Dowd, who heads the Fayette County Fund, cited two bombings, one shooting, numerous cross burnings and threatening letters, in a letter to assistant attorney general John J. Doar. Since then, the home of one candidate has been burned; civil rights workers' cars have been shot at.

The people feel isolated and afraid; only four candidates could be found there to run for Magistrates' Court, compared to 21 in Fayette.

Although the only organized Klan activity to date is in Haywood County, a continuing history of anti-Negro violence forms a backdrop to the struggle for civil rights in West Tennessee.

During the last six months a Tipton resident who had enrolled his daughter in an integrated school was beaten so badly he lost the sight of one eye; a Fayette County Negro was shot and killed while handcuffed by a constable in Hardeman, who has not been prosecuted for the murder; one of the Negroes who boycotted white-owned stores in Collierville, a few miles outside of Fayette County, was shot at by a white cafe owner and later charged with disturbing the peace.

White economic retaliation is as old as the Movement itself; it began in 1959 when Negroes in Fayette and Haywood who registered to vote were evicted from their land.

Because of this and events since then, "the people in Haywood feel they've been sold out," Fry says. Outsiders came in, organized, and left, and the local people who had to stay behind got beat up and lost their jobs."

Disillusionment is more acute because last year Brownsville was the center of a flourishing, if short-lived, movement. Organizers for the West Tennessee Voters' Project moved into Haywood, Tipton and Hardeman counties from their original base in Fayette County to work toward the 1966 county elections. (The Project was begun in 1964 by Cornell students as the Cornell-Tompkins County Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Fayette County.)

Two large marches were held in Brownsville after a civil rights worker had his jaw broken during a swimming pool test-in, but the movement dissolved after local students returned to school and all but two project workers went home.

The Klan, which had held its first big rally the night of the second civil rights march, was left unopposed, although the two full-time rights workers succeeded during the winter in opening about 200 jobs in local factories to Negroes.

Issues such as inequality of job opportunities and inadequate schooling have now taken precedence over demonstrations to open public accommodations, for both local and outside workers.

Last year was the first that Negro children were admitted to white schools in Fayette and Haywood Counties: only 44 in Fayette, although more wanted to enter, and 65 out of a total school population of 5,000 in Haywood.

Fayette parents brought suit against the school board last year and the Federal government withheld funds from it. Indications are that the board is now prepared to follow the government's guidelines for desegregation and the funds will probably be released this fall.

Another advance is that split terms, where the Negro children take their summer break in September rather than July to help pick cotton, ended this year in both counties.

"The thing which will determine the future of Fayette County Negroes is getting better schools," says Mrs. Viola McFerren, who has been active in the movement here since it began.

"The people here have nothing to do—and they don't know how to do things even if they have the desire. That's why the people are so poor. We need education for the people and for the adults as well. Then we need jobs."

One cause of unemployment in West Tennessee is under-education but a more basic one is the strangle-hold whites have on the land and the economy. They have waged systematic, open campaigns to get the Negroes out ever since voter registration began. Even Negroes who could afford to buy their own land in Haywood County can find no one who will sell it to them.

Cotton operations have been mechanized so that white farmers need not depend on their workers. Now Negroes can no longer find more than an average of four months' agricultural work a year in West Tennessee. In Mississippi sharecropping has given way to day labor. In West Tennessee the same transition is underway.

This has resulted in a huge exodus to Northern cities from Fayette and Haywood, Black Belt counties whose economies are dependent on cotton. Now only a small percentage of the Negro population in the two counties is between the ages of 18 and 45.

With this decline in numbers has come the possibility that in the near future Negroes may no longer form a majority in these counties and no longer have the power to choose a local government to represent them.

Whether, even now, there are more Negroes registered to vote than whites is uncertain. Local officials have not been very helpful about releasing official figures, which in any case are notoriously inaccurate.

Organizers estimate that in Fayette and Haywood, where the over-all population is split fairly evenly between Negroes and whites, there are about equal numbers of voters. In the last presidential election Goldwater polled 2,900 votes to Johnson's 2,600 in Fayette County. This is being taken as an indication of the relative strength of the two blocs.

About 40 per cent of the registered voters in Tipton and Hardeman counties are Negro. In Tipton, three Negroes are running for constable, one for county judge and one for circuit court, and eight are running as magistrates. Only one candidate is running for quarterly court in Hardeman.)

In any case, organizers feel that curbing election irregularities and helping the people to mark their ballots correctly will have a more significant result on the outcome than merely registering more Negro than white voters.

Local leaders say that even if only some of the candidates win, even if there is no Negro majority in any of the four counties, the election of a few Negro representatives will mean a great deal.

"Just the fact that the poor people are represented will make a difference," says Mrs. McFerren.

"It is our people who suffer from poor roads and schools, from the lack of jobs.

"If people from the core of poverty can speak out and pinpoint some of the things the court has failed to do in the past, it will make a difference."

North Nashville Project Begins Community Work

(By Staff Correspondent)

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—A children's summer program and tutorial sessions are the opening wedges being used to organize a small "medium poverty area" in the northwest section of Nashville.

Closer to the kind of anti-poverty organizing that is being carried on in Northern cities than to traditional Southern anti-segregation activity, it is the city's first community organizing project.

Its members see it as a new beginning for the flagging Nashville civil rights movement, and as a way to help people in the neighborhood organize to make the decisions that influence their lives.

"We have to relate politics to issues the people are immediately concerned about—even if it doesn't seem to us like great, sweeping social change. Later, we can build to something more basic," says Ronda Stilley, one of four full-time workers on the North Nashville project.

Because schools in the area are turning out "kids in the third grade who can't read at all" and because a tutoring project would involve a large number of college students and give them a chance to meet people in their homes, they decided to start with that.

Now, several months after the program began, it has been transformed into a day camp involving about 40 children.

Center of their activities is a huge lot the parents cleared for a playground, after appealing without success to the local councilman to make good on his election promise to provide somewhere for their children to play.

Project members plan to help the people organize around this and other local issues, at first on a block level. Eventually a community union may grow out of one of these groups.

But intensive work among the adults won't begin for several more months, until the people have come to know and trust the project workers and the workers know more about the real needs of the community.

"I'm convinced it takes a year just to get into the community," says Fred Brooks, a Tennessee State student who is coordinating the project after working for the last few years with CORE in Louisiana and SNCC in Mississippi.

Already, however, parents' meetings held to discuss the camp have expanded into far-reaching discussions of problems which trouble them.

"Nashville's problems are getting closer to those in Northern cities, where at the government level there is a theoretical acceptance of integration but on a practical level that's not the case at all," says Dave Kotelchuck, a Vanderbilt professor who gives a weekly physics lesson to the older children.

The project's members are mainly university students and teachers who have been involved in local civil rights and peace work. They are not affiliated with any larger group, and have raised their operating expenses independently.

They switched to community organizing rather than continuing to fight for desegregation and more skilled jobs for the better trained Negroes, as they had in the past, because they felt they were ignoring their obligation to the poorer people, who lacked job skills.

"Most of us didn't come from the neighborhoods we wanted to deal with—we're middle class and we didn't really know how to proceed," Kotelchuck said. "We want the people to tell us what the problems are, and we'll work to help them solve them."

Another important difference between the organizers and the community is that the community is almost all Negro, while about half the project workers are white.

With the recent emphasis on the importance of Black communities being organized by Negroes, the question of whether to go into the area was debated hotly.

"We agreed that Negro workers could be most effective in Black communities," Miss Stilley said. "But we see the process as being one of stages: in some of the more basic stages the Black-white issue is less important than filling basic needs such as education.

"We're making it possible for Negroes in our group to do things that they wouldn't have been free to do otherwise."



A PLAYGROUND CLEARED BY THEIR PARENTS is the scene of a weekly physics lesson for North Nashville children. Their program also includes lessons in Negro history and mathematics, field trips and movies. (Photo by John Spragens, Jr.)