A Chance for Power In Fayette Election

By JOY FENSTON

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.

Three elections are the real key to taking power in the area, for in West Tennessee it is the Magnistrates' 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 1962.

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 county elections fair. 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 is to bring out up to 60 percent of those registered to vote—in 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.

CANDIDATES IN THE WEST TENNESSEE ELECTIONS discuss campaign at a pre-election meeting. A total of 59 persons are running for county offices in the four counties. (Photo by John Sprague, 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 26.

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 registered voters turn out 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.

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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 activities.

In Nashville, he appeared on an old charge of blocking a sidewalk during a demonstration in Birmingham in 1961. It had been on appeal ever since. He 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 check. He and others were arrested while picketing the Drake Memorial Hospital this summer protesting employment practices at the hospital. He is scheduled on one year's probation—which has been the usual sentence for persons charged in Cincinnati in connection with civil rights activity—after pleading the decision.

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

Seven Fast For Peace

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 fasting are interviewed by AP wire service reporter. (Photo by John Sprague, Jr.)

This war. Yet the President, who's single one of us is involved in the war, must make all the decisions and not just us. That means we've let them make niggers out of us.

"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 ever 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扰乱. Among those arrested were Mrs. Shirl Myers, deputy chairman of SCEP's Operation Open Debate, and her husband Bob. Operation Open Debate was started in January to stir debate throughout the South on foreign affairs, especially the war in Vietnam.

But after 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 case.

The Southern Patriot

The Southern Patriot is published monthly except July by the Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc. at 150 Twelfth Avenue North, Nashville, Tenn. 37203. SCEP is dedicated to ending discrimination based on race, creed, color, national origin, or economic condition. Editorial offices, 415 Virginia Avenue, Nashville, Tenn. 37207; business offices, 3120 W. Broadway, Louisville, Ky. 40212. Twelve-cent costs a copy, $2 a year. Second-class postage paid at Nashville, Tenn.

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Civil Rights Documents

Letters from Albany Jail

Palmour corresponded with the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC) and other groups. He was one of seven Negro civil rights workers arrested in Albany, Ga., in July 1963. He was one of seven who had refused to stop their 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 reasons for the fast:

"A Negro, James Meredith," the leaflet read. "This is not a personal attack against my race. I feel the people who must do what Southern Negroes have got to do what Southern Negroes have got to do..."

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"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*

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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 change in the South.

Mrs. Joshua and SNGC, which have worked in Mississippi for the last four years, left Grenada.

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

Williams and SCLC, which had never organized in Mississippi before, became a major factor in that area. Even before the March, Mississippi's main Negro newspaper, the Jackson Free Press, was reported in Washington as saying that the state's decision was "too late for the movement."

The movement centered 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 night 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 Be" , "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 whites clustered on the sidewalks 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 submachine guns. When the marchers stopped at the courthouse to make their speeches the cops fixed bayonets and held them pointed at the groups. The speech 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 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.

William 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 Ghettoes 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 anymore, because nobody believes her anymore."

*Amercia 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 misuse of "white power" or will it renounce integration altogether, and steadfastly 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

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. Wilie Alsop.

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 throw them out after the 1964 U.S. Supreme Court decision in the School Segregation Cases.

Mrs. Alsop was fired by the Halifax County, N.C., school board in June, 1964 after she and her husband became active in successful voter registration campaigns.

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 got back to work; to 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. Alsop 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. Alsop'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.

She was represented by Attorney Philip Hirschkop of Alexandria, Va., and his colleagues, SCEF lawyers William Kunster and Arthur Kinney. 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 Holt 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 his father, Thomas Colfax, had run for state representative. Head of the Halifax Voter Movement then and now is her uncle, A. C. Colfax.

She was "one of the very few teachers in that whole northeastern 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 1800 people march through Grenada's black and white areas in efforts to win concessions from the town's power structure. (Photo by Robert Analageve)
Negroes May Win Majority

(Continued from Page 1)

Dowed, who heads the Fayette County Fund, ched two bombings, one shooting, numerous cross burnings and threatening letters, in a letter to as- sistant attorney general John J. Doar. Since then, the home of one candidate has been burned; civil burnings and threatening letters, in a letter to the

THE SOUTHERN PATRIOT

SOUTH

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—A children's summer program and tutorial service has been launched in the community of Nashville, Tennessee, as a way to help people in the neighborhood organize to make the decisions that influence their lives.

"We have to make policies to change the lives of the people, and a few of the most concerned about—even if it doesn't seem to us like great, sweeping social change. Later, we can build to something more basic," said Dave Stilley, director of the North Nashville Project.

Negroes in schools are in the area turning "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 trans- formed into a day camp involving about 60 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," John Fry, a local organizer, said of the North Nashville Project after working for the last few years in 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 more acute sense of integration but on a practical level that's not the case at all," said Dave Stilley, a Vanderbilt professor who gives a weekly physhics 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," Miss Stilley said. "SNCC wouldn't do it, CORE wouldn't do it. So we set out to tell us what the problems are, and well work to help them solve them.".

Another important difference between the organizers and the community leaders is that they make no attempt to find ways of working with the local officials, who have not been very helpful about releasing information. In West Tennessee the local people who had to stay behind got beaten on a job site in Haywood County."

Another advance is that split terms, where the Negroes are running as magistrates, for both local and outside workers.

During the last six months a Tipton resident who was beaten badly he lost the sight of one eye; a Negro was shot and killed while working on a highway; a Negro was shot at by a white cafe owner and later charged with disturbing the peace.

Tipton and Hardeman counties is Negro. In the local people who had to stay behind got beaten up and lost the sight of one eye; a Negro was shot and killed while working on a highway; a Negro was shot at by a white cafe owner and later charged with disturbing the peace.

One cause of unemployment in West Tennessee is under-education but a more basic one is the struggle for 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 allowances have been mechanized so that white farmers need not depend on their workers. 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. New Negroes who are better educated than the Negro population in the 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 white is uncertain. Local officials have not been very helpful about releasing figures, which in any case are notoriously inaccurate.

Organizers estimate that in Fayette and Haywood counties, where the overall population is split fairly evenly between Negroes and whites, there are about equal numbers of voters. In the last presidential election Goldwater polled 3,500 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 the 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 magistrate in Hardeman County.

In any case, organizers feel that curbing elec tion irregularities and helping the people to mark their ballots correctly will have a more significant result on the outcome than merely registering more Negro 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 repre sented will make the difference," says Mrs. McFar ren.

"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 dif ference."