

# NORTH + SOUTH

Southern Christian Leadership Conference Staff News, February, 1967

## SCLC MOVES AHEAD ON NEW IDEAS AND PROGRAMS

In addition to our regular, traditional activities like the Citizenship Education Program, voter registration and direct action, SCLC is moving into some new areas of work.

We're putting new emphasis on economic development and housing, through such projects as Albert Turner's organizing of evicted tenant farmers, the Grenada co-operative super-market, and self-help housing.

Here is a new report on the work of SCLC:

### Evicted Alabama Farmers Rally Together

For many months, white politicians and landowners in the ten-county Alabama Black Belt have been driving sharecropping Negro families off the land. The excuse is that the white farms are becoming mechanized and going into new types of farming.

But the real reason, says SCLC's Albert Turner, is that "the politicians are planning to drive us out of this area so they can be in a voting majority."

Now the Negro farmers are fighting back by organizing co-operative efforts. SCLC and other groups, including the Southern Regional Council, the National Sharecroppers Fund and the Citizens Crusade Against Poverty, got together with the farmers to form the Southwest Alabama Co-Operative Association. Federal officials and farm experts have helped with planning.

The cruel evictions can boomerang on the white folks. As Mr. Turner reports, "We plan to hire those farmers who have been evicted and we feel we could improve the total income of the Negro tremendously. We also would need a considerable amount less land." Thus, the small amount of land owned by Negroes in the area, is being converted to vegetable farming, and evicted Negro families will share in the new farm work.

How can this pay off? Albert Turner writes that the farmers "have been raising vegetable crops for several years but were not able to get very much for them. Take okra, for example: The farmers had been selling okra for 2 1/2 cents per pound. Now we have been able to find a market that would buy it for 6 and 7 cents a pound. You can see this is almost three times what they had been receiving. As a result of this the local buyers are being forced to go up in price or out of business. We will be able to grow peas for about twice the original price."

The new farm co-op has been meeting almost nightly to organize and find ways to get seed and fertilizer, and trucks for hauling. Because of the higher price offers for the co-op's vegetables, Mr. Turner says, "the local canning plant is getting afraid. This is the first time the plant has had competition."

The Black Belt farmers are finding that in unity, through their co-op, there is strength.

Rev. Fred C. Bennette, National Director of SCLC's Operation Breadbasket, and his fellow clergymen (including some members of the SCLC Board of Directors) have been very busy setting up new projects.

He and an Atlanta delegation, including Board Member Rev. Roland Smith, motored to New Orleans to organize ministers for a Breadbasket program.

Next, Rev. Bennette drove with another group to Tallahassee, Fla., and met with the local Breadbasket clergymen, including Board Member Rev. C. K. Steele, on plans to get more jobs in the Florida government.

Dr. Steele already was working on organizing migrant farm workers in Florida. He represented SCLC at a recent conference with union officials in Miami to plan an organizing drive.

Meanwhile, in Atlanta, Breadbasket delegations have been pressuring State government agencies for new and upgraded jobs. Rev. Bennette says the Atlanta chapter also soon will start a program for jobs in the big downtown banks. Breadbasket is also looking into job possibilities at insurance companies which have business through the national Medicare program.

Most recently, Rev. Bennette went with Atlanta ministers to help establish a Breadbasket affiliate in Mobile, Ala. Coming up: a state-wide organizational meeting in Savannah, Ga. on Feb. 16.

And on Feb. 23, the first Operation Breadbasket program in the New York area will be launched in Brooklyn.

Breadbasket won a recent victory in Cincinnati, under the leadership of SCLC's regional representative, Rev. Otis Moss.

Three SCLC men are leading Breadbasket negotiations for government and industry jobs in Virginia: Rev. Curtis Harris, a vice president of SCLC; Milton Reid, a regional representative, and Herbert Coulton, Director of Affiliates.

In Louisville, under the direction of Board Member Rev. A. D. King (Dr. King's brother), Breadbasket is "moving steadily along in acquiring jobs at the city, state, county and federal levels," Rev. Bennette says.

Breadbasket has been asked to set up chapters in Cleveland and Akron, Ohio, and in St. Louis. The national office is also advising the chapter in Minneapolis on its program.

In Tuscaloosa, Ala., Rev. T. Y. Rogers (another Board Member) has been working on Breadbasket jobs in the dairy and bread industries. He is helped by SCLC's E. Randel T. Osburn.

Another Southern project for Breadbasket is an organizing drive, with union co-operation, of textile workers. In Charlotte, N. C. at federal hearings on discrimination in the textile industry, SCLC was represented last month by Rev. Bennette, Rev. J. E. Boone of Atlanta, and our Carolina field secretaries, Ben Mack and Golden Frinks.

Up in Chicago, dramatic Breadbasket victories have been followed by demands that government agencies deposit some of their funds in Negro financial institutions. Rev. Jesse Jackson heads the drive. Negro businessmen who benefited from Breadbasket agreements in Chicago have been helping with fund-raising and promotion of the Negro market.

(3)

### Grenada: A Fire, A Supermarket, An Election

On Sunday night, Jan. 22, fire destroyed or damaged much of the Bell Flower Baptist Church, headquarters of SCLC in Grenada. The staff immediately set up a new office to keep the comprehensive Grenada project going.

Biggest current effort is an election campaign for U. S. Gillon, the Freedom Candidate in a special city council election Monday, Feb. 13. Registered Negroes in Grenada are outnumbered by registered whites, but SCLC has an intensive, last-minute effort in hopes of an upset.

The Negro community's co-operative supermarket in Grenada is now under construction. Hosea Williams has been there when time permitted to arrange for training of management and employees at the store and freeing funds for the co-op which have been tied up in court by segregationist businessmen.

Last month Robert Johnson of the Grenada staff was the victim of Mississippi-style justice. He visited a trial in which the judge called the defendants "niggers" and their lawyers from Jackson "Northerners and Jews." Robert stepped into the courtroom as he had often done before, and the judge immediately said that Robert was in the wrong part of the room. He had Robert arrested for contempt of court, and when an SCLC lawyer complained, the lawyer was arrested for contempt.

### Chicago: Voter Registration and Tenant Unions

The Freedom Movement's voter registration campaign ended Jan. 31. Despite the worst blizzard in history and obstacles put up by the political machine, more than 30,000 Negroes were registered. Some SCLC staffers on Hosea Williams' political team are remaining in Chicago for political education leading up to municipal elections on Feb. 28.

One of the good reports from Chicago is that SCLC staff members, including Sam Smith and Meredith Gilbert, have helped unions representing more than 10,000 slum dwellers to win more than a dozen collective bargaining contracts with landlords.

### Housing

In SCLC's pilot co-op housing project in Chicago, we are now looking for properties to buy and rehabilitate for 500 apartment units.

Jim Robinson, a housing expert, in the meantime is preparing similar self-help housing programs to be sponsored by SCLC in the South.

### Wilcox County Antipoverty Project

This program of education and training for families of seasonal farm workers in Alabama is in full swing. Directed by Mew-soong Li, the program has adult classes (taught by professional staff and specially trained local adults), ten children's day-care centers, and ten youth centers.

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NOTE: Dr. King will be returning the end of this month from Jamaica, where he has been working on his new book. Harper & Row have set a publication date of May 24.

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PERSONALITIES

When Bernard Lee was offered goat meat by friends in Jamaica, he turned green. "When I eat eggs, "Bernard says, "I don't think about the chicken. When I eat beef, I don't think about the cow. But when I saw that goat meat, I couldn't stop thinking about that old goat. ". . . .

When SCLC's John Reynolds enrolled at the integrated (token-style) Shelton Trade School in Tuscaloosa last month, he soon got 'help' from a white friend. Somehow, John's clothing "mysteriously" caught fire. The white student whacked John to put out the fire. It was a most vigorous, but (we hope) nonviolent whack. John wasn't burned, but his shirt and sweater were ruined. . . . .

Veterans of the original Nashville sit-ins recently had a reunion in Chicago. Those present included James Bevel, Bernard Lafayette and C. T. Vivian. . . . .

When LBJ yakked to Congress about "crime" but said little about poverty and civil rights, Rev. Abernathy told the press: "It would have been better had he stayed in Texas and tended to his barbecue. ". . . . .

Coretta Scott King has been named Atlanta's "Bronze Woman of the year." She received this honor at the 21st annual awards program of Iota Phi Lambda. The sorority also selected her as "Woman of the Year in Fine Arts. ". . . . .

Both Martin and Coretta King were among the world's "most admired" men and women in the Gallup Poll. . . . .

Welcome to three new SCLC baby boys: Dan and Juanita Harrell are the parents of a boy in Camden, Ala. . . . James Harlem Gibson, Jr. weighed in at 7lb. 4oz. on Jan 30. in Alabama. According to his parents, SCLC's James and Terry, the boy announced: "I am ready to start fighting for the Freedom of my family. ". . . . . In Washington, D. C., on Jan. 19, Reuben E. Adams II arrived. He weighed 7 pounds. His mother, Victoria, will be back working as SCLC field secretary in Mississippi in March. . . . .

Freedom Singer Emory Harris was married Feb. 4 in Albany, Ga., to Mary Alice Hightower. . . . .

The popular Miss Mary Frances Oatts of our Finance Office is in the hospital. Address: G. M. H. I., Cottage 1, 1256 Briarcliff Rd., N. E. Atlanta. Phone: 876-9138. . . . .

Last fall Prue Robertson, who is now at our anti-poverty project in Wilcox County, made a speech at St. Ann's Episcopal Church at her home in Old Lyme, Conn. Result: Church members sent six boxes of children's books, toys and clothing to Wilcox County during the holidays. . . . .

Terrie Randolph's mother and sister were recent guests at Freedom House. . . . .

Rozell White has re-joined the SCLC Print Shop. He is a camera man and assistant to William Whitsett, foreman. . . . .

Charles Clarke is now in charge of the mailing and supply room. . . . .

Assigned to Grenada after the Chicago voter registration project: Lester Hankerson, Leon Hall, Cottonreader, Willie Leon, Dana Swan. . . . .

In Grenada they joined Robert Johnson, George Shinoster, Willie Kincaid, Major Wright, Edna Woods, Joanne Taylor, Jim Bullock, Bruce Hartford. . . . .

Staying on in Chicago for political education: Hosea, Ben Clarke, J. T. Johnson, Pam Gomez, Robert Sims, Richard Smith. . . . .

At this writing, Atlanta is blanketed with a 1/8 inch snow, and Dora McDonald says we'd better close down the office. . . . .

Albert Turner, our man in the Alabama Black Belt counties, has built a new house for his wife and children. That's right--Albert built it himself. He's putting the finishing touches on it now

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(5)

## WHO'S WHO IN SCLC

Starting this month, each issue of North & South will feature a few SCLC staff members--the people who are making history by making the Movement.

### HENRY BROWNLEE

Henry Brownlee is always smiling. Even when disowning the nickname "TRASH," he replies "My name is HENRY" with a broad grin.

He is one of SCLC's most diligent and quietest field subsistence workers, and it is sometimes difficult to find out what goes on under Henry's mysterious good nature. But a bit of digging turns up the soul of an artist.

Next to the Movement, the love of Henry's life is his art. He recently received a Certificate in Fine Arts from the Washington School of Art, after completing an intensive correspondence course. Henry's dramatic posters and handbills have been seen in all the projects where he has worked: Savannah, Selma, Montgomery, Birmingham, Hale County, Ala., Waynesboro, S. C., Williamsburg, Va., Grenada, and most recently, Chicago.

Henry joined the Movement in the 1960 lunch counter sit-ins by the Savannah NAACP Youth Council. After two years at Savannah State College, he jumped into Hosea Williams' Savannah drive--and he's been with Hosea and SCLC ever since, despite two jailings and numerous harrowing marches.

But the citizens of Savannah and Montgomery, and Henry's co-workers, remember him most for his unique method of getting people to the court house for registration. What fond memories we have of Henry and the Ballot Bus! There have been two generations of Ballot Buses. The first came to an untimely end in Savannah. The second, a huge 1949 Packard limousine with slogans boldly painted all over its tired old body, served in Savannah and Montgomery. He wouldn't let anyone else drive the Ballot Bus; he'd sit behind the big steering wheel, smiling and singing, and the amazed and amused registrants sat WAY, WAY in the back.

We're sure Savannah and Montgomery never saw anything else like it. We know that Henry loved the old Bus, and grieved when it finally had to be buried in a certain junkyard in Montgomery.

But Henry is still going strong with his own special brand of voter registration. And we're sure it has a lot to do with that winning smile.

Henry says he hopes by his work in the Movement, something good will come to mankind, but he's not looking for anything for himself. This is evident to all who know his quiet dedication and untiring spirit. He would probably be embarrassed by praise, but we know he has made a great contribution. No one ever hears him complain. If he sees a problem, he sets out to conquer it--and usually does.

Now 26, Henry was asked recently about his marital status. He replied, "Say I'm a bachelor. Wait a minute, better say available bachelor."

### HATTIE BROOKS

The scene was hectic, almost frantic. Work was piling up. There were dozens of chores--organizing, paper work, minute details.

Selma? Grenada? Chicago? Nope. It was the SCLC Finance Office, and right in the middle of it was a calm and gracious lady, Mrs. Curtis Brooks.

Mrs. Brooks answered a personal plea from an SCLC friend and came to help on March 1, 1966.

Since then, she has been one of the seven staff members who do the critical and painstaking duties involving something called money.

Hattie Brooks' most important job is to write up receipts for donations to SCLC, making sure that every contributor receives our thanks. In busiest times, well over 100 contributions can arrive in one day. She also prepares contributions for deposit in the bank and serves as clerk-typist.

Mrs. Brooks is a native of Milledgeville, Ga., where she graduated from high school. She

(OVER)

attended an extension of Georgia State College for more than two years and went on to become an elementary school teacher in Milledgeville. Later she attended Reid Business School in Atlanta.

She now lives in Atlanta with her husband, who is a truck driver. In her spare time, Hattie Brooks likes to sew; indeed, she makes most of her own clothes. So that explains her fine grooming.

Mrs. Brooks is a member of the Union Baptist Church and of the November Birth Month Club.

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### WILLIE MAE STEELE

Girls, if you want that slender look of Willie Mae Steele, try this two-meal-a-day diet: For breakfast, biscuits, a little syrup, a bit of fatback, and coffee with no sugar. For dinner, peas, corn-bread and water; a chicken back permissible on Sunday only.

That's what Willie Mae got in the Grenada County Jail last October. She and more than 100 protesting demonstrators had been jailed for protesting against brutality and abuse of Negro children in Grenada's integrated schools.

Demonstrating against Southern school systems is not new to Willie Mae. That's how she came to the Movement. During the Selma-Montgomery March in 1965, she dropped out of high school to boycott a segregated school in Montgomery, her home town. Then she joined the March.

Willie Mae went to Atlanta for the SCLC SCOPE project that summer, and since then has been assigned as a subsistence worker in Montgomery, Waycross, Ga., and Grenada. She was on the Meredith March and was among those who were tear-gassed last August in Grenada. She has worked on voter registration, youth work, community leadership, and direct nonviolent action.

Recently she returned to school in Atlanta where she lives with the Hosea Williams family and helps SCLC when studies permit.

Miss Steele is the oldest of four children of Mr. & Mrs. Douglas Steele of Montgomery. Her younger brother and sisters are students at home, and veterans of the Selma March, too.

6  
Willie Mae is a stylish young woman, but always attuned to the Movement. The other day we saw her in a blue miniskirt, white stockings--and a "Freedom Blouse" (blue denim work shirt)!

### CAROLE GRIFFIN

On her first visit to the South for our Frogmore retreat in November, Carole Griffin was impressed by the land and open spaces. She decided she would like to move South some day.

Carole grew up in crowded Chicago. She believes that the purpose of life is to "BE a person, and you can't BE one in a 16-story building."

Miss Griffin also was surprised to find that she was not afraid on her trip South. She had experienced real fear only one other time--in the North last summer, when white mobs burned cars and stoned demonstrators like Carole on the open-housing marches in Chicago.

About a year ago Carole went to a student retreat organized by SCLC's Jimmy Wilson. She reflected on her education. Carole had been salutatorian at her high school in Chicago in 1964, yet she had a very hard time with studies in college. A friend of hers who had been valedictorian at a Negro high school had found the same difficulty in college. Carole began thinking about the general inadequacy of education for Negro children, and wondering what would happen to Negro students who did not have a fine academic record like her own.

For SCLC in Chicago, she helped organize a high school delegation which met with Mayor Daley, and served at our headquarters office. Most recently she has worked with Chicago Operation Breadbasket and the new SCLC Department of Special Projects and Economic Development.

Carole is a subsistence worker and lives with her family, which includes three brothers. In the future, she hopes to combine the study of research mathematics with "something dealing directly with people." And she's dreaming about the beautiful open space she found in the South.

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