

NORTH + SOUTH

Southern Christian Leadership Conference Staff News, March 1967

WHO SAID THE DIRECT ACTION MOVEMENT IS "DEAD"?

Some people are telling themselves that the Movement, particularly direct nonviolent action, is "dead." SCLC has news for them. Direct action is very much alive and as necessary as ever. Here are some recent actions taken by SCLC and Affiliates:

Louisville: Rev. A. D. King and SCLC staff led a "sit-in" in the City Council meeting room March 14 after the Board of Aldermen failed to act on open housing. Rev. King, Hosea Williams, staff members and citizens were dragged outside by police and some demonstrators were treated brutally. The Kentucky Christian Leadership Conference is conducting marches and protests against segregated housing. Our staffers who are helping are J. T. Johnson, Henry Brownlee, Phil Goober, Mike Whitman, Mike Bibler, and Winters Knox.

Atlanta: Rev. Martin Luther King Sr., Rev. Fred Bennette, Rev. J. E. Boone, Rev. J. C. Ward and their fellow Breadbasket ministers have started picketing at a downtown shoe store which discriminates and humiliates its Negro employees.

Grenada: R. B. Cottonreader reports an intensive Easter shopping blackout and regular downtown demonstrations against segregationist white merchants. Despite the recent burnings of Bell Flower Baptist Church and Vincent Chapel A. M. E. Church -- both of which were SCLC headquarters -- the Grenada County Freedom Movement has excellent support in the Negro community. Dr. King applauded Edna Woods when she told the press after the Vincent Chapel fire: "If they burn down all our churches, they still won't turn us 'round!"

Chicago: Meredith Gilbert, his wife and two children created their own action movement by taking an apartment March 1 in the all-white Belmont-Cragin area. The Gilberts have had mild harrassment, including a brick thrown through a window, but Meredith says some neighbors are very friendly, and he even held a "workshop" with local whites in a tavern across the street. Meantime, Meredith and James Orange are co-ordinating plans to move Negro families into five target areas where SCLC marched last summer.

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Washington, D. C.: Dr. King and Rev. Walter Fauntroy, head of the SCLC chapter in the nation's capital, led a parade in the Shaw community March 12 to rally support for rebuilding the area.

Jacksonville, Florida: Catherine Seawright and Margaret Carter tell us that our Jacksonville Affiliate in recent months has protested against lack of sidewalks along busy streets in Negro school areas. The Affiliate also is working for full integration of the police force, fair treatment of welfare recipients, and better housing for the Negro community.

Virginia: The Danville Christian Progressive Association, another SCLC Affiliate, began a three-month voter registration drive March 1. Leading this and other SCLC activities in Virginia are: Herbert V. Coulton, Director of Affiliates; Rev. Curtis Harris, an SCLC vice president and head of the Hopewell Improvement Association; David Gunter, head of the Petersburg Improvement Association; Dr. Milton A. Reid, SCLC regional representative who is organizing an Affiliate in Norfolk; and Rev. Lawrence Campbell, head of the Danville Affiliate.

Mobile, Alabama: Mrs. Annie B. McGrue, after attending an SCLC Citizenship Education Program workshop in February, returned home to Mobile, was elected president of a tenant union in a housing project, and began organizing tenants to protest against high rents, invasions of privacy and other abuses.

Birmingham: The Alabama Christian Movement has started a two-month period of mourning for 10 Negroes killed by law officers in the area of Birmingham and Prattville during the last 14 months. Marches, mass meetings and a "don't buy" campaign are being held to protest the deaths. Rev. J. E. Lowery (a Board member), Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth and Mrs. Georgia Price of our Birmingham Affiliate are among the leaders.

Atlanta: Some of our office workers and field staff represented SCLC in a demonstration at the State Capitol March 7 when George and Lurleen Wallace addressed the Legislature. Rev. King Sr., using a cane to support a weak ankle, led the SCLC group. Former field staffers Jean Jackson, Melzenia ("Cookie") Cook and Terrie Randolph were especially happy to get out of the office and back into action. Lester Hankerson, Willie D. Leon, Willie Tabb and Leon Hall were marshalls.

The annual meeting of the SCLC Board of Directors will be in Louisville, Kentucky, March 29 and 30.

If you would like to raise funds for an Affiliate and SCLC, you may order recordings of the March on Washington and the March on Detroit from our Atlanta office, 334 Auburn Ave., N. E. SCLC receives \$1 for each record sold. Affiliates can raise funds by charging more than \$1 and keeping the balance.

C. E. P. and Negro History

"IF YOU CAN TAKE DIGNITY FROM PEOPLE, YOU'VE GOT IT MADE"

(Editor's note: Anyone who goes to one of SCLC's Citizenship schools is inspired by the experience. And one of the most inspiring moments is a session on Negro history, taught by Benjamin Mack of our Citizenship Education Staff. The notes below were taken directly from Ben's lesson. We can not perfectly re-create this session, because it was enlivened by class participation and Ben's own dynamic teaching technique. However, we hope you get some appreciation and understanding from these notes.)

Why are we interested in Negro history? For one thing, because we are Negroes. We want to know the contributions Negroes have made to the world. Negro history inspires us to do better. It gives us pride and dignity.

In almost all American textbooks, nothing has ever been held up for children to respect except white people. A Negro child gets the feeling that he is not worth anything.

In textbooks, Negroes are shown as happy-go-lucky slaves, sold on the auction block or picking cotton. Africans are pictured as nearly naked people, often boiling missionaries.

What does this kind of false image do to the Negro? It robs him of human dignity. And if you can take dignity from people, you've got it made.

But what is the truth about Negroes? Africans once had a great civilization. It fell, and this teaches us that if America doesn't do something about its problems, American civilization will fall.

The bad things that happened to Negroes happened not in Africa, but in America. History books say the African was fooled into coming to America. The truth is that Negroes were kidnapped from Africa, and most of them did not want to come here. Many escaped the slave ships, some jumped overboard, and many revolted and took over the ships. And this tells us something: The Negro had his own mind. What we are fighting today is the notion that the Negro does not have his own mind.

How was the Negro kept down in America? White people took him from his native land. They took away his language -- but he picked up English, without even going to school! They kept him in fear. And they called him a Negro, not an African. This was a planned situation, to dissociate the slave from his land, his language, his government. When people have no government, they have no protection, and other people who are backed by government are strong enough to do anything they want.

By doing these things to the Negro, white people took away our identity and said we were nothing. Today when you see a man from Africa sticking his chest out, you know he hasn't lost his dignity. He knows his identity, but ours was taken away in America.

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Now let us think about what this has done to us. What did the "Colored" and "White" signs say to you? They said, "You are inferior," and you were taught to accept this. But did you like it? (Class: "No!") Could you do anything about it? (Class: "No!") Why? Because of the government. If the government did not support segregation, we would not have it. The government never had trouble enforcing segregation. But when the Civil Rights Movement started, for some reason no state government was able to enforce integration. They had the same clubs and pistols they toted to enforce segregation, but they didn't use them for integration.

We all know that it's hard to get Negroes to stick together, and if you understand why, it will help your attitude in working with the folks in your citizenship classes back home. We must remember first that the Negro was taught not to stick together. His master claimed his loyalty. A man could not be true to both a master and his Negro brothers. Second, the Negro's family was kept apart. His children were sold. That's why I burn whenever I read about the Negro family "disintegrating." How can Negro families keep from disintegrating when we were split up for 300 years?

Today we are beginning to think for ourselves. We now realize that Negroes were never happy with their condition in America, but we did keep our spirit alive. America does not want to face up to the fact that we were unhappy. We are told that Negroes wanted to return to their masters after the Civil War. But what is the truth? From 1619 to the Civil War, Negroes were treated as property, not human beings. After the War, some Negroes went back to the plantations, but that was horse sense. If you work half your life as a slave, and you are suddenly turned out and you have nothing to eat, you'll go back where you can get some food. But if the Negro after the Civil War had an opportunity to get a decent job, he wouldn't have gone back.

One of the main things that brought about the Civil War was a power struggle for money. There was unrest among religious groups and emancipators, and Negroes were running away to freedom. But the industrial revolution was starting, and the North needed labor and had to pay for it. The balance of financial power was swinging to the South, where the white man had slave labor. The idea that Lincoln loved us so much that he went to war is bosh. Lincoln was willing to go to war to save the Union.-- not the Negro. If the economy of the North was not threatened, there would not have been a Civil War.

After the war, during Reconstruction, the Negro became a person, a human being. He was included in government. And what do the school books tell us about Reconstruction? We are taught that this was the worst period in American history, because Negroes found their way into government. But the textbooks do not say that in Reconstruction, some of the best legislation ever was passed. It was good because we are still using it. For example, we got the 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution. In Southern States, outstanding Negro legislators worked to set up public schools and welfare laws.

There never really was a real total reconstruction, though, and when Hayes was elected President by one vote, he made a deal to pull federal troops out of the South. The Ku Klux Klan immediately rose up, and we began to decline. In 1896, when the last Negro Senator left Washington, he said: "We are going, but we will come back." And we did come back.

It was not until the early '30s that Americans began talking about brotherhood again. Franklin Roosevelt came in when everyone was on about the same level. He set up relief programs and Social Security and appointed Negroes to high office. Then World War II came. White and black boys fought side by side, and people learned to get together. Jobs opened up to us. But after the war, Negro soldiers had to come home to America and split company with whites.

Then the Civil Rights Movement began, and we have won many victories: the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Bill, and programs like our Citizenship Schools which help us to organize together and demand our rights.

We are beginning to get power. That's why "bloc voting" all of a sudden is supposed to be bad. Whites have had voting blocs for years, but now that the Negro is a threat to those in political office, whites think he is a threat to their jobs and money. The white man says, "If the Negro gets hold of money, I can't handle him."

I am disgusted with our public school system because we aren't taught all these things. But we can do something about it. If we organize to get political power, we can start dealing with the school boards. We can control our own education, we can learn Negro history in the schools, we can teach the great spirit of the Civil Rights Movement, and create a desire to learn more about ourselves and prepare our children for a good life.

NEWS FROM AFFILIATES

The Crenshaw County Improvement Association has helped more than 50 Negro Children enroll in formerly all-white schools. Collins W. Harris writes that, despite constant threats and abuse of the children and their parents, "We are holding on to manhood, dignity and pride with the hardest hitter the world has ever known: Nonviolent Methods."

The Atlanta SCLC is reorganizing around new officers: Rev. Howard W. Creedy, president; Rev. Julius Williams, vice president; Dr. Otis Smith, treasurer; Rev. W. J. Stafford, finance chairman; Mrs. Lottie Watkins, secretary; and Mrs. E. H. Dorsey, assistant secretary. Sheriff Lucius Amerson addressed the Affiliate at a rally Feb. 16.

From the anti-poverty program of the Wilcox County SCLC, Stephanie Stilwell reports: Adult classes are jammed -- with students who are not even on stipend -- some of whom walk eight miles to learn to read. One man who had never been to school before signed an application to be in the next stipended group with printing he learned going to class. It really makes the grind seem like nothing when that happens."

E. Randel T. Osburn is helping organize an Affiliate in Cleveland, Ohio. An office is provided by the church of Rev. O.M. Hoover, Carole's father.

MADDOX MEETS BREADBASKET

More than 50 Breadbasket ministers from all over Georgia met with State department heads and Governor Lester Maddox March 10 to demand more and better jobs in the Georgia government. State Rep. J. D. Grier, spokesman for the

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delegation, said he hopes the matter can be resolved at the conference table, but if not it will be taken to the federal government. Many departments use millions in federal funds.

SEMINAR ON NEGRO BUSINESS

SCLC's Chicago Operation Breadbasket sponsored a two-day seminar for Negro businessmen March 3-4.

The meetings, at the University of Chicago, acquainted community leaders with Negro-owned and managed enterprises in Chicago.

Business experts at the seminar spoke on how to solve special problems faced by Negro businessmen.

THE OTHER PART OF A STORY

Chicago staff members tell us that when some food was stolen in the ghetto during the huge Chicago blizzard, the press played up the thefts, but largely ignored another fact: Some stores were trying to sell poor slum residents bread at \$1.00 a loaf and milk at \$1.00 a half-gallon. Prices were inflated when supplies could not be trucked in through the snow drifts and people could not get out of the ghetto.

NONVIOLENT WORKSHOPS AHEAD

A grant has been awarded for urban workshops on the philosophy and practice of nonviolence, sponsored by SCLC and led by Rev. James Wallace. Jim has been consulting civil rights leaders on arrangements and staff for the program.

PERSONALITIES

Mrs. Septima Clark, a great and gentle heroine of the Movement, had a house blessing ceremony at her new home in Charleston on March 5. Among those attending were Erma Burton, Bernice Robinson and Esau Jenkins of C. E. P., and Deloris Hall, formerly of SCLC. Mrs. Clark received telegrams and flowers from Dr. and Mrs. King Jr. and the SCLC staff, and a gift of crystal from the C. E. P. staff

Annell Ponder, another beloved veteran of the Movement, became a field instructor for the Atlanta University School of Social Work on March 1. Annell needed rest from the extensive traveling she did as a field supervisor for C. E. P. She is now organizing adult citizenship classes in an Atlanta housing project and developing a program for A. U. students who will be placed there next fall

A distinguished SCLC Board member visited Atlanta a few days ago. He is Judge Benjamin Hooks of Memphis, the only presiding Negro judge in the South. . . .

SCLC photographer Bob Fitch and his wife Lynne, who has been secretary to Mrs. King, have returned to California. Bob will work for a community self-help housing project in Oakland, and hopes later to become a pastor in the United Church of Christ. On March 3, Mrs. King invited the SCLC staff to a farewell party for Bob and Lynne in the King home. Dr. and Mrs. King gave the guests of honor a plant, and the staff gave them an engraved ashtray. . . .

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PERSONALITIES CONTINUED:

Frances Sims, that live-wire of the Atlanta office, was married last month to Mr. Joed Allison in her home town, Huntsville, Ala. Frances hopes to be able to work for SCLC again, and when she's ready, we have a mountain of work on the 1967 convention waiting for her....

Terrie Randolph and Jean Jackson have gone to Varityper school in Atlanta and are now learning layout and typesetting....

Our deep sympathy to George Shinhoster's family, who lost a favorite uncle of George's this month....

WHO'S WHO IN SCLC

"THE BLACK SNAKE"

Willie James Tabb is a native of Selma who was recruited in 1965 by James Bevel, James Orange and Richard Boone. Not long after that, Willie found himself on the Edmund Pettus Bridge on "Bloody Sunday" in Selma, helping children escape from the charge of mounted police.

Willie's mother was understandably worried about his safety, so when he was asked to go to Marion, Ala., on a project, he slipped out a window of his home at 3 a.m. When he returned two weeks later, his mother gave her blessing to his work for civil rights.

This dark, slender young man, nick-named "The Black Snake" by Hosea Williams, has worked in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina and Chicago. He has been jailed by Jim Clark and struck by Big Bill Lee, two of the more famous sheriffs in Alabama.

One dark night outside Eutaw, Ala., Willie and James Orange were stopped by a mob of gun-bearing whites. The Freedom Fighters' lives were threatened, but they were finally released after being pushed around and told to leave Eutaw for good.

Despite jailings, tear-gassing and beatings, Willie still enjoys joking and reminiscing with white sheriffs, policemen and troopers he has known.

Willie Tabb is now 20. He graduated from R. B. Hudson High School in Selma, a school which has contributed more than its share of students to SCLC including Jean Jackson, Richard Smiley, and Willie Mae Steele. Jean and Willie grew up about a block away from each other and have been friends almost all their lives.

FROM PECOS TO TANGANYIKA TO CHICAGO

One of the newest additions to the SCLC staff is David Marshall Wallace, whose soft-spoken manner belies his fierce dedication to the Movement, and specifically to solving the staggering economic problems of Chicago's vast ghettos.

Born 27 years ago in Pecos, Texas, and still carrying a Texas-style drawl, Dave came to Chicago by way of Tanzania (then Tanganyika), East Africa, where he and his wife, Mary, spent two years on a project of the American Friends Service Committee.

It was at Chicago Theological Seminary, which he attended on a scholarship, that he met fellow-student Jesse Jackson. Jesse and David have worked together since then,

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developing Chicago's unit of SCLC's Operation Breadbasket into one of the most potent forces for economic development ever seen in huge cities.

Chicago Breadbasket's accomplishments are well known, but less known is the tremendous contribution David has made to its success. As a volunteer, he devoted all of his spare time to Breadbasket and the Chicago Freedom Movement, sometimes working 18 hours a day. His work has been the tough, behind-the-scenes coordination which brought him not glory or recognition, but the knowledge that significant progress was taking place in the ghetto.

David's commitment runs in the family. His sister, Sara, works for SCLC's Chicago ally, the Coordinating Council of Community Organization. And his wife is director for high school projects for the Chicago A. F. S. C.

THE SWINGIN' GRANDMOTHER

She doesn't look it, act it, or feel it, but Bernice Robinson is a grandmother -- "a swinging grandmother," in the words of her C. E. P. colleague, Erma Burton.

A native of Charleston, S. C., Bernice has lived there all her life except for 12 years in New York, where she worked in cosmetology, interior design and real estate.

That gives an idea of her range of interests and hobbies. What else does she do? Well, she makes all her clothes. She skates, rides bikes, and plays bridge, poker and gin rummy. She likes to play golf. "I have middle-class attitudes," says Bernice, "but I don't get much chance to indulge them because of my work."

Bernice became a field supervisor for the Citizenship Education Program in 1964. She teaches at the regular workshop and travels in South Carolina, and increasingly in other States

of the South.

How did she get in the Movement? "I was born into it," she says. "Every colored person is born into the movement." She has worked on citizenship training programs with Septima Clark since 1956.

Bernice recently arranged to interrupt her work so she could attend a community center workshop at the University of Wisconsin.

Her daughter has four children and lives in New York. A few years from now, it's just possible that one of Bernice Robinson's grandchildren will become a parent. Bernice says she would be very proud to be a swinging great-grandmother.
