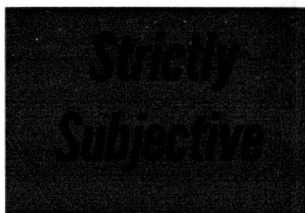


NEW SOUTH

NOVEMBER 1964

The President's Address

**ANNUAL MEETING,
SOUTHERN REGIONAL COUNCIL**



By MARGARET LONG

NEW SOUTH

Published by

SOUTHERN REGIONAL COUNCIL

5 Forsyth Street, N.W., Atlanta 3, Georgia

Volume 1 • November 1964 • Number 10

CONTENTS

Poverty and Segregation in the South	3
Home Again	11
Strictly Subjective	2

OFFICERS

John H. Wheeler	President
A. W. Dent	Vice President
Marion A. Wright	Vice President
Josephine Wilkins	Vice President
Rufus E. Clement	Vice President
Raymond Wheeler	Chm. Exec. Com.
Leslie W. Dunbar	Exec. Director
Margaret Long	Editor

New South is published 11 times a year. Subscription cost is \$2.50 a year. Single copies are 20 cents each, or less in quantity.

IT WAS A long time ago that Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt rose at a Democratic Convention which nominated Adlai Stevenson for president and made a platform plea that the party pronounce its resolve to "abolish poverty" in the United States. The grand old lady, whose simplicity of expression and rectitude of heart often made her sound stupid to more complicated and less people-loving thinkers, offered this outlandish proposition in her dear, high quavery voice and I don't recall that anybody took her very seriously. And I wondered, well, why not? Mr. Stevenson did, during his campaign, echo this ambition in eloquent and large-minded words, and I don't remember anyone taking him very seriously in this matter, either, certainly not enough to elect him President.

Now that the more practical and sophisticated politicians have caught up with Mrs. Roosevelt, and with President Johnson's start of a "war on poverty," the condition of poverty is such a conversational commonplace that the word itself has lost much of its boney and frightening force. Quite as school "dropouts" have become statistics instead of bored, desperate, lost youngsters, as "unemployment" conjures up faceless lines of distant jobseekers instead of this anguished and importuning breadwinner and that demoralized and helpless head of the house, and as "slumdweller" designates hordes of impersonal poor off there somewhere across town instead of this mother with a beloved son turned hophead or a rat-bitten baby, thus "poverty" is a glib term enfeebled by overuse and bandying about so that it has little power left to move the imagination or invoke the suffering of poor people. We forget and no longer envision the agony of people without the protection of money.

(Continued on page 10)

Poverty and Segregation in the South: New Concepts, Old Truths

by John H. Wheeler

ONE HARDLY BEGINS to examine the history of our beloved region without noting at once the extent to which the South's long and bitter struggle against conditions of poverty, economic stagnation, and moral schizophrenia has in every period been characterized by racial tensions and by emotional outbursts on both sides of a controversy as old as the history of man.

It should, therefore, be of more than passing interest to this distinguished group of Southerners that the Southern Regional Council, a relatively new organization insofar as its corporate structure is concerned, finds its roots firmly imbedded in the South's effort to fashion a new way of life, approaching more nearly the American Dream of liberty and justice for all. Among the Southerners who, in the early years, fought against the institution of slavery were the forebears of white and Negro stalwarts who in later times have taken up the battle against disfranchisement and the evils of racial segregation.

Although the South's attitude on matters of race has always been subject to continued change, there have been some periods during which changes have come more rapidly than in others. The Antebellum and Reconstruction periods will go down in history as an era during which white supremacy established and maintained itself through violence and intimidation ap-

plied with extreme force and fanaticism.

It was in this era that, through lynchings and floggings, the night riders and members of the Ku Klux Klan felt it to be their righteous duty to keep the slave population under complete subjection and control. During a brief period following the Emancipation Proclamation and for so long as federal troops remained in the South, the new American Negro was able to pursue his ambition to assume the full responsibilities of citizenship; but as soon as federal troops were withdrawn from the South in keeping with the Hayes-Tilden compromise, the exponents of violence resumed many of the same tactics of terror which had been used prior to the Civil War.

On the brighter side, the conscience of the South, although overwhelmed at many stages in its history, has never ceased to labor for change and relief from the scourge of racial prejudice and injustice, and, as a result of the impact of conscience upon public and private behavior, a new, yet dubious, period of thinking was formalized by the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision in 1896, and it was in this period that the concept of separate development of the races upon vertical lines, and the creation of a "nation within a nation" captured the fancy of southern white leaders in government, business, and education. In much the same fashion as South Africa is, at this moment, en-

This is Mr. Wheeler's Presidential address to the Southern Regional Council, delivered November 21, 1964 in Atlanta.

gaged in pursuit of this will-o-the wisp, our talents, energy, and huge sums of money were poured into an effort to create two new and separate racial societies. It was also in this period that the proponents of white supremacy attempted to maintain themselves through a system of racial segregation by law, through use of the police power of the several states and by numerous and ingenuous extra-legal means.

Sixty-four years after *Plessy v Ferguson*, we suddenly knew that this era of enforced segregation was about to end, because 1960, ushered in by a series of lunch counter 'sit-ins' participated in by masses of Negro students, undoubtedly signaled the point at which we have now formalized another and more enlightened effort to achieve an open society in which freedom of movement, equal opportunity in employment, equal justice under the law, and full voting rights are the goals of a South whose battle scars and whose frequent rendezvous with conscience should enable it to achieve the Great Society before other regions of the country are able to do so.

As founder and executive director of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, organized in Atlanta during the critical period of racial tensions which followed World War I, the life and work of Dr. Will W. Alexander represents an important link between the period of enforced racial separation and the rapid succession of events which form the base from which a New South is moving rapidly in the direction of an open and fully productive society. As one of the organizers of the Southern Regional Council in 1944, "Dr. Will," as he was known to his friends and acquaintances, exercised an appropriate influence upon the objects and purposes set forth in Article 4 of the Charter of the Council:

"To organize and maintain a Regional Council for the improvement of economic, civic and racial conditions in the South, in the endeavor to promote a greater unity in the South in all efforts towards regional and racial development; to attain through research and action programs the ideals and practices of equal opportunity for all peoples in the region; to reduce race tension, the basis of racial tension, racial misunderstanding, and racial distrust; to develop and integrate leadership in the South on new levels of regional development and fellowship; and to cooperate with local, state, and regional agencies on all levels in the attainment of the desired objectives."

Indeed, the petitioners for the Council's charter, Rufus E. Clement, Ralph McGill, Bishop Arthur J. Moore, Dr. Charles S. Johnson, and Dr. Howard W. Odum, were, in each instance, either a former associate in the highly important work performed by the old Interracial Commission or one of the brilliant young men for whom Dr. Will had, in former years, sought scholarship aid based upon his belief that they were potential leaders of a new and progressive South.

In their widely read biography *SEEDS OF SOUTHERN CHANGE* (University of Chicago Press, 1962), Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely trace the inherited concern of Will Alexander to his great uncle, Hugh Boyd, who lived in Denison, Texas prior to the Civil War and who, because he spoke against human bondage, was considered a traitor by his neighbors. In an inflamed atmosphere, he was lynched for his "heretic views on freedom, indivisible for all." It is no wonder, therefore, that early in his own life, Will Alexander became interested in seeking equality and dignity for all humans alike. His rescue of a Negro child in Nashville from a brutal

beating by a white adult and his concern for the people who lived in poverty and filth, near the Tennessee church which he pastored, brought him within range of the fierce hostility of the white South on matters of race.

In their effective style, the Stokelys have revealed Dr. Will's passionate dedication to the cause of justice and fair play. His service to the International YMCA during World War I did much to ease racial tensions within the Armed Forces, but the real test of his skill and dedication came during the years immediately following the War when the proponents of white supremacy used every means at their command to reestablish the old order of race relations which prevailed before the war. Because of his persuasiveness, many Southerners of strong character and a high degree of skill in the administration of both public and private affairs joined Dr. Will in forming the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. These associates included such persons as Robert R. Moton of Tuskegee and John J. Eagan and John Hope, both of Atlanta.

In spite of an unfavorable climate of public opinion, the Commission was able to sponsor an appeal to the United States Supreme Court from the conviction of a Negro tenant farmer under provisions of the Georgia Peonage Act. By some miracle, the opinion striking down this legislative remnant of the Reconstruction period was rendered by none other than Justice James Byrnes of South Carolina.

Another of the Commission's significant achievements had to do with its widespread effort to create a better climate of thinking on race. It was in this context that the Commission found itself waging a constant battle against the Ku Klux Klan. One of its most effective victories in the fight came as the result of long and tedious

research (sponsored by the Commission) which became the basis of a series of stories in the old New York World revealing the extent to which the Klan controlled law enforcement and courts in the southern states.

Dr. Will discovered and guided a virtual army of promising young men whom he selected to receive fellowships and grants from the Rosenwald Fund and other foundations. Most of this group of efficient and talented young persons are recognized today as the strong and productive leaders of the nation.

In a career of unbelievable range, Dr. Will was a trusted advisor to two Presidents, architect of the Bankhead Farm Tenancy Act, Farm Security Administrator, a key person with the Office of Production Management, the War Production Board, and perhaps of greatest significance, he became the silent partner to Philip Randolph and Robert W. Weaver in their successful effort to have Franklin D. Roosevelt sign Order 8802 creating the first Fair Employment Practices Commission in 1941. During a lengthy and fruitful career, his concept of the manner in which one achieves new gains of race relations underwent constant change—from one of pleading and persuasion to the need for use of the federal courts as frequently as possible, and for the hard-headed use of political power.

We could devote just as much time in tribute to countless other great souls who have given their time and talents to the task of removing the shackles of hate which impede our progress.

The rapid changes which have occurred since 1960 have not only opened many new doors of opportunity; they also loom as the climax to a long but successful period of litigation during which basic interpretations of constitutional law have been established with reference to travel, public accom-

modations, voting rights, education, employment, and other fields. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 reflects clearly the response of Congress to a new climate of public opinion in America evidenced by the line of important decisions handed down by the Supreme Court since 1927.

An integral part of our heritage from Will Alexander and his associates may be found in his conviction that we accomplish our tasks by "doing," and in proportion to our interest in individuals and the potential which they represent. He is quoted as having said, "I think you do next things as you can, and you get a little more wisdom, and then you know what the next things are."

In every respect, the Council, blessed with strong leadership from its members and an exceptionally wise and competent staff, has met the challenge *to do next things next* with an expertise which matches the ingenuity and courage of our borebears.

In our opinion, the Council has also lived up to the objectives and purposes enumerated in its charter, which bears an issue date of January 6, 1944. The unique nature of the Council's work has enabled it to serve effectively as a reliable source of materials and statistics on American problems of race. It has also become an accepted facility for coordinating the efforts of other organizations whose primary concern is the improvement of human relations, and, through its affiliation with eleven Councils on Human Relations domiciled in the southern states it has continued to render important services to the entire South.

Among these have been the highly effective consultant services offered to southern superintendents of education, mayors, and law enforcement agencies. In addition, the accuracy of the Council's reporting of progress in race rela-

tions in many communities of the South has been equal to, if not superior, to the reporting in the daily press and magazines throughout the country.

Since 1944, the Council and its staff have learned by experience that planning for the future must of necessity envisage and anticipate new concepts which are constantly changing the nature and *modus operandi* of society. For instance, recent racial outbursts in protest against (1) poor and overcrowded housing and (2) exclusion from employment opportunities coupled with other forms of discrimination with which we are all too familiar, could have been forecast accurately more than 25 years ago.

It was during the late 1930s that the South began to make extensive studies of population shifts from rural to urban areas occasioned by mechanization and the disappearance of the small marginal farmer. These studies, prepared by several independent groups including the Committee of The South and the National Planning Association, have proved to be remarkably accurate.

The difficulty arose, however, when the South's leadership decided, after due deliberation, that opportunities for employment of Negroes would have to be restricted to the service categories, and, that because of custom and prevailing practices of racial segregation, it would be impossible for the Negro Southerner to participate in the new technology which had begun to improve the economy of the South. This decision was reflected sharply in the apathy of school boards with reference to the quality of education in the Negro schools. As a result, large numbers of functional illiterates have been graduated in recent years from the South's segregated public schools.

Deprived of equal employment op-

portunities and saddled with an inferior education. many of these young people found their way from the farms to the southern cities, thence to the metropolitan areas of the North, Midwest, and West. That the heavy concentrations of Negro population in New York, Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia have not erupted in more violent protest against exploitation by big city landlords and employers is indeed a miracle.

Prevailing conditions outside the South should make it apparent, even to the casual observer that the movement of unskilled, poorly trained Negroes to metropolitan centers in other regions of the country has already begun to reach the saturation point. It follows that as the South's huge Negro population becomes even more urbanized, our cities assuredly will be called upon to allocate an ever increasing amount of their operating and capital budgets to the high costs occasioned by the presence of large numbers of unemployed or marginal persons who occupy vast areas of slums within the city.

In planning for the future, it seems extremely important for us to encourage all segments of the population to share responsibility for the total range of community life. Whereas the governing bodies of many southern cities have adopted resolutions which establish fair hiring practices, there appears to be little or no effort to recruit talented young Negroes who may begin internships in the affairs of government or in the technique of municipal management. It is equally true that the vast majority of private industry located in the South has made little, if any, effort to recruit Negro personnel for training at the executive or any other level.

In view of the length of time required for adequate training and ex-

perience in most supervisory or executive categories of employment, the South, by its sin of omission, is already engaged in creating problems which it will not be able to solve ten years hence.

The rapidity with which the Federal German Republic has reestablished itself as the most affluent nation on the continent of Europe can be attributed in large part to the fact that each German citizen knows from infancy that every opportunity awaits him for acquisition of the skills necessary for his participation in the industrial, financial, and cultural effort of the society. Only to the extent that we are able in the United States to provide a similar range of opportunities for every person, regardless of race, do we also possess the ability to achieve high levels of industrial and cultural activity.*

In contrast to West Germany, we note from a preliminary examination of the policies and practices of the United States Employment Service operated by the several states that this group of agencies may be expected to resist any enlargement of employment opportunities available to Negro applicants and that, under present circumstances, they undoubtedly stand as a formidable barrier to the employment of Negroes in the skilled and semi-skilled categories.

Another important part of our unfinished business lies in documenting the manner in which a mass of unwritten or "skull" regulations are used to exclude qualified Negroes from employment as staff members in most of the agencies operated with state, municipal, or federal funds. In like manner, we shall have the task of documenting the extent to which the "unwritten" law denies Negro applicants access to the full range of job opportunities for which the Employment Service makes referrals. Up to now,

the southern states have virtually thumbed their noses at every attempt of the United States Department of Labor to enforce its own employment regulations designed to prevent discrimination.

Of even greater importance than the bare removal of these artificial barriers will be our task to create a climate in which it will be possible for the Employment Service to carry on an active program of *invitation* and *recruitment* of qualified Negroes into the work force.

We are faced with an equally formidable task of eliminating discriminatory practices from welfare agencies and other projects operated with federal or state funds or both. This will become increasingly important as we seek to obtain the desired results from operation of the President's poverty program through the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Although the Council, through its own reporting service, has exercised an important influence upon the southern press, much remains to be done in terms of our concept of an open society. A handful of southern dailies and the weekly newspapers operated by Negroes in numerous cities in the South could be the vehicle through which talented young reporters, while doing internships or special pieces of research (with foundation grants), can begin the process of reporting the news of progress in human relations in all areas and as they see it, without having to run the gauntlet of concern on the part of many city editors for reaction from their readers and local officials.

Of utmost importance to progress in the South has been the manner in which the Voter Education Project, administered by the Council, has given new hope that the South within a very short period will find itself giving ear

to many of the problems which cannot be solved completely without the aid of elected officials and the legislatures of the several states. The figures reported earlier by Mr. Branton (Wiley Branton, director of the Voter Education Project) indicate that since 1962, the 688,800 Negroes who have been added to the registration roles of eleven southern states have stimulated larger number of whites to register also. Although this project is reaching a terminal point, it will be tragic if means are not found to continue the work of voter education and citizenship training.

In its plans for the future, the Council expects to cooperate in every possible way with the Community Relations Service created by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and headed by the Honorable LeRoy Collins, who has been our guest for the past two days. We fully expect the Council to assist in providing the means by which public officials may become aware of the provisions of Section 801 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which requires the secretary of commerce to conduct a survey of all persons who are registered and duly qualified to vote.

It will be unfortunate if proper recognition is not given immediately to the importance of providing the means by which all segments of the population may have an opportunity to participate in the elections of 1968. Otherwise, we may find ourselves involved in an endless series of controversies over the seating of delegates to the national party conventions four years hence.

Southern cities which have not already begun, through adequate planning, to provide the means for developing a completely open housing market may find within a relatively short period that their efforts to eliminate bias and discrimination in the

housing field will be too little and too late to prevent the eruption of massive protests by Negroes whose opportunities for better schooling and upgraded employment are stymied by customs and practices which prevent their escape from slums and ghettos. At the present time, we do not know of any southern city which has begun to face the housing problem in terms of the President's housing order which contemplates that in America every citizen is entitled to a decent home and to complete freedom of choice in its selection.

In the foregoing and in many other areas of concern which are shared by the Council and its staff, we find a challenge for renewed efforts on our part to give life and substance to what is now only the framework of an open society.

In a paper entitled "The Economics of a Free Society" written in 1944 by William Benton for the Committee for Economic Development and distributed widely by CED again within the past 30 days, we find the basis for our challenge to the business community and public officials of the South in the following excerpts:

1. The good of all—the *common good*—is a means to the enduring happiness of every individual in society and is superior to the economic interest of any private groups, not only in war (when the validity of the principle is obvious) but in peace as well.
2. The economic system chosen by the American community is loosely (often too loosely) called the free-enterprise system. This system, when it functions properly, permits the maximum freedom to the individual consistent with the common good. It supports and reinforces political liberty and provides the greatest

opportunities for the development of all men and the attainment of their individual as well as their common aspirations.

Mr. Benton also undertakes to define the American system of free enterprise in the following terms:

What a Free-Enterprise System *is Not*:

"The free-enterprise system is not, never has been, and never should be, a system of complete *laissez-faire*. It is not the freedom to seek profit by any and all means;—not the right to profit at the expense of the welfare of the community; nor the freedom of any man to exploit any other.

What a Free-Enterprise System *Is*:

The free-enterprise system is a system of production, investment, and consumption under which private individuals and business firms, largely by their own initiative and responsibility, combine the community's labor skills, managerial skills, and capital to produce the bulk of the goods and services men want. Its most characteristic features, as compared with other economic systems, are: maximum dependence upon competition and the free play of prices to determine who shall produce what, maximum dependence on profit as an incentive rather than on compulsion or prestige, and maximum emphasis on free personal choice among the economic opportunities—be they goods or jobs—that are available to men."

Above all we have an obligation to the heroes of the past and to this generation to continue in the Council's tradition of creative and clear thinking, as we seek a new and better way of life for the South. We also have a

prime obligation to recognize, as we seek to uncover and remove the barriers to progress which have been built into the southern way of life with such sophistication and subtlety, that time is of the essence. Lest we be misled, what many of us are inclined to herald as new dimensions in the South's racial practices may turn out to be a New Set of Limits which are being forged by the gate-keepers of traditions of the old South.

In closing, let me urge upon the Council and its staff the wisdom of discovering new concepts and techniques in support of the policy statement adopted by the Council in 1951 which reads as follows:

"The South of the future, toward which our efforts are directed, is a South freed of stultifying inheritances from the past. It is a South where the measure of a man will be his ability, not his race; where a common citizenship will work in democratic understanding for the common good; where all who labor will be rewarded in proportion to their skill and achievement; where all can feel confident of personal safety and equality before the law; where there will exist no double standard in housing, health, education, or other public services; where segregation will be recognized as a cruel and needless penalty on the human spirit, and will no longer be imposed; where, above all, every individual will enjoy a full share of dignity and self-respect, in recognition of his creation in the image of God."

Strictly Subjective

(Continued from page 2)

In the South we're glad enough—having been po' folks so long in the rich family of the United States—to talk about "poverty" in the North,

their sprawling and spreading slums where misery erupts in angry riots, their thousands automated out of work and their gigantic welfare bills, and to take comfort from the obvious fact that big northern cities spawn more wretched poverty than we do in the South, since there are more Northerners, bigger cities and more slums than we have.

It is, of course, an excellent sign that the national conscience and the southern worriers are at last concerned with poor people and that our consensus now regards a decent livelihood as a human right in the United States as well as an important factor in the common weal.

Here in Atlanta we bustle about our "urban renewal" with the commendable aim of razing our most hideous and uninhabitable slums and somehow getting our city-poor families into decent housing, and we are somewhat comforted at least enough to go about our business aware that we're "trying to do something about it." Also, we have "the welfare" so nobody need really starve, and have got a new agency to get our share of federal "war on poverty" benefits.

So, it was with some surprise that I heard a friend of mine in the real estate business who had gone to evict a rent-delinquent family from a nice, \$60, four-room apartment in a good Negro neighborhood.

"When she rented the apartment," my friend recalled, "she told us she had two children. Of course, nobody will rent an apartment to *ten* children. Anyway, when I went in, the place was just *swarming*. You never saw so many children, like *stairsteps*; the youngest was a precious little girl about two. They were playing and running around like rats, or puppies, and they all ran up to me, smiling

(Continued on page 15)

Home Again

by Al Ulmer

THE TELEGRAM from Sargent Shriver impressed my parents and me with its length. One page of yellow telling me of my acceptance into the Peace Corps for pre-selection training at the University of California at Los Angeles. The Clearwater *Sun* devoted a quarter of a page to the announcement of my selection. The article said I was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Albert C. Ulmer of 317 10th Avenue, Indian Rocks, Florida, a graduate of Clearwater High School and Florida State University and that I would teach biology in Nigeria.

Fifty-five of us Peace Corpsmen flew from New York City in late December of 1961 across the Atlantic Ocean and into Africa. One doesn't tour across, or go on, or visit this continent. One goes into it. Into people milling about, talking, laughing, begging. Into heat, heavy with warm smells, clinging to your back, trickling down your body. And into living. Not stainless steel living but struggle living: Children standing with their mouths on the full, elegant, naked breasts of their proud mothers; their older brothers, weaned, standing close by, stomachs beginning to protrude and hair to redden, beginning to look much like other victims of protein deficiency. Lepers, burned out, with palms stretched forward for daily droppings, only palms. Open sores and torn shirts, now and again a strong urine smell striking your nose—and stomach.

Mud houses ring Lagos, the capital,

mocking the splendor of the Federal Palace Hotel, the grandeur of Parliament members' homes, the luxuriousness of the storied ex-patriots' retreats. It is a land of contrasts: tin roofs—tile roofs, marble—mud; chandelier—bush lamp.

The Peace Corps had been invited to Nigeria for a specific reason. It was to release Nigerian teachers not having graduate degrees, allowing them to take advantage of scholarship opportunities to finish their education without draining the schools of desperately needed instructors.

I lived in a concrete block house, not a mud hut, slept in a net-enclosed bed, not on a grass mat, and though my standard of living might have appeared austere by American standards, it was comparable to that of a Nigerian graduate of a university. A young Nigerian man cooked and kept house for me. At the beginning this bothered me. But my job was to teach and having a cook-steward gave me more time



Mr. Ulmer, who spent two years with the Peace Corps teaching in Nigeria, is an Eleanor Roosevelt intern with the field department of SRC.



to devote to teaching which was why I was there.

An old man, Mr. Nnaji, and I became good friends. Every day during the school term Mr. Nnaji would bring me either fruit, greens, or yam and we would drink a beer together sitting on the porch watching the sunset. He would speak of the days when the first missionaries came to Emene, or of elephant hunts in which whole villages participated, or of punishments meted out equally to thieves—all men who stole. Before I left Nigeria he adopted me into his family.

I booked passage on a French mail

boat leaving Nigeria the end of November 1963. I sailed, numbed by the announcement four days earlier of President Kennedy's murder. If it is possible for a man to live white and die thought of as black, he had done so. I doubt if many Nigerians will ever believe he died for other than his belief in the equality of men. The heads they will carve from ebony blocks in his likeness will be brown.

New York City, and they were searching my baggage for the first time. The tempo was fast, faster than I had remembered. Cars, big shiny, and fast were everywhere. Glass and concrete and steel, so much more glass than I had remembered. And the people all walked fast. There was no milling about; everyone walked in a straight line, straight ahead. Then I was moving. A bus hurried over broad, hard clouds of concrete and I was thinking metal, glass, concrete, and squareness. Miles of cemetery were on my left and Biff-Burgers, Dandy-Dogs, Superettes and Creamettes flashed by to the right . . . all cold.

We had had an orientation class before leaving America to prepare us for the phenomenon referred to as culture shock. Before we left Nigeria two psychologists flew from Washington to warn us of a similar effect caused by returning to the United States. They had been right to do this.

Washington, D.C. How strange to feel awkward here in my own country's capital, sitting on the grass and watching the drab green three buttoned suits go by with men in them, briefcases holding hands. Eyes straight ahead and slightly up, striding straight ahead and somehow slightly up.

"We'd like to have you come on deck with us but we're phasing that aspect of the program out." . . . "it's important to know your degree of

commitment otherwise we can't tell just how you'll relate to the job."

Glass, metal, concrete . . . cold.

The two years are gone now, having passed quickly, been enjoyed, and now become cocktail patter.

Nigeria is a large country, the size of Texas and Arizona combined. Africa's most populous nation, with nearly 50 million people, it represents the diversity of the continent with its 250 tribal and linguistic groups. The religion is mainly Islamic in the North and Northwest and Christian in the East and Mid-west. Vestiges of the old religions some describe as Pagan remain throughout the country firmly intertwined with intricate social and family customs.

My school had only 60 places available each year and each year over 600 young men applied for entrance. It costs a student approximately \$180 per year in tuition alone to attend the school. The money sometimes smelled of earth and the shillings were often rimmed with mold. If civilization is a race between education and disaster, as H. G. Wells suggested, then the latter is winning.

Once I walked through a small village and counted 27 people with goiter. One of our finest students died in the local hospital. In three days a doctor had seen him twice, once to pronounce him dead. For 50 million people there are 1,575 doctors at present in Nigeria.

Laborers make approximately 50 cents a day. Government workers recently struck for a minimum monthly wage law, asking for \$15.85. It was difficult to select one hopeless beggar out of the ten odd in front of the Kingsway store to give to.

There is more to tell. America looks a special way from Nigeria. Take a magnifying glass and place it on Bull Connor or George Wallace or Ross

Barnett, on the shiny cars, the ranch houses, and the tall apartment buildings. Color them white. Turn your magnifying glass and place it over the city slums, the sharecropper's shack, the road gang, or the electric chair. Color them colored. And look at a pledge we Americans make at ball games, Scout meetings, and before class begins. Focus on the second sentence of this pledge: "One nation, indivisible, under God, with liberty and justice for all." You should be getting an idea by now what America looks like from Nigeria. It looks like hypocrisy.

The papers I read after the Birmingham riots and bombings had front page pictures blown up to huge dimensions depicting our law enforcers with their knees on necks and their hands holding clubs and leashes. The caption at the top of the page said, "Democracy?"

Missionaries of practically every denomination are in Africa. Their contributions are controversial. Education, social change and custom-shattering, societal regrouping, and racial and political consciousness have all received stimulation in varying degree from missionaries. Whatever their role, a disturbing paradox shadows American missionaries. The denominations they represent often have "white" and "black" churches in America. Souls, colorless and strived after in Africa, belong to brown bodies which are anathema to many missionary societies in America.

One day I heard one student ask another if his dress shorts were clean enough for chapel. "Why, they're as white as God," was the reply.

For two years I lived in a sort of Never-Never Land with many other Americans. We had interesting, challenging jobs with guaranteed salaries, adequate housing, and the respect of

the community. And Negroes and whites acted like people with one another. There was an easiness. Now a tension has replaced that easiness. I'm more aware of being white in Atlanta than I was in Enugu.

Maybe that is why I am looking for changes for the good and why I am disappointed when I find the changes small. And since changes rarely take place suddenly, perhaps it is presumptuous of me to have expected them in such a length of time. I guess changes are more often moods of factions of people and that they must grow and gain popular consensus and acceptance. If this is so, then the emerging, predominant mood should have a feeling and there should be some way to measure it.

But there is an awful lot to this mood. It includes more than just the way Negroes and whites treat one another. I am inclined to enlarge the daily meaning of segregation, forget the hues and shades of our outsides for a moment, and return to the pre-1896 meaning of the word. Separateness, exclusiveness. We rise above ourselves in Babel-towering urban renewed apartment houses; we submerge in suburban split-level ranch houses; we move about alone, segregated even from the weather, in sleek new automobiles.

Nigerians, with their salaries less than half those of British and American expatriots in comparable positions, passed fewer of the omni-present beggars than did the ex-patriates. There is, however, a certain callousness sometimes shown toward the "stranger beggars." But the same man who showed this lack of concern would probably impoverish himself for a relative, a friend, or a townsman in need.

At home our segregation allows us to witness street assaults casually, to be physically detached when viewing

city slums, and to be stolid and impassive at the plight of whole groups of deprived people. What does move us then? Strange things it seems. Such as \$650,000 sent to the pension-provided-for widow of a policeman killed on duty and a very substantial amount to the killer's widow. It seems we can still write our checks at our desks in our studies, envelope them, and throw them down a metal shoot toward a name. But we are squeamish at touching people's hands, and we glance shoe-ward rather than meet the eyes of a human being in need.

In Emene when a village elder died men thronged together, gathered close and comforted one another in their loss. The women keened and the sound of anguish and hurt was as from one voice.

In America we rushed from one another, fled into our homes to watch our TV's, segregated in our sorrow.

It has been said that one very real reason for our country's racial problems is that Negroes and whites don't know one another. This is probably true. Doubts about unknown things often grow and harden into myths. But just where are we going to get to know one another? Whites associate with Negroes just a little less than whites associate with whites. How do you talk in a living room over TV or in a bar with the juke box blaring? How do you get to know someone at a movie, or at a concert, or in a restaurant?

We seem to be segregating ourselves more, in both senses of the word. Gradually our cities are darkening until ghettos will soon be a southern word, also. Optimists in the South say we have cause to hope because black and white of this region share the same values and have the same loyalties. But this kinship of values and loyalties must to an extent be a product of liv-

ing together, sharing activities, participating in community life, equally. The changes I am conscious of are the ones I hear and read of, not the ones I see. To have the same opportunity to attend the same school, live in the same neighborhood, or hold the same job does not mean that Negroes are going to the same schools, or living in the same neighborhoods or working side by side with whites.

My students in Nigeria asked me if my high school would accept them if they came to America. They asked if they would be welcomed at dances and parties and at village gatherings. They asked, after I had answered, if my home was the same as South Africa. One day during the rainy season when the iron roof drowned out our voices, I asked my English class to write about what they thought an average American's goals in life were. They mentioned large cars, large houses, large swimming pools and large money. I corrected large money to read a large amount of money but the remainder was correct. No one wrote of freedom or justice or human dignity. And the disturbing thing is that I would have received practically the same paper if I had substituted "your" for "American's."

This year segregationists and states righters joined hands and "hearts" with a property-right-over-human-right faction, and now pass under the guise of a national political party. It is almost as if we have given official sanction to greed. Proposition 14 won in California and fair housing and open occupancy lost consistently wherever the decision was offered to the voter. The retreat to retrench in suburbia continues, unimpeded.

I mentioned a tension. Though I don't like it, it is necessary. Whenever justice begins to replace the status quo, and honesty gains on expediency, a

tension develops. And this tension is world enveloping. The Africans who listen to China's Chou En Lai ask whether Americans would have dropped the atomic bomb on white Germany as they did on yellow Japan, also listen to the news of Birmingham. Sadly, the tension that produces justice can also birth violence if politicians talk and law enforcers turn.

The mood seems to be one of slowness, of self interest, of talking and writing. I read recently that the South had seen the crack in the wall of Never and when this wall of segregation and separateness crumbled, we in the South would show the rest of the United States, indeed the world, how good men can treat one another. I hope this is so and soon, for we in the South are in one way lucky. Our wall doesn't hide a Harlem. Not yet.

I measure the mood another way. I wonder if Mr. Nnaji came to visit . . . I wonder how he'd like it here?

Strictly Subjective

(Continued from page 10)

and pulling on my skirt and tugging all over me.

"And *filthy!*" her voice rose incredulously. "Some of 'em looked like their hair had never been washed or combed or brushed, it was in *lumps*. They were just running and playing around in little T-shirts and pants, all dirty—they slept in these clothes, too—and I couldn't even tell you which were boys or girls.

"There was not one stick of furniture, except a couple of beds, for eleven of them, and the stove and refrigerator furnished with the apartment. She said the furniture dealer had repossessed their things. She was a nice-looking girl, about thirty-something, and she

(Continued on back cover)

Strictly Subjective

(Continued)

was dressed nicely and talked pretty well. She'd been sick, though, a lot; she'd had an operation to remove a cancer from the back of her arm and hadn't been well since. Her husband's in the penitentiary. There wasn't *any* food in the house. She was going to the restaurant where she had worked to get her pay—\$20—and I told her our manager said she'd better bring it to the office, or we'd put her out. The rent's \$60. They don't have any lights, either, and they won't have gas long.

"She seemed to be in a kind of a daze. She kept saying, 'I just don't know what to do, I just don't know what to do'."

My friend's real estate office called the county "welfare," which had provided the family food money in October, and, on December 1, could not send another check until December 19. So, my friend went out and bought grits, potatoes, hamburger meat, turnip greens, side meat, bread, soap, a mop and broom, and other provender, and brought the supplies to the unfurnished apartment jumping with hungry children. On her return, the oldest, 14-year-old daughter lay in bed, covered by the only bedspread and would not be wakened.

My friend instructed the twelve-year-old sister to mop the floors and bathe the babies. This latter seemed impossible, with no towels or clean clothes, so she sent her friends to rummaging through linen closets and children's chests to come up with sheets, towels and some clean clothes. Another friend gave the mother a job as a waitress and furnished her uniforms. Other families found chairs and a table or two to spare.

We don't know how the family survived up to the point of the December rent delinquency and during the mother's surgery. Nor do we know if the charity of groceries, old clothes and cast-off household goods, with a waitress' job will hearten the young mother to attack the enormous task of keeping her family together.

This, then, is "poverty," which lurks everywhere, a shame from which a 14-year-old girl hides under a dirty bedspread, a fear which strikes a 12-year-old dumb before a well-dressed, well-fed visitor, a disaster in which a young mother "just doesn't know what to do."

It seems to me an outrageous scandal that this woman "just doesn't know what to do," that there is nothing to do to get money for rent, clothes, electric lights, food, soap and bedcovers, in the rich and self-righteous city of Atlanta where the "welfare" furnishes grocery money once in two months for ten children and a breadwinner too sick to work.

This little Christmastime homily is to ask, I suppose, while we prate solemnly of the problem of poverty, whether there is any reason in any southern community this year of 1964 for a mother to despair, a child to hide in shame and little children to go hungry and huddle in darkness after sundown?