

# Interview

by Wesley A. Anderson

Wed 2:30 P.M.

Ralph Winders Director of State Baptist Student Work, State of Mississippi

Rev Winders is a native of Virginia attended Knoxville Theological Seminary with <sup>classmate</sup> Ralph Johnson, (the president of B.B.D.S. (my school)) and is the director of 22 College workers throughout the state of Mississippi.

Mr. Winders thought he recognized me from a former meeting (which I did not remember) but which he later recalled as having been in Beirut, Lebanon during the Baptist World Alliance in 1963. He was correct and his memory is amazing. I would evaluate him as being a solid, conservative, moralistic, yet gentlemanly person who attempts to be immensely fair & <sup>impartial</sup> in his judgments even though he may be certain that his judgment need not be restrained.

His impression of the Mississippi Summer Project is based by his own admission largely on "hearsay". His reports were that (1) "they want to be treated as <sup>adult</sup> mature people but they are still youngsters on a <sup>large</sup> scale", good intellectually, but <sup>morally</sup> white dominated <sup>immaturity</sup> (of C.K. workers) <sup>was</sup> <sup>not</sup> <sup>good</sup>.

"A minister told him of a group <sup>(and bodies)</sup> who came into worship whose clothes <sup>were</sup> so filthy they actually stank"

(2) This report was apparently sent back up north. One of the workers was a minister whose church replied by telegram that they hoped the minister would stay in Mississippi and they had no further desire to have him return to the Northern Church and they hoped Mississippi could keep him. Mr. Winders assures me that Mississippi has enough "white trash" of their own (words mine, he was too gentlemanly to say it so crudely but that's what he meant)

(3) "He spoke of a report which indicated that 10 or so of the students were co-habiting in a house under conditions which no Christian group would wish to be identified" He would ~~always~~ refrain from saying <sup>in what town (or church)</sup> that had occurred.

(4) He spoke of a minister who said (upon coming here for the project) "that it wasn't at all the way he had been led to believe and that he no longer felt so secure about participating" as a religious expression of his faith.

In general:

Re. the religious situation

Some C.K. workers and ministers have contacted some of the churches with whom our Windsor has some jurisdiction. These contacts have not been "from the top". He doesn't know who is "directing the operation" but doesn't seem to feel the National Council is anywhere "if people want to help us they should stay awhile, that come down for a week or so."

Re. the Civil Rights Law

We didn't get around to discussing this.

Re. the Mississippi Situation

"When a person is getting hit in the face, continually, he fights back as long as he can. What is needed is a "breathing spell" so the Mississippi can relax, not be so emotionally defensive and can think about the problem and the solution. They say it is now, there isn't time to think, there is only emotional defensive reaction." When asked if any attempt had been made to contact whoever is running the program or project, he disclaimed any knowledge of who to go to or how to establish communication with the WCC

Impression:

Mr. Winters has a lot more information about the actual projects that he let on, most of the information he has is either on the scary side and would tend to discredit Mississippi or the C.R. workers. He is too gentlemanly to embarrass ~~either~~ the C.R. workers and so loyal to embarrass Mississippi.

Mr. Winters feels strongly that the Mississippi Whites story is a garbled, distorted one and that the truth of the Mississippi side has never been told but that it will eventually come out. He seemed to indicate that in general the students' C.R. workers tale is at best a sorry episode of sex, filth and thrill-seeking mixed with some desire to "find out what's going on down here." One gets the impression that any Church identification with this business is purely by-the-way.

As yet, Mr. Winters doesn't feel free to communicate what he really wants to say but he will do so tomorrow for he suggested a luncheon together to discuss it further. In the event that such a talk leads to a good rapport with Rev. Winters, it is possible I could meet all or most all of the College Pastors and get their reactions from all over the state.