

PREVAILING VOICES

Stories of triumph and survival



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TOP ROW

"They shouldn't get away with how they've been treating us – and they're not going to!"
Lois Locklear, page 66.

"I realized that you could buck the system, if you were right, and if you stuck to your guns."
Wyman Westberry, page 36.

"In 1960, we certainly didn't know the Movement would take the turn it took, its eventual scope, size, importance."
Dorothy Cotton, page 25.

BOTTOM ROW

"I didn't have any idea that we could go that far and I could do part of it myself."
Gladys Maynard, page 16.

"People could learn to pool their resources, to trust each other, to depend on one another."
Charles Prejean, page 48.

"I'm going to have me a union."
John Cook, page 66.

Prevailing Voices

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FROM OUR READERS

Thanks a million for a very brilliantly written article ("Danville Movement" *SE*, Vol. X, No. 4). You have captured the heartbeat of the Danville Movement.

I have only a few observations I wish to add:

Approximately 550 cases were appealed to the Supreme Court of Virginia; the bulk of the briefs were prepared by S.W. (Sam) Tucker and me with generous assistance from Julius Chambers. By the time that the Movement had wound down, Len Holt and the other out-of-town lawyers had to return to their practices, Harry Wood had gone to teach at the School of Law at Southern University, Andrew Muse was heading up the Office of Minority Affairs with the Democratic Party, and Jerry Williams and George Woody had by this time become heavily involved in their practices. But Sam Tucker, whom we affectionately called "Mr. Sam," did not rest until our cases had been pursued as far as it was legally feasible to do.

The above statement really completes the saga.

— *Ruth Harvey*
Danville, VA

In "South Coast Follies: Coastal Profiles of Nine Southern States" in "Coastal South," Russell Long is referred to as the nephew of Huey Long. Senator Long, former chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and still one of the most powerful members of Congress, is the son of Huey Long.

— *Morris Witten*
Baton Rouge, LA

I was interested in Steve Schewel's article, "Pocketbooks and Neighborhoods," (*SE*, March/April, 1982), about the successful progressive electoral victory in Durham, North Carolina, in which activists overcame a campaign based on personalities and discussed serious issues intelligently. However, as Schewel admits, they were

unable to deal with the issue of crime effectively. I'd like to share some thinking on this issue.

The "crime problem," code-named "law and order" by the conservatives, trips up progressives again and again. Disdaining the conservative view that crime is caused by genetic inheritance and should be treated with more incarceration and longer sentences, progressives accept the liberal view that crime, as Schewel writes, "is largely an indirect product of poverty, discrimination and social dislocation. . . ." They know that tougher law enforcement and longer prison sentences won't solve the problem and will probably only make things worse in the long run.

However, progressives have generally conceded the issue to conservatives because they have not developed a workable solution or even a legitimate hope to offer voters. Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty threw massive amounts of money at poverty and its supposed product, crime, but, even though the program reduced poverty somewhat, crime is still escalating. The major liberal solution — more dollars means less crime — has been discredited.

How about providing jobs to people as an indirect solution? Even if enough jobs at livable wages existed, there is no sound guarantee that crime would not flourish. If employment and crime were negatively correlated (meaning those with jobs didn't commit crimes), then there would be no white-collar crime (embezzlement, fraud and the like), no Watergate-like political crimes and no criminal activity by employed working-class people. However, we all know that these criminal activities still exist, and in fact seem to be increasing.

Furthermore, the Reagan Depression renders this solution even more hopeless. Unemployment seems firmly structured into our current economic system, making the "more jobs means less crime" scenario even more impractical, because when so many white males are unemployed, it makes things almost impossible for people of color and women.

Given the failures of these "liberal"

solutions, what alternatives would I offer? I have a bachelor's degree in criminology. I have done full-time volunteer work in a maximum security state prison and worked as a paraprofessional counselor in a half-way house. As a result, I joined the radical prison movement, struggling to end the oppression of prisoners by fighting for the eradication of prisons. I have been a prisoner myself, serving time in four different federal prisons (for armed political activities), with differing security classifications. This wide range of personal experience leads me to believe that both the conservative view of the causation of crime — heredity — and the liberal — quest for money — do not accurately describe the prime reason people engage in criminal activity.

(By "criminal activity," I refer to crime committed for economic gain and/or which involves the conscious oppression of others, such as premeditated murder and kidnapping, and rape, spouse beating, "queer bashing" and other crimes of violence generally directed by men against women and/or gay men. This obviously does not include crimes of passion nor crimes by the psychologically impaired, and may not include such "victimless" crimes as drug use or prostitution. In other words, I am referring to consciously criminal activity which is repudiated by almost all members of a community.)

As a result of my experiences and a theoretical understanding of others, I feel that the primary reason most people commit crimes is as an effort to take power over their lives. When people participate in a crime, they — if only momentarily — are in control. They know they face imprisonment and/or death if they are apprehended, yet they still act. There is a high, a rush, that comes with a good score, because it proves you've mastered your environment; this is similar to scoring a touchdown, closing an important contract, birthing a baby or generally anything where you've succeeded as you wanted to. You are in total control and the world seems beautiful.

FROM OUR READERS

(I don't wish to ignore the fear, the terror, the powerlessness a crime victim feels; I am simply pointing out how someone feels when they are in control of a situation. It's what ABC's "Wide World of Sports" calls "The Thrill of Victory.")

I came to this conclusion when I started getting to know professional criminals. Almost all of them have succeeded economically in their criminal careers. Almost all criminals, especially the pros, have a run of success before they are caught, if they ever are. But they keep on committing crimes.

One bank robber I know was living with a bank executive and had access to her keys, but refused to rip off the bank, while robbing others at the same time. One might say he was being respectful or sentimental toward this woman, but knowing him and how he used people, I believe he didn't rob the bank because there was nothing in it for him: it would have taken no skill, no mastery, no feeling of power. So he didn't.

Sure, criminals enjoy obtaining money, but I've found it is only a bonus rather than the reason they act. Their quest for power, and the attendant feeling of accomplishment and success, is both why crime is rampant and growing, and why it cannot be generally deterred by punishment, no matter how severe. Any society such as ours, where alienation and feelings of powerlessness and victimization are so pervasive and intensifying, is one where crime will increase as people strive to gain power.

If progressives agree with what I'm saying, they should see that the way to deal with the crime issue is not to try to out-repress the repressives, nor to duck the issue, but to point out that the way to end crime is for people to take power over their lives and eradicate all oppression. Short-term strategies can include instituting anti-sexist counseling for rapists and batterers, starting counseling programs for juvenile delinquents and developing support systems for them and their parents, and supporting block patrols by community members. More intermediate-term strategies could include efforts focusing on eliminating racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-semitism and other forms of oppression from school activ-

ities and curricula, as well as removing ROTC activities from schools and replacing competitive sports with noncompetitive ones.

However, these strategies will only work within a larger understanding of the necessity to change the way we raise our children and how they relate to themselves, each other and their environment — a change possible only when adults re-evaluate the way they were raised and consciously work to support each other and to raise the community's children non-oppressively. Only by liberating ourselves and building a liberated, non-oppressive society can we end crime. And capitalism. And the patriarchy, that original source of oppression.

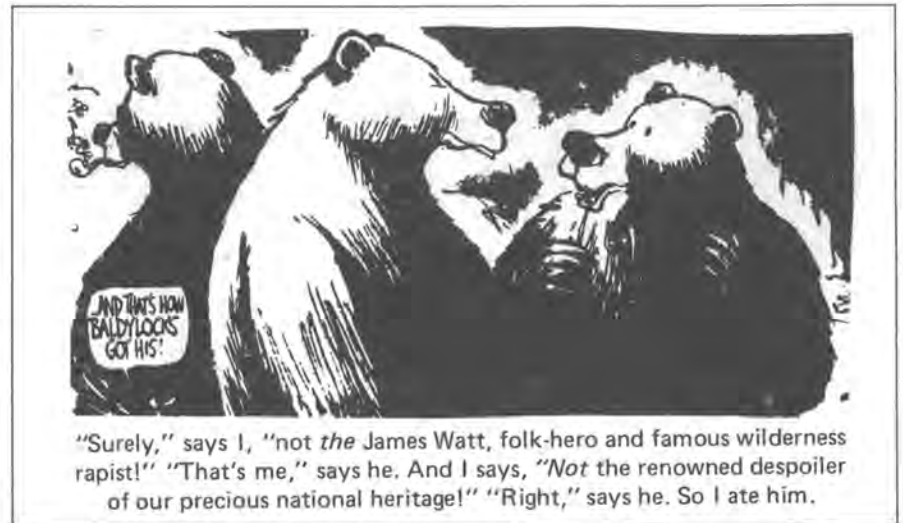
— *an anonymous printer in the
Louisville, Kentucky, area*

I appreciated your article on woodcutters in the March/April issue of *SE* in its human concern for the individuals so employed, but I am growing in-

other things, massive dislocation and social disruption of indigenous peoples, the appalling rate of species extinctions due to habitat destruction, and potentially irreversible damage to the ecosphere a decade or two hence, is a seldom-mentioned byproduct of this "industry."

While I support efforts to improve the status of individual woodcutters in the short run, I am far more interested in liberating them from their position as cogs in the wheel of the great industrial machine — we could all stand to be so liberated, in fact. The time has come when human actions that are clearly bad for the Earth can no longer be justified on the basis of providing "jobs." Instead of letting the outmoded dictates of the human-created game we call "economics" cause us to strip the planet bare of life, we need to start talking about how we can reorganize that game to support a sustainable future for us all.

— *Ronnie Hawkins
Gainesville, FL*



creasingly tired of a journalistic viewpoint that continues to place the concerns of an "industry," of whatever type, ahead of the wellbeing of the Earth — and the paper/timber industry is an excellent example of this clear divergence of priorities.

As is mentioned, the multinationals and conglomerates have extensive land holdings in North America, the Amazon region of Brazil, the Philippines and elsewhere; yes indeed, and the major deforestation that is rampant on a global scale, contributing to, among

What do you mean selling only sizes small, medium and large! Is there no "Journal of the Progressive South" for extra-large people? Clearly the staff of *SE* thinks too small. . . .

— *Randy Lawrence
Size XL
Brooklyn, NY*

Rest assured that we do have the great Southern Exposure T-shirt in an extra-large to accommodate the needs of our extra-large fans, so get your orders in today!

Farmworkers win Arkansas contract

It was like a tree falling in the forest. There was nobody there to hear." Elaine Burns, a volunteer support committee member of the Arkansas Farmworker Civil Rights Organizing Project (AFCROP), was describing an attempted strike by undocumented workers in the early part of the tomato harvest this season.

At that time there was no such thing as AFCROP, and few people besides the farmers and farmworkers themselves knew about the existence of, much less the predicament of, undocumented Mexican and Central American workers in Arkansas. For good reason. According to Burns, "The farmworkers were brought across the Mexican border through a labor smuggling system. Farmers pay the smugglers \$200 to \$300 per worker, and that money is deducted from each worker's earnings until it is paid off."

Approximately 2,000 workers are smuggled into Arkansas each year for the May-June tomato harvesting season. Most are Mexicans, but a growing number are refugees from El Salvador and other war-torn Central American countries; few speak or understand English.

"Undocumented workers who come to Arkansas are held by force," Burns said. "The farmers feel that because they have paid for them, they *own* them. If they're lucky, the farmers will take them to the store once a week, but that's the only time they're let off the farmer's property, and they are closely guarded so it's almost impossible to speak to them. We've been threatened, surrounded, when we've tried."

Other farmworkers, however, have been successful in reaching some of the Arkansas-bound undocumented workers before they crossed the border. Primarily from states like Texas, Florida and New Jersey, where migrant

and seasonal farmworkers have been actively organizing for years, these documented farmworkers have traveled back and forth across the border to develop a support network in both countries for their undocumented colleagues. They have exposed the slavery-like working conditions to religious, labor and civil-rights groups in the states, and they have counseled workers entering this country on their basic rights and on legal organizations that can assist them.

The support bore fruit on June 16 when the undocumented workers at Billie Joe Ferrell's Bradley County tomato farm stopped work. They demanded — and won — a contract which barred Ferrell from holding earnings until the end of the season and which increased their pay from 30 cents to 40 cents a bucket. It was the first contract signed by a tomato grower and undocumented workers in the state.

Although the tomato harvest ended without any other contracts being signed, Burns points with pride to the formation of AFCROP, which was organized by the farmworkers in Bradley County after the successful contract negotiations with Ferrell.

"The farmworkers have all left Arkansas now, of course," said Burns. "They're on to North Carolina for the tobacco crop, then to Florida or Michigan or New Jersey. But the support committee is here . . . getting ready for next year."

Power of boycott protected by Court

The Supreme Court gave Americans a welcome Independence Day present on July 2 by upholding the constitutional right of organizations to engage in economic boycotts. By a vote of eight to zero, with former NAACP general counsel Thurgood Marshall abstaining, the jus-

tics overturned a Mississippi court's ruling that NAACP members must pay \$1.25 million in damages to Port Gibson, Mississippi, businesses targeted by a 1966 boycott (see "News Roundup," January-February, 1982).

NAACP officials, meeting at their national convention when the decision was announced, heralded the court's declaration that "while the state legitimately may impose damages for the consequences of violent conduct, it may not award compensation for the consequences of nonviolent, protected activity." Individual threats or acts, such as a brick thrown through a windshield, were not representative of the Port Gibson desegregation campaign, the justices said, and the organization could not be held liable for unsanctioned actions by a few of its members.

NAACP leaders in the South said the ruling opens the door for local chapters to launch new economic boycotts against power structures which, for example, deny adequate black political representation through gerrymandering or other practices. At its seventy-third annual convention, the national NAACP announced a boycott of the movie industry to secure more jobs, subcontracts and other opportunities for blacks, as well as an agreement — called Operation Fair Share — with the electric and gas utilities' trade associations for similar affirmative action steps.

Meanwhile, Jesse Jackson's PUSH (People United to Save Humanity) announced the initial gains won from two corporations it threatened with national boycotts. Coca-Cola now has 20 black wholesalers, up from only one in 1980, and it has lent \$1.5 million to black entrepreneurs entering the beverage industry. Heublein, Inc. — owners of Kentucky Fried Chicken and itself now owned by R.J. Reynolds — has pledged to add 105 black franchisers to the seven it had in 1980 and to provide \$10 million in financing for 24 of them. Both companies agreed to spend more of their multi-million-dollar advertising budget with black public relations firms and black-

audience publications.

Noting that U.S. blacks have an estimated gross annual income of \$145 billion, Jackson said, "We have something that corporations can't do without: big appetites and money." But even supporters of private enterprise caution against high hopes for Jackson's "renegotiation" program with big business. "Minor changes can create a few black capitalists, but don't be deluded that you're increasing the average standard of living for all black people," observed Alfred Osborne, a black economist at UCLA.

The Supreme Court's ruling on boycotts, however, gives new assurances to many organizations, including the AFL-CIO, which put up a substantial part of the NAACP's nearly \$1 million bond, that their use of the potent tactic is protected under the Constitution from retaliatory damage suits.

Is South Carolina "a little guinea pig"?

Recent news reports have sparked an intense controversy over the potential health effects caused by the Savannah River Plant (SRP), the gigantic South Carolina facility that produces plutonium for the U.S. nuclear weapons program. And amid charges and countercharges that the plant is jeopardizing local citizens, South Carolina health officials have announced that they are embarking on what could be the first systematic study of health disorders caused by the plant.

The hubbub began on August 4, when Atlanta *Journal/Constitution* staff writers Mark Bradley and Robert Lamb reported that residents of the towns surrounding SRP suffered from an unusually high incidence of a rare blood disease, polycythemia vera. A survey of area physicians revealed that 25 cases of the disease have occurred in seven South Carolina towns. Polycythemia vera creates an enlarged spleen, a substantial increase in the number of red blood cells and a high oxygen concentration in the arteries.

It causes profound fatigue, and some health officials say it can lead to leukemia, heart disease and stroke.

Since approximately 700,000 people live within a 60-mile radius of the plant and polycythemia vera occurs in an average of one in 250,000 Americans, the 25 cases represent an alarmingly high frequency. Six of the disease victims are current or former SRP workers.

"I believe that a very dangerous situation might well exist near the Savannah River Plant," said Dr. Robert Winslow of Atlanta's Center for Disease Control. Winslow noted that testing among victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs and among Canadian brewery workers exposed to cobalt had revealed possible links between the disease and exposure to radiation. However, he later emphasized that he did not assume that SRP was responsible for the disease and that it "is relatively harmless, if incurable, and really doesn't hurt you. It's fixed by removing blood" — that is, the centuries-old practice of bleeding.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) immediately denied any connection between the disease and SRP. "We don't have any knowledge of the cases," said Jim Gaver of the DOE. "Even if [the cases] are of this disease,

you can't say they can be directly linked to the Savannah River Plant."

Ironically, the day before the report on polycythemia vera broke, Dr. Carl Johnson of Denver, who has documented health hazards at the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant in Colorado, told the judge at the trials of six anti-nuclear trespassers at SRP that there is an "urgent need" for a study of the effects of the "imminent danger" from the plant's radioactive emissions.

"These cases of polycythemia vera are the Three Mile Island of SRP," said Michael Lowe of the South Carolina anti-nuclear group Palmetto Alliance. "It will discredit the lies they've been putting out for years." He added: "The state health department hasn't done a thorough job of monitoring the plant thus far, but we hope this will finally change the way it regulates the industry."

"I think I know where my disease comes from," said George Couch, who worked at SRP for 23 years; during the last 12, he repaired mechanical arms used to handle highly radioactive materials. "The doctor tells me what I've got comes from high altitude or radiation," he said. "Of course, I've never lived in high altitude, but out at the plant, I was exposed to all kinds of



DEMONSTRATORS GATHER OUTSIDE SAVANNAH RIVER PLANT AT 1979 PROTEST

photo by Dic Turte

radiation." Couch filed for workers' compensation, but the claim was refused.

At the urging of Representative Butler Derrick of South Carolina, the state Department of Health and Environmental Control and the Center for Disease Control will conduct a joint study of the causes of the disease. DOE now also promises to "double, triple and quadruple-check" the records of more than 10,000 current and former SRP employees for cases of the rare blood disease. And Georgia Representative Bo Ginn is prodding the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee to investigate as well, since it is deliberating the approval of \$52 million for a new plutonium blending facility.

Many SRP critics, like Lowe, say that "the studies will be meaningless unless the public stays on top of them." Dr. Johnson labeled the polycythemia vera cases "the tip of the iceberg," and said internal SRP reports he obtained from Freedom of Information Act requests reveal astoundingly high levels of radiation emanating from the plant, including releases of radioactive iodine 7,500 times greater than reported to the public.

Reporters Bradley and Lamb also found incidences of heart disease climbing in neighboring Screven County, Georgia, at a rate about five times the statewide increase; and a growth in the cancer rate in Burke County, Georgia, at two-and-a-half times the state as a whole. They also found that higher than normal rates of disease and death exist in all counties southeast of the plant in both Georgia and South Carolina; these rates exceed those in other rural areas that suffer from similar poor medical care.

Local people have generally accepted the plant's presence with few questions, largely because it employs 9,000 people and provides a yearly payroll of some \$280 million. However, further revelations of health disorders could lead area residents to echo the comments of Gene Crawford of New Ellenton, a long-time SRP opponent: "As an individual who doesn't work at the plant, I resent them putting that much [radioactive] stuff in there. If an accident was to happen, we'd be a little town just like a guinea pig."

Southern shipping tied to federal anchor

Four of the busiest ports handling exported cargo are located in the South — New Orleans, Houston, Baltimore and Norfolk. New York is number two in exports, number one in imports. New figures for 1980 show almost one-third of the wheat, corn, soybeans, cotton and other U.S. farm products shipped abroad flow down the Mississippi and out through New Orleans-area ports, giving them nearly one-sixth of the over \$120 billion in export shipments.

If Southern ports are thus greatly helped by government support of farm-product exports, federal aid to the region's shipyards is more confusing. Under Ronald Reagan, the yards may get help, but not until late 1983 or '84. The Navy's five-year construction program of 133 new ships, beginning in fiscal 1983, could bail out floundering shipyards on all three coasts. At the moment, contracts for new military and commercial ships are so scarce, one-fourth of the nation's 80,000 shipyard workers could be laid off this year.

Tenneco's Newport News complex is expected to hold steady at 25,000 workers, but Litton's Ingalls Shipbuilding division in Pascagoula, Mississippi, will drop 1,000 of its 12,500 employees by the end of September. Bethlehem Steel's Sparrow Point, Maryland, plant will cut 1,600 of its 1,700 workers if no new orders are received.

Despite his rhetoric of helping private enterprise work on its own, Reagan is forcing the yards to depend

even more on the Pentagon. Commercial shipbuilders complain that government subsidies for U.S.-built boats don't compete with those offered by countries like Japan and South Korea. As a result, private builders are taking their business elsewhere because "they can't afford to build in the U.S. anymore," says Edwin Hood of the Shipbuilders Council of America.

Double dipping at the Moral Majority

Vandals cut down the antenna tower of Reverend Jerry Falwell's radio station near Lynchburg, Virginia, in June, and in a matter of days, the Moral Majority leader sent out thousands of fundraising letters to resurrect it. "Sabotage!" the letter began. It went on to ask supporters to "send a special gift of \$100 immediately to help us back on the air."

It ended with Reverend Falwell's postscript: "Let's defeat the devil and get back on the air in the next few days."

But the letter left out one important fact: the station's insurance policy will pay *all* damage and replacement costs for the antenna. Pressed by a reporter, Falwell admitted the policy would cover "whatever was destroyed."

William R. Goodman, a Lynchburg College professor and biographer of the evangelist, says the appeal "follows a pattern over the years" of Falwell sending out desperate letters that are highly misleading.

Election finds UMW facing a rough future

Campaigning for the November 9 election of a new president for the United Mine Workers (UMW) coincides this year with a deep recession in the coal fields. But so far, style more than differences in programs for dealing with a troubled industry

SEEN ANY GOOD NEWS?

There's no reason to let us be the ones who sift through the press to choose the material to include in the Southern News Roundup. If you see a feature article in your local newspaper or a magazine that sheds light on what progressive Southerners are doing — or are up against — send it to us. Send the complete article, date and name of publication (with its address if possible) along with your name and address, and whatever additional comments or interpretations you care to include, to: Southern News Roundup, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

SOUTHERN NEWS ROUNDUP

seem to separate incumbent Sam Church from his young, steady challenger Rich Trumka.

Mine closings and layoffs are a daily affair, unemployment among Appalachia's union miners has hit 20 percent, and foreclosure suits and bankruptcy petitions fill mountain courthouses. The international depression in the steel industry has crippled the demand for high-grade coal. Conservation, factory shutdowns and mild weather have left utilities with large stockpiles of unused coal. And the expected coal export boom, which once promised to turn every coastal city into a coal port, sputters with the slackening world economy.

Miners have also had their troubles with the Reagan administration. Although Church and the UMW blocked a proposed \$15 million cut from enforcement of mine safety laws, the Mine Safety and Health Administration plans to lower fines and develop a more "cooperative" working arrangement with industry. Other plans threaten to weaken the black lung compensation program, and strip-mining regulations have already been rewritten in the industry's favor.

The union faces troubles of its own, too. In 1974, 70 percent of all coal mined in the United States was dug by UMW members. By 1981, that figure had dropped to 44 percent as the non-union Western coalfields expanded and non-union operators in the East offered to match or exceed union pay and benefits to undercut UMW organizing. Needless to say, the declining ratio of UMW to non-UMW coal means a shift in the balance of power between the union and industry.

Despite these problems, personalities still seem to get most of the attention in this presidential race. Sam Church is a beefy, tobacco-chewing Virginia miner elected union vice president in 1977; he took over in 1979 when then-president Arnold Miller retired after a stroke. Challenger Rich Trumka is a 32-year-old Pennsylvania miner with a Phi Beta Kappa key and a Villanova law degree. He won election to the union executive board last year by running hard against the national contract negotiated by Church.

Miners rejected the first contract Church brought them by a two-to-one

margin, and most still feel Church did a poor job. Trumka is making weak leadership a key issue in his presidential bid, but compared to the givebacks accepted by many unions, the UMW's 37.8 percent wage increase over three years looks great. In fact, Church is now touting his skill as a contract negotiator and saying that the 1981 settlement "will be the best national wage agreement negotiated while Ronald Reagan is in the White House."



photo by Earl Dotter

HAPPIER DAYS FOR THE UMW: 1974 VICTORY AT HARLAN COUNTY, KY.

Inflating his capacity to win concessions and fight Reagan is crucial to Church's campaign because his electorate knows the new union president will negotiate two national contracts during his five-year term and because of mounting grievances against deteriorating working conditions fostered by federal permissiveness.

Trumka, who is considered more militant than Church, plays up his education as well as his solid union-family background. He wears three-piece suits on the campaign trail and thinks

miners, especially the young miners who are his natural constituency, want their president to exude savvy and class. As one Kentucky miner put it, "They want to go with brains this time instead of a good old boy who chews Red Man on TV."

Church's supporters counter by painting Trumka as being "young and dissident," an allusion to his connections with the Miners for Democracy campaign that elected Arnold Miller and ushered in a period of bitter internal and external feuding that many miners would like to forget. In some camps, the American flag on Trumka stickers has even been covered over with a hammer and sickle.

Church is raising lots of money from Washington lobbyists, politicians and other union officials, and is spending it on a professional-run campaign, complete with direct mail and telephone banks. By contrast, Trumka is reviving an old-fashioned stump speaking style and shaking hands in coalfield bath houses. His running mate, Cecil Roberts of Charleston, West Virginia, is also widely respected among rank-and-file miners.

Still, it's been a low-key campaign, especially compared to the battles of the last two decades. One Pineville, Kentucky, resident said he hasn't seen the first campaign sticker on a car or hard hat. "You wouldn't even know there was a UMW election down here."

Jim Branscome, a long-time coalfield observer, believes that as election day approaches, miners will choose between a hesitancy to rock the boat in the middle of a storm (pro-Church) and a growing anger toward their employers' use of the economy and lax regulations to reverse the gains of a generation (pro-Trumka). "The election may well be up to the companies," he said. "They favor stability and Mr. Church, but if conditions get worse in the mines, they may put the man they don't want in office."

The larger program for actually regaining organized miners' clout in a changing industry has hardly been mentioned by either candidate, noted Curtis Seltzer, a former coalfield journalist now at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington. Steps in such a program might include setting jurisdictional guidelines with other unions

SOUTHERN NEWS ROUNDUP

— like the Teamsters, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and International Union of Operating Engineers — who are signing up Western coal miners. The UMW could also initiate a coalition of energy-related unions representing workers in the conglomerates that now control oil, gas, uranium and coal, says Seltzer.

Less grandiose plans would include a beefed-up research effort in preparation for the next contract, more attention to health-and-safety issues, and an education program for training a host of new local leaders. "It's clear to me," Seltzer predicts, "that if Church or Trumka doesn't come up with something different in the next five years, the UMW is going down the tubes."

— Thanks to Bill Bishop of Louisville

Black lawmakers aim for voice in Congress

Seventeen years after the Voting Rights Act, not one of the Deep South states sends a black to Congress. Harold Ford represents a Memphis district that's about half black, and Mickey Leland has a Houston district that's 41 percent black and 31 percent Hispanic. But across the region, as districts have been redrawn after each federal census, white politicians have protected themselves by splitting up black voters.

The black caucuses of several Southern legislatures made serious attempts in the 1981 and '82 redistricting sessions to draw the new lines so major black communities would not be splintered. They took their cases to the Justice Department under the pre-clearance provisions of the Voting Rights Act (VRA). And, under other VRA sections, they filed lawsuits that sometimes rankled old-line Democrats who consider blacks part of their natural constituency. But with not one of their own in Congress to show for their years of loyalty, black politicians refused to lose sight of their goal.

As a result, Mississippi now has one black candidate on the November bal-

lot, and Georgia has an Atlanta district that's 65 percent black, with a candidate yet to be chosen. Texas will have a new Dallas district that's likely to elect a black beginning in 1984. But Alabama (26 percent black), Louisiana (29 percent), North Carolina (22 percent), South Carolina (30 percent) and Virginia (19 percent) still have no districts that are even half black and have no black candidates that survived primaries to make the ballot this fall.

In Mississippi, blacks met with partial success in their attempt to recreate a Delta district taking in the northwest

Democrats now in power, who see themselves as unable to prevent losses to Republicans in districts stripped of solid black Democratic voters.

As Claude Ramsay, president of the state AFL-CIO, told a *Washington Post* reporter, "I don't blame blacks for feeling the way they do because they've been screwed pretty badly here, but we could wind up with one black congressman and four damn Republicans.

Given the performance of Democrats, the black legislators accepted their unlikely alliance with Republicans as the only way they'd get a rep-

NUMBER OF BLACKS IN NATIONAL AND SOUTHERN LEGISLATURES

STATE	Black U.S. Repres.	Black U.S. Senators	Black State Repres.	Total State Repres.	Black State Senators	Total State Senators	Blacks as % of Total Population
Alabama	0	0	12	105	3	35	25.6%
Arkansas	0	0	4	100	1	35	16.3%
Florida	0	0	5	120	0	40	13.8%
Georgia	0	0	21	180	2	56	26.8%
Louisiana	0	0	10	105	2	39	29.4%
Mississippi	0	0	15	122	2	52	35.2%
North Carolina	0	0	3	120	1	50	22.4%
South Carolina	0	0	15	124	0	46	30.4%
Tennessee	1	0	9	99	3	33	15.8%
Texas	1	0	13	150	0	31	12.0%
Virginia	0	0	4	100	1	40	18.9%

THERE ARE NO BLACKS IN CONGRESS FROM THE DEEP SOUTH; 126 NOW FILL 7% OF SOUTHERN STATE LEGISLATIVE SEATS, UP FROM 32 IN OFFICE IN 1970.

corner of the state from Vicksburg up the river to the Tennessee border. That's what the district looked like in 1966, when white politicians read the provisions of the Voting Rights Act, noticed the district was 65 percent black and realized they could lose control to the newly enfranchised black voters. They promptly redrew the map, dividing the black belt among three new districts with white majorities.

Because so many people have moved away from the dirt-poor Delta in the last 15 years, a district akin to the old one would be only 54 percent black today — only 47 percent of the voting-age population would be black. So the district proposed late last year by black leaders added enough precincts from northern Hines County outside Jackson to make it 65 percent black — an idea that did not sit well with the white

representative in Washington. But then the Republicans went with a Delta district that's only 54 percent black, and that's just what the federal courts approved in a July, 1982, decision.

In an August primary, black legislator Robert Clark beat three white opponents to secure the Democratic nomination. Clark is a former school teacher who was first elected to the state legislature in 1968, the first black since Reconstruction. He now faces strong GOP opposition — this was the *Republican* plan, remember — and the seat has been targeted by the Republican National Committee as one they can win.

Hopes are higher in Georgia, where federal courts ordered the legislature to redraw the lines in Atlanta in early August, 1982. There was clear-cut evidence that an earlier district drawn up

by lawmakers was racially motivated; during discussion of its composition, the chair of the lower house's reapportionment committee, Representative Joe Mack Wilson, publicly stated, "The only thing worse than a 'nigger' district is a Republican district."

Under pressure from black legislators, led by State Senator Julian Bond, the legislature finally settled on a Fifth Congressional District that is 65 percent black instead of its current 50 percent. This seat, once occupied by Atlanta mayor Andrew Young, is now held by white liberal Wyche Fowler, but one or more blacks are expected to file against him in a primary not scheduled at this writing in mid-August. Fowler is vulnerable not only because of the increase in his black constituency but also because the reapportionment moved large sections of his liberal white voters into a neighboring district. Whoever wins the Democratic primary is expected to take the seat.

The situation in Texas, which is 12 percent black, is considerably different. There, the black and Mexican-American caucuses lined up solidly with the liberal wing of the Democratic Party to save as many seats as possible for progressives. They failed. The legislature had the complicated task of rearranging all the existing Congressional boundaries to add three new districts to the 24 Texas already had. The biggest battle came over Dallas. Despite their protest, GOP Governor Bill Clements proclaimed himself on the side of minorities — and then rallied a coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats to pass his plan. It replaces three Dallas-area seats now held by two white liberal Democrats and a conservative Republican with four seats tailor-made for three Republicans and a black. All but one black legislator voted *against* this plan; the Republicans' one ally, Lanell Cofer, was later defeated by another black in her bid to stay in the state house.

A three-judge federal panel eventually overturned the GOP's plan for Dallas and put their own in its place, just in time for the May primary. However, the Supreme Court has since reversed the judges and reinstated the

Republican plan, but too late for this year.

In 1984, unless the legislature changes its mind again, there will be a Dallas district that's 47 percent black and 17 percent Hispanic, and a black is expected to easily take it away from incumbent Martin Frost. That would bring the total of minority-controlled Texas House seats to six. Besides Leland's Houston seat, there is Henry B. Gonzalez's San Antonio district (62 percent Hispanic, nine percent black) and three south Texas chicano districts with combined Hispanic and black populations ranging from 57 to 72 percent.

Anti-bigotry efforts expand in two states

The Atlanta-based National Anti-Klan Network (NAKN), a coalition of more than 50 national civil-rights and religious organizations, says Klan activity has risen six-fold in Georgia since last December. NAKN's director, Lyn Wells, attributes much of the upsurge to one person, Edward Fields, grand dragon of the Marietta-based New Order Knights of the KKK. Fields, a co-founder of the Christian Anti-Jewish Party in the '50s and later of the National States Rights Party, now edits the latter's *The Thunderbolt*, which is filled with neo-Nazi propaganda.

Last February, members of Fields's group, some of them armed, confronted and verbally abused civil-rights

marchers on an 11-mile walk from Social Circle to Monroe. The marchers were protesting a 35-year string of unsolved murders, including the 1981 lynching of a black soldier on furlough. Other recent Klan activities range from membership drives across the state, to cross burnings in Marietta and Savannah, to shootings into black homes and businesses.

Through a series of lectures, workshops, film showings and press conferences, NAKN has launched its Georgia Counter-Klan Project to break what it calls "the best friend of the KKK" — *silence*. With help from the project, churches, women's organizations and student groups in various parts of the state are now, as Wells puts it, "doing their own thing" to educate their members about the increasing threat of Klan terrorism. And together with the Georgia Association of Educators, the project is encouraging teachers to use an instructional kit on the Klan created by the Connecticut Association of Educators and the Council on Interracial Books for Children.

Pressing for a government crackdown on the Klan is another focus of NAKN's Georgia project. The state attorney general recently declared that a public Klan rally is an illegal gathering if anyone present brandishes a weapon, even if the rally is held on private property. A bill introduced in the last session of the state legislature by Representative Tyrone Brooks of Atlanta would create an Anti-Terrorism Task Force within the Georgia Bureau



Illustration by Frances Jetter

of Investigation to identify, investigate, arrest and prosecute any individual or group engaged in terrorist acts because of race or religion.

The bill, known as the Anti-Terrorism Act, was supported by the Georgia Black Legislative Caucus, but failed to pass the full House. Opponents say an existing Civil Crisis Task Force created by several government agencies already has responsibility to investigate the Klan. But Wells says that it's "obviously not doing its job" and won't take the necessary preventive actions to halt the rise of dangerous Klan activities.

Some citizens are not waiting on government help. On July 31, about 125 counter-demonstrators attended a Klan rally held by Fields in Hogansville, Georgia. The group of blacks and whites, wearing buttons proclaiming "KKK Not Welcome Here," distributed leaflets and raised their voices with loud songs to break the silence — and drown out the Klan speakers on the podium.

Citizens in Louisville, Kentucky, are also pushing the government — in this case, the local school board — to block provocative action by the Klan. A pro-Klan group got permission from the board to have Bill Wilkinson, head of the Invisible Empire, Knights of the KKK, speak at the high school in Valley Station the week that school begins. The white suburb cradled an anti-busing campaign in the mid-'70s, and it has sponsored Labor Day parades ever since to activate racism in the now-integrated schools. It invited Wilkinson and pressured the school board for a meeting place after a human-rights rally at Central High School in the early summer featured Angela Davis and Eddie Carthan, the former mayor of Tchula, Mississippi. (A growing movement of supporters says Carthan was framed for murder and other charges by his white opponents.)

An Ad Hoc Coalition Against the Klan claims Wilkinson's appearance presents a "clear and present danger" to school children's safety; with support from an impressive array of religious, social and civil-rights groups, they are petitioning the school board to cancel its permission. Significantly, the Reverend Daniel Lovell of the Valley Station Baptist Church has broken the silence of opposition to the Klan

in the area by mobilizing his congregation and others in favor of the petition.

Black youth say integrating Valley Station High has been difficult but relatively peaceful. Threats and discrimination are common, and last spring the Junior Klan began peddling "white power" T-shirts. To prevent an escalation of terror, two black students are the principal plaintiffs (joined by the Ad Hoc Coalition) in a suit asking the federal courts to block Wilkinson's appearance at the school. The case is scheduled for September 2, two days before the Klan leader's rally.

Hi, we're here for the uranium in your yard!

Marline Uranium Corporation announced in July its intention to begin one of the first major uranium mining ventures east of the Mississippi. The company said its six-year investigation showed as much as 30 million pounds of uranium oxide lie under 100 acres of farmland in Pittsylvania County in southern Virginia. Company vice president Norman Reynolds predicted Marline would rev up a \$200 million mining-and-milling operation within five years that would eventually create 900 jobs locally and generate millions of dollars in county and state tax revenues.

State Senator Daniel Bird, Jr., approvingly announced that his subcommittee of the Virginia Coal and Energy Commission will recommend that the General Assembly end its moratorium on the granting of uranium mining permits and allow the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to regulate Virginia uranium mines.

Other Virginians, especially in central Virginia, where Marline has been leasing since 1980, were less excited by the news. "We are very concerned about Marline's plans," said Barbara Lambert of Stop Uranium Mining in Virginia (SUMVa), a recently formed grassroots group. "We hope to involve people across the state in stopping these plans in the state legislature next year."

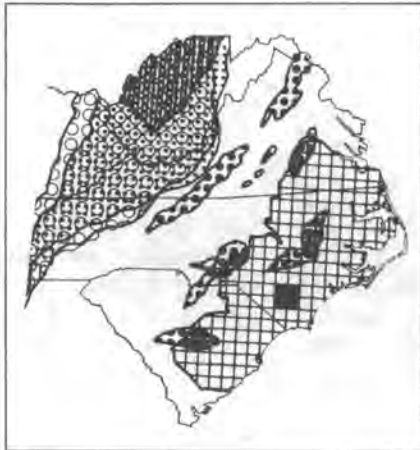
Sandra Speiden, who along with dairy farmer husband Bill refused to lease any land to the company, has spearheaded a campaign by central Virginia's well-respected Piedmont Environmental Council to make Marline address such issues as what type of mining would be used; how mill tailings would be controlled; how area residents' health would be affected; and what would happen to water availability and quality. As a result, many county boards of supervisors and other officials in the area support a seven-year moratorium on mining until there is better data on current water quality and on the impacts mining might have.

Marline enjoys a far more favorable reception in Pittsylvania County, a textile-and-tobacco area generally poorer than the dairy farm districts of central Virginia. About 40,000 acres of the 55,000 acres the company has under lease are located in the county. "It's incredible," says Danville chemist Joanne Spangler. "This is the first time Yankees have come into southern Virginia and been welcomed with open arms."

Marline has deftly courted local folks. Two of its first leases were with Edwin R. Shields, then chair of the Pittsylvania County board of supervisors, and with Preston Moses, editor of the Chatham *Star-Tribune*, two potent figures who have led support for the company. For more good will, Marline recently donated a vitally needed \$2,700 to the Chatham Volunteer Fire Department to help buy a new fire truck. And vice president Reynolds bought a plush home in the county and declared his intention to settle down in the area.

Marline is working equally hard to build ties in the General Assembly. It spent \$58,000 for "lobbying" in the 1982 session. And it assured itself of bipartisan influence by retaining as its two chief lobbyists Edward Lane, formerly a key conservative Democratic legislator and still a confidant of Governor Charles Robb, and William Royall, the former campaign manager and press secretary for former Republican Governor John Dalton.

Most observers now predict the legislature is where the fate of uranium mining in Virginia will be decided. Senator Bird has proposed allowing



THE SHADED AREAS REPRESENT GEOLOGICAL FORMATIONS WITH POSSIBLE SOURCES OF URANIUM

mining in the Pittsylvania County area, while holding off in the central part of the state where opposition is strong. But the central Virginia opponents fear Marline will establish its base in southern Virginia and then move north. They also oppose turning regulatory authority over to the NRC, especially considering the disastrous legacy of uranium mining and milling in the West and the inadequacy of federal rules for a populous state like Virginia.

To broaden their own base, Joanne Spangler is organizing citizens against Marline in the Pittsylvania County area, and SUMVa plans to create a statewide network that can pressure enough legislators to get the statewide moratorium extended. Meanwhile, residents in Rockingham County, North Carolina, where Marline has also leased some land, have begun meeting and registering their concern about the firm's plans.

Beneath this entire battle are two critical, yet unanswered, questions: where will Marline get the \$200 million start-up capital it needs, and where will it sell the uranium it eventually finds? Marline is a subsidiary of the relatively puny \$13-million-a-year Marline Oil Corporation. The latter is controlled by toy heir Louis Marx, Jr., who has previously peddled similar small companies to the oil giants for a healthy profit. Marline has admitted it will need partners to finance such a substantial operation, but thus far has remained mum about who those partners will be.

Even more important is the second question. The domestic market for uranium is glutted, and the international market has been slumping for years. Nuclear reactor cancellations and vigorous competition from countries like Australia have caused the closing of mine after mine in the Western states. Marline continues to project optimism about its prospects for selling uranium and hints that foreign buyers might be a major outlet. But, comments one observer of the industry, "I don't know anybody, *anybody*, trying to sell uranium based on what the market looks like three-to-five years down the road. It makes me wonder if this isn't a smokescreen for some other type of project."

The battle lines in Virginia are being drawn as if a potential mint lies underneath Pittsylvania County. But as suspicions grow, concerned citizens hope the crucial questions about Marline's operations will get answered before the General Assembly gives the go-ahead for the company to begin mining uranium in Virginia.

CWA loses battle for Tennessee plant

Organized labor recently lost its foothold in one of the largest of the telecommunications companies now building manufacturing facilities across the South. On June 17, by a vote of 273-211, Northern Telecom employees in Nashville, Tennessee, voted to end their affiliation with the Communication Workers of America (CWA).

"The union attracted support across the board — black, white and Oriental," said CWA organizer Ron Harleman, "but we weren't able to overcome the strong anti-union sentiment among the white workers."

Owned by the Canadian equivalent of Ma Bell, Northern Telecom has opened 13 manufacturing facilities in the U.S. in the last 10 years — including the Nashville facility, headquarters for its American operations, and five other Southern plants: Atlanta; West

Palm Beach, Florida; Raleigh and Creedmoor, North Carolina; and Richardson, Texas.

The expanding market for telecommunications equipment — like business communications and office switching systems — and electronic office systems has combined with the court-ordered breakup of giant conglomerate AT&T to present an entirely new organizing dilemma for CWA, which has traditionally been based in the Ma Bell system. "With the breaking-up of AT&T," comments Harleman, "we are realizing how important it is to organize some of its competitors."

CWA has stubbornly sought to do just that at Northern Telecom's Nashville plant. From 1976 to 1980, the union lost five elections there by less than 20 votes each; four of those were overturned by the National Labor Relations Board because of the company's illegal anti-union activities. However, in October, 1980, CWA finally prevailed by a 14-vote margin.

Northern Telecom did not accept the union's victory. With the advice of prominent anti-union law firm King, Ballou and Little, the company refused to meet union demands on key contract items, isolated union supporters and held frequent in-plant talks denouncing the union. Because of its expanding market, the company was able to double its work force, adding mostly young whites and Laotian refugees unfamiliar with unions.

Northern Telecom finally found the tactic to rid itself of the union in February, 1982: it offered its workers a 10-percent wage increase *if* the union would accept a weak contract. Once the union refused, anti-union workers circulated a petition calling for a decertification of CWA and then won the June vote.

CWA organizers have not abandoned the plant; they are still meeting with organizing committee members and offering assistance to union supporters. The union is also surveying other Northern Telecom plants in the region for possible organizing drives. With the company posting a 20 percent gain in profits during the second quarter of 1982 and CWA membership in the mid-South declining, union officials say they will keep Northern Telecom as a prime target for organizing efforts.

Facing South

a syndicated column:
voices of tradition
in a changing region

The Raindrop Waltz

LOWELL, NC — “I can’t hardly believe it. You’re Happy’s boy!” The thin stooped man smiles and shakes his head in amazement. “You come all this way jest to see a 50-year-old guitar and hear me play ‘The Raindrop Waltz!’ Well, come on in!” As I move inside, Lawrence Mills peers closely at my face. “Now that I look at ye up close, ye do favor your daddy — specially around the eyes. Come back to the bedroom. Hit’s cooler there, and that’s where I keep my memories.”

The room is filled with pictures. Smiling young men holding musical instruments look down at me from the front porches, bandstands and country roads of 50 years ago. “Look at this,” says Lawrence, pointing to a photograph in an ornate frame which seems to dominate the collection. “Happy and me. Ain’t we something?” The two figures, their faces watchful and serious, stand before a vintage roadster. “That guitar your daddy’s holding, that’s the same one I’ve got.”

Slowly, painfully, Lawrence kneels by the bed and slides a big guitar case from beneath it. “I don’t play much now. Arthritis, ye know.” His broken fingers move cautiously up the neck of the gleaming Gibson. “Purty thang, ain’t she? Me and my boy keep a shine on her.”

He turns the guitar in his hands, and then carefully strums a faint note that lingers in the air. Smiling softly, he says, “This is the one, ye know — the one that I played at your daddy’s funeral. Played ‘The Raindrop Waltz.’”

Lawrence Mills cradles the guitar like a man holding a sleeping child. “Funny thang was, all the boys in our string band liked that song. Your daddy played it at every dance — allus played it last. I guess it got to be a way of letting everybody know that the show was over, and it was time to go home. We even agreed that whichever

of us died first, the rest of us would play that waltz at the funeral. Didn’t have no idea that we’d be playing it so early, or that it would be for Happy.”

“Before your daddy was killed, we shore had some good times!” Lawrence chuckles and places the guitar back in its case. “Called ourselves ‘The Smokey Mountain String Band.’ Played dances in Gatlinburg, Walhalla and Asheville. Happy had this spiffy little Chevy roadster with our name on the side. I remember some wonderful nights . . .



Illustration by Frank Holyfield

nights we played till daylight — till the fiddlestrings broke, and then riding back home playing and singing. Your daddy was courting your mama then. The night Happy told us he was getting married, we was coming over New Found Gap, the top down, the moon shining, the band playing in the back, and your daddy and Irene in the front. Them was good times.”

Lawrence stares reflectively at his broken hands and sighs. “Never have been able to accept the way Lyndon, your daddy, died.” He smiles apologetically. “You notice I have trouble calling your daddy Lyndon? I allus thought of him as . . . Happy.” His voice breaks. “We was all in that little service station in Moody’s Bottom, cutting up and playing. That’s where your daddy worked during the day. This little man just walked in, he went over to your daddy and shot him. He was drunk. He didn’t even remember doing it. I can still hear him at the trial:

“I didn’t go to! Happy was my friend!”

Lawrence lifts the guitar again and stares briefly at his own reflection in its glowing depths. “One thang about your daddy’s funeral. I guess we all knew that something had ended — like when Happy played ‘The Raindrop Waltz’ at dances, it was time to go home. The band broke up after that, and I come to Gastonia to work in the mills. Kinda quit making music, I guess, except every now and then. But now the doctor has made me quit

working in the mill, I spend a lot of time just trying to recollect them old songs.”

My father’s best friend smiles brightly. “Did you ever hear ‘The Raindrop Waltz?’ Right purty song. Kinda sad and restful both, ye know. Really does sound like rain falling.” Lawrence’s fingers move haltingly up the neck, and slowly the music comes. The patter of raindrops, water dripping from the eaves of the houses, sifting through trees to a parched earth. As Lawrence said, the sound was both sad and restful. □

— GARY CARDEN
folklorist, speaker, writer
Sylva, NC

“Facing South” is published each week by the Institute for Southern Studies. It appears as a syndicated column in more than 80 Southern newspapers, magazines and newsletters.

VOICES OF OUR NEIGHBORS

Amnesty International

Everyday Events

American chapters of Amnesty International (AI), the worldwide group that agitates for the release of political prisoners and against official torture and terrorism, have been spending their energies of late publicizing "disappearances." A specialty of Latin American right-wing governments, a "disappearance" is a seizure of a person by the state's security forces without a charge, without a trial — and without an admission that he or she has been seized. The victim simply vanishes. The May, 1982, issue of *Matchbox*, AI's U.S. newsletter, features activities all over the country. Many groups went the predictable route of lectures by experts, showings of films on the subject, discussion groups and so forth. But several were more imaginative. Here's a sampling from the *Matchbox* story:

The St. Louis University campus group actually staged a "disappearance" before members of a political science class. The professor was suddenly taken away by people dressed as security officers. Following the simulated abduction, the professor returned to lead a discussion of what the students had witnessed. An AI member explained to the class, "Events like this happen every day throughout the world."

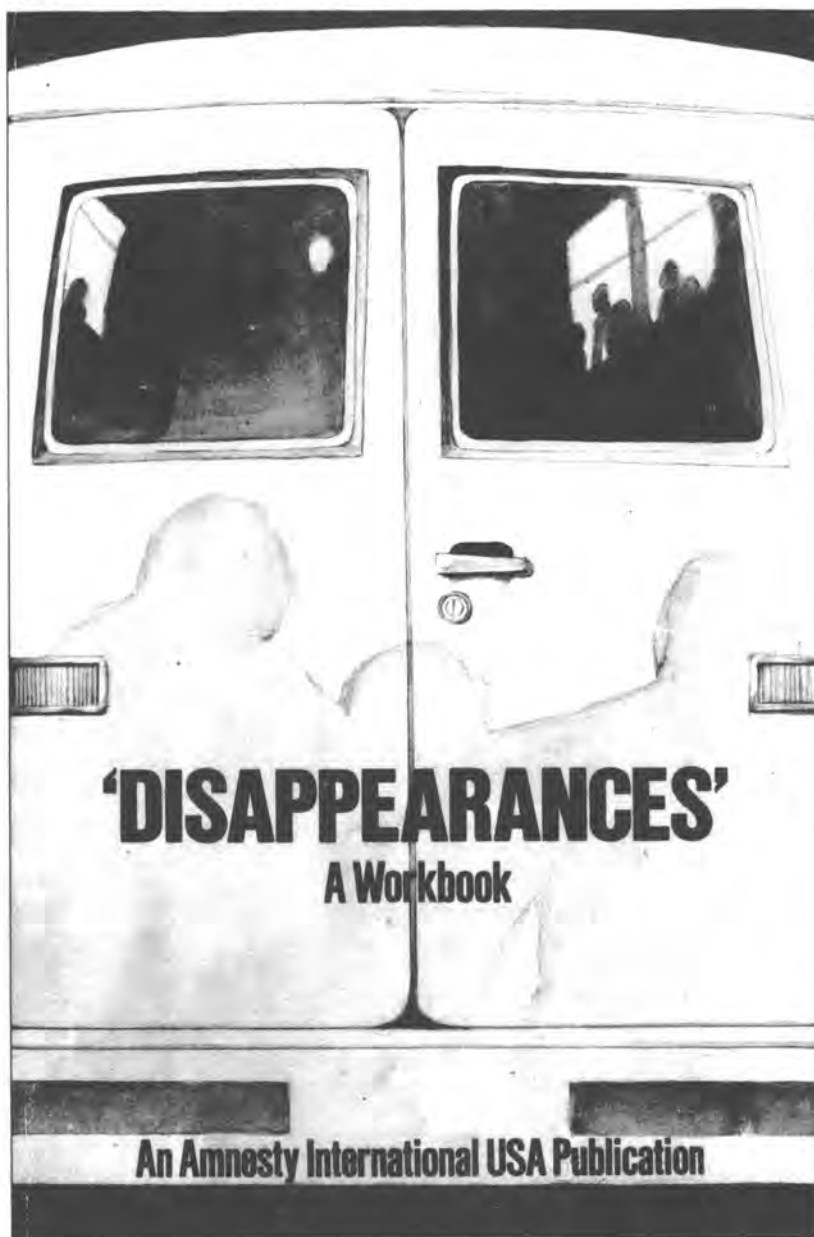
The Bismark, North Dakota, group looked for a positive kind of "disappearance" as part of an innovative fundraiser. The group coordinator decided that she wanted some extra pounds to disappear, and her plan to diet turned into an AI Weight-Loss-A-Thon, in which Bismark residents participated. Complete with pledge cards for dollars per pound lost, the campaign ran for three months and netted the group \$700.

A group in Tucson, Arizona, distributed literature at an arts and crafts fair from a rather unusual booth:

group members set up a small "prison" holding two blindfolded, life-sized mannequins. "It looked quite realistic and attracted a lot of people to our booth," said an AI spokesperson.

In New York, members launched a "continuous leafleting campaign" outside theaters showing *Missing*, the film which tells the story of an American who "disappeared" in Chile. The group distributed 1,500 AI flyers on the "disappeared" to audiences leaving

five New York theaters. One group member said the film, along with the AI literature, sparked concern among many moviegoers, who requested information on what they could do to help the "disappeared." Amnesty's suggestions for what to do are described in detail in a handbook called "*Disappearances*" available for \$4.95 from its U.S. office: 304 West 58th St, New York, NY 10019. □



Minnesota

A Populist Agenda

Minnesota is getting a dose of Southern populist politics this fall in the form of Paul Wellstone, a transplanted North Carolinian who is running for state auditor on the Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) ticket. Though this is his first campaign, Wellstone is attracting crowds with well-developed oratorical and organizing skills and a simple theme: "Too few have too much."

Wellstone's platform includes investing state pension funds in housing, alternative energy, small business and agriculture, coupled with employee participation in investment decision-making and a moratorium on farm and home mortgage foreclosures. His platform also stretches far beyond the state auditor's traditional responsibilities: for example, he's pushing the nuclear freeze. As Wellstone explains to those who question why a candidate for state auditor would embrace such an "unrelated" issue, "The survival of Minnesota is a Minnesota issue. I feel ethically and morally bound to talk about it."

This straightforward approach, taken in a personal style that one local newspaper described as "a combination of Robert LaFollette, Oral Roberts and Rocky Balboa," helped Wellstone bury two opponents for the DFL nomination with 70 percent of the votes at a party convention in June, 1982.

Raised in the South, the 37-year-old candidate moved to Minnesota in 1969 to teach political science at Carleton College, and he has been active ever since in organizing, as he says, "especially the low- and moderate-income people, the farmers, the working people who want to be working." He is also the author of *Powerline*, a chronicle of Minnesota farmers' recent battle against high-voltage power lines across their lands, and *How the Rural Poor Got Power*, a handbook on rural organizing.

Now he is waging a visible, close race against a well-financed Republican incumbent. Though Wellstone is clearly

the underdog, his campaign — begun only four months before the DFL convention — has met with such unexpected success already that Minnesota political observers give him at least a chance at victory. Even if he doesn't win, says local activist Harry Boyte, the Wellstone campaign is already a success. It has introduced a promising progressive politician to the voters, in anticipation of a future race in which he could start off with some name recognition, and — more importantly — it has put populism back on the state's political agenda.

Nestle

The Boycott is ON

Nestle Corporation's public statement in March, 1982, that it would abide by the World Health Organization's code for marketing infant formula has led many people to believe that the international boycott of Nestle products is over. But organizers of the five-year-old boycott



say the multinational Swiss food company refuses to allow outside monitoring of its actions, especially the aggressive promotion of breast-milk substitutes in Third World countries, where shortages of sanitary water and money to buy adequate amounts of formula

make its use dangerous to infant health.

Nestle is a world-class creator of public relations smokescreens, and its new marketing guidelines, purporting to follow the code of the World Health Organization (WHO), are a case in point. The WHO code applies to *all* breast-milk substitutes, but Nestle's applies only to formula and not to the heavily promoted weaning cereals and canned milks marketed as supplements to breast milk. Other Nestle guidelines differ substantially from WHO's strictures on advertising and such promotional schemes as offering personal gifts to medical personnel and using salespeople dressed as nurses.

The Minneapolis-based Infant Formula Action Coalition (INFACT) says the boycott of Nestle products should continue until the company complies fully with the WHO code. In another public relations ploy, Nestle recently created its own "independent" committee to "evaluate" criticism and alleged violations of its new guidelines. Nestle does not market infant formula in the United States, but it asked former U.S. senator and presidential candidate Edmund Muskie to serve as chair of the Nestle Infant Formula Audit Commission; the rest of the commission slots are held by religious leaders and health professionals, all from the U.S. and all recruited by Nestle. The company gave the commission a \$450,000 budget, exclusive of Muskie's top-drawer fees, estimated by Washington insiders at \$500 an hour.

INFACT continues to negotiate with the company while reminding consumers that the boycott goes beyond Toll House cookies; other Nestle trademarks include Libby's products, Nescafe and Taster's Choice coffee, Quik chocolate drink mix, Los Hermanos wines, Crosse & Blackwell products, Stouffer's restaurants and frozen foods, L'Oreal cosmetics and others. For more information, write INFACT at 1701 University Ave SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414, or *Food Monitor* magazine, 350 Broadway, Suite 209, New York, NY 10013.

— Thanks to Lynn Hamilton of Food Monitor and Doug Johnson of INFACT for help with this story

RESOURCES

Facts about Racism

Anyone who thinks the historic disparities in the quality of life between whites and blacks in America have been erased should study a new set of statistics compiled by the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC). *Fact Sheets on Institutional Racism* collects facts and figures on the effects of racism in education, media, the economy, health care, housing and government. For example: the black poverty rate is three times that of whites, the black infant mortality rate is twice that of whites, the median family income of blacks is 57 percent that of white families (compared to 56 percent in 1953). In addition, a disproportionate number of blacks continue to be poorly housed, poorly educated and underrepresented in positions of authority in academia, government, the media and business.

Order the booklet for \$2 (or \$1.25 on orders of 10 or more) plus 50 cents postage from: CIBC, 1841 Broadway, Room 500, New York, NY 10023. A similar set of fact sheets on institutional sexism is also available for the same price.

Books about Blacks

An annotated publishers' list of books on black-related themes is a special 29-page feature of the Spring, 1982, issue of *Black Scholar* magazine. Publishers range from the mainstream New York crowd through the scholarly press to the small literary presses offering editions of poetry and fiction. The subject matter also covers a full spectrum: novels, literary criticism, historical works, the social sciences, both Afro-American and African. Finally, there's a long list of black bookstores, but only two are listed from the South (Atlanta's Shrine of the Black Madonna and Houston's Afro-American Book Distributors).

Information Please

We all have a vested interest in

invading the government's privacy — an activity that journalists, scholars, unions, activists and others have developed into an art form since the passage of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 15 years ago. The act is now threatened by crippling amendments proposed by Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah who, along with his friends in the White House, thinks FOIA is a costly, unfair burden on federal agencies.

If it weren't for this law, though,



we would all still be in the dark about hundreds of things it's in our interest to know. To bolster the case for leaving the law alone, the Campaign for Political Rights (CPR) has just published *Former Secrets*, a 200-page compendium of FOIA disclosures. Written by Evan Hendricks, it includes some 500 examples, complete with the names of the requesters of information, the agency involved, what was disclosed and what resulted.

Just to remind you of a few things we owe to FOIA: recall of Firestone 500 tires and exploding Pintos, banning of red dye No. 2 and chloroform, knowledge of the cancer threat to the children of DES mothers, SEC regulations against corporate slush funds and bribery of overseas officials, most of what enforcement there has been of laws against racial and sexual discrimination — and on and on.

Much of what we know of our recent history is also ours thanks to journalists' and scholars' imaginative use of FOIA. For example: the CIA's attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro; the Army's coverup of the My Lai massacre; the FBI's Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) to spy on,

harass and disrupt groups it didn't like, from the Black Panthers to the Ku Klux Klan, and its surveillance of individuals it didn't like — from Martin Luther King, Jr., and Jimi Hendrix to Helen Keller and Adlai Stevenson.

Besides all these reminders of FOIA's past usefulness, the book is also a great source of ideas on how to use the act in the future. Order it from CPR, 201 Massachusetts Ave NE, Washington, DC 20002 (\$9 for tax-exempt organizations, \$15 for others).

CPR also advises that you tell your representatives in Congress to oppose S.1730, Senator Hatch's bill to amend FOIA. The version reported out by the Senate Judiciary Committee in May, 1982, is pending before the Senate; the committee dropped many of the restrictive items on Hatch's wish list, but the bill would still exempt the security agencies and the FBI from most of FOIA's disclosure requirements.

Films on Struggle

"I Heard It Through the Grapevine" is a new film documenting the history of the Civil Rights Movement, featuring interviews with participants at all levels all over the South, conducted by James Baldwin. Interspersed with reminiscences of people and events are film clips, newsreels and photographs from the '60s. Produced by WGBH, the Boston public TV station, it has been shown on some PBS stations. It can be rented or purchased at negotiable rates from Grapevine Productions, 270 Riverside Dr., Apt. 5-A, New York, NY 10025; (212) 222-6547.

"Resurgence" profiles more recent struggles for racial and economic equality. This hour-long documentary contrasts the strike of women poultry workers against Sanderson Farms in Laurel, Mississippi, with the racist ravings of the Klan/Nazi perpetrators of the killings of five Communist Workers Party activists in Greensboro in 1979. The film is an effective catalyst for discussing where the South stands today in matters of racial and economic justice. Distributed by First Run Features, 144 Bleecker St, New York, NY 10012, (212) 673-6881.

Gladys Maynard, a 58-year-old retired beautician who lives in Martin County, Kentucky, learned a meaningful lesson about power this past winter when the leadership of the Kentucky House of Representatives buried an unmined minerals tax bill which she had been pushing. As chair of the Kentucky Fair Tax Coalition, Maynard was leading a battle to bring greater fairness to the Kentucky property tax system.

Minerals are taxed at such a minuscule rate that the absentee corporations controlling most of the wealth of eastern Kentucky get by with incredibly small tax bills. In Martin County, for example, Pocahontas-Kentucky Corporation, a subsidiary of Norfolk and Western Railroad, of Roanoke, Virginia, owns 55 percent (81,333 acres) of the county's minerals yet pays only \$76 in annual property taxes. Royalties on their minerals, which are leased primarily to other large corporations, amounted to over \$17 million in 1981, according to the county tax assessor.

The statewide citizen effort for an equitable tax on minerals was brought to an abrupt halt by coal industry pressure on the legislature. What follows is Gladys Maynard's story of how she came to participate in the struggles of Martin County and central Appalachia, an area where "coal is king." She told her story to Joe Szakos, an organizer for the Appalachian Alliance, a regional group which recently completed a land study that documented the extent of absentee ownership of land and minerals in central Appalachia and detailed the low property tax bills that out-of-state corporations receive. For a full report on the

By Joe Szakos

Things will get Better & Better

*An interview with
Gladys Maynard
of Martin County*

study, see "Who Owns Appalachia?" in Southern Exposure, Vol. X, No. 1, or write the Appalachian Alliance, P.O. Box 66, New Market, TN 37820.

I'm the third generation of my family to live in Martin County, so my roots are here. But we had to leave about 1950. My husband, Vernal, had been working in the mines, and he got sick with arthritis. The doctors recommended that he get out of the mines because it was so damp.

So we had to look for another place to raise our family. Most of our relatives were already in Ohio, in Dayton, and we knew the area since we had lived there for a short time when we first got married. Vernal felt pretty sure that he could find other work there. In fact, he had never found work in Martin County; when he was working in the mines, it was across the river in West Virginia.

After we moved to Dayton, Vernal worked in a foundry for almost 10 years. But the iron and steel dust, along with the coal dust from before, really got to him. In 1959, after four lung operations, he became disabled. But there were no Social Security benefits then. I had to work so hard that I just couldn't earn enough money to keep the house going, my beauty shop going and take care of three kids in school. So we settled out everything; I thought there must be an easier way and decided to move back to Martin County and put up a beauty shop.

It really wasn't much easier. It was more of a struggle to accomplish what I wanted to — even to purchase property or set up a business. I ran into difficulties. The politics were

a lot different. When you have to make a way to survive, to set up a business, you have to learn fast when you're dealing with local powers, with politicians.

About the only thing to do was to work our way out of it. You often had to keep your mouth shut and just mark it down as experience. Now, looking back on it, there was just a whole list of things being chalked up to experience and held for later use.

When I moved back with three teenage children, they actually taught me a lot about the community that I didn't know myself. I had been very active with children's activities in Ohio, but when we returned to Kentucky, there wasn't much for the children to do. But some of their experiences in school showed me how influential the board of education was, especially since the board was the largest employer in the county at the time.

I began studying the political structure of the county, trying to understand what it was all about and putting it together, learning who had power. It was kind of a hard thing to do — I had to listen to people talk, listen to customers and be careful what was said because I had to depend on them for a living. It wasn't my nature to make people mad, and it bothered me that I couldn't speak out and hold my own. It also bothered me that other people would not take their own part and speak out.

I couldn't understand why they would have that much fear. Then I began to realize that it was their jobs. If they didn't vote right, they didn't eat right. There was not much access to public knowledge, public rules, regulations. Every-



photographs by John Roarke Combs

body would just do what they were told.

Then, sometime in the early 1970s, Vernal and I met Lorraine Slone, who had returned to the county from Ohio. We began to compare notes and study the structure. And several others became involved who didn't like the way things were being done, were opposed to the county politics and did not like the education their children were getting. We began to make notes and start a collection.

We soon realized the personnel for the board of education were also officials, leaders, in the Democratic and Republican parties. One day someone said, "Well, it's like a pyramid." From there, we began to put the structure together, with the superintendent of schools at the top. One side of the triangle was made up of Republicans and the other side by Democrats.

The director of pupil personnel was also the chairperson of the county Republican Party. And his wife was a board member. A secretary of finance at the board of education was the secretary of the county Democratic party. The chairperson of the Democratic party was a school principal. When we began to check out the election officers in each precinct, there was usually one or two teachers at each polling place. Also, there might be a janitor, or a cook, or some of their families. It was just a close-knit thing that prevented people from being free to go to the polls and vote independently.

The qualified people would run for office and get such a small number of votes that it would be embarrassing for them to stay in Martin County politics. They usually ended up



GLADYS AND VERNAL MAYNARD ON THEIR PORCH SWING

leaving the county to find employment. In Dayton, it was much different. There was more community participation. People worked together well and you were part of it.

When I first came back here, they had a parent-teachers group at the Warfield School, and I tried to get involved. But it was, "I don't want to hear how they did it in Ohio." By the second year, a teacher was president of the PTA and by the third year, it was phased out entirely.

It just seemed that county officials or school officials wanted to deal with people on a one-to-one basis. They really didn't want organized groups.

Our first attempt to work with a group was in 1972 when a committee formed up Route 292 to improve the road. There was not much coal mining from the 1930s until the early 1960s. But after the coal trucks came back, the roads wouldn't hold up the weight. Route 292 was just one big pothole after another.

I guess I began talking with some customers who came into the beauty shop, and they informed me there had been a meeting called. I went because we had so much trouble with the dusty road from here to Warfield, which is two miles away. It was also a problem to get to the nearest hospital. The hospital is on the Kentucky side of the river, but we had to cross a toll bridge, go up the West Virginia

side, cross like seven railroad crossings. At that time, an ambulance would often be delayed, and it would take at least an hour to get to the hospital. Where, if it could be traveled on the Kentucky side on 292, it could have gone straight up the riverfront within probably 20 minutes.

As I rode to that first meeting, I was concentrating on the roads and I probably had some hopes of getting to people a little higher on the state level. There was actually no plan in my mind. But letter-writing campaigns followed, letters to the governor and the state department of transportation and meetings in Frankfort, the state capital.

We had state officials here for a big dinner in an open field — we did that several times. We made signs posted along the road. This went on for several years, and we were known as the Citizens for Better Roads. The chairperson was Clyde Robinette, who had been involved in community organizing in West Virginia. He knew how to go about getting things done.

By the time we got the road finished — we finally got it hardtopped — there were a number of people beginning to get interested. We saw that we had to fight local officials and state officials.

We began to realize that we just had to fight. By this time, we had a new high school in the county, named Sheldon Clark High School, after the superintendent of schools. Along with the school came a new dress code

that was so strict that it was a hardship on the local people.

I remember one substitute teacher who had just been hired for a few days, and the superintendent came to visit his class. By evening, he was called at home and told they didn't need him any longer. So the next morning, he went to see the superintendent and the principal and asked them why he was laid off, why they didn't need him. I guess the superintendent couldn't give him any satisfaction. He ended up telling him that his papers, his certificates, were not in order. But I understand that he checked with the state and found out that everything was in proper order. But the teacher thought maybe it was because his hair was a little too long to pass the dress code. He realized he had been fired without really knowing why.

At this time, there was a board election coming up, so this young man was ready to fight too, and was willing to try and help us find out what was going on. He came up with the idea to pass a petition to change the name of the school and do away with the dress code. Several people from the Citizens for Better Roads group went to work on the petition. We gathered so many names that the board of education cancelled their meeting. We continued to work on the petition until their next meeting, and again they called it off. But we did not hear about the meeting being cancelled, and about 40 people went to the courthouse that afternoon. Meantime, we were locked out of the courthouse, locked out in the rain, and a photographer for the local paper took some pictures of us standing there.

Later, somebody came with the key and let us in the building. We discussed what we would do and decided that we would keep up until we could go before the board with our petition. And the coverage in the paper helped quite a bit, because the next time we got into the meeting.

I had been chosen to do the talking. This is the first time that I was in a leadership position. Actually, other things I had participated in were already organized. This was the first thing I had ever been working with starting from the ground up.

Well, I wasn't thinking of myself



KFTC MEMBERS AT THEIR MEETING WITH KENTUCKY HOUSE SPEAKER BOBBY RICHARDSON

as a leader. I had all the materials I had gathered, and I wanted to put it all together by that time. I wanted to talk about it. I wanted to tell them.

Because there were people in the room that the board did not know, they really got upset. They had not been used to dealing with that many people at one time. Apparently, they wanted no part of our ideas. But we did come out of that meeting with a promise to meet with the board and with a committee on the dress code.

The board brought the name of the school to a vote, and we lost. The rules of the dress code were not changed, but they sort of faded out.

By this time, I believe as a result of this pressure, there had been a new board member elected, but he stood alone for four years. Meantime, we attended all the board meetings and county government meetings and kept track of what was going on.

I guess it was during the road project that we started to collect names, addresses and phone numbers of people in other counties and other community groups. We got on every mailing list and attended as many workshops as possible. We had lots of fundraising projects going on and had some travel money of our own. We would usually send a couple of representatives to any kind of meeting that we thought would be of use to us.

The people of the road committee pretty well kept in touch. We had been meeting in a church, but they got new people in the church and didn't want to let us use the building. So we met in homes and kept the organization going. Some people moved away. Some found a job in the mines, since the coal boom hit the county. Actually, we noticed that when somebody was employed at the mines, they became inactive and dropped out. At that time, I was the only one that didn't have children in school and had the time for training. I was offered a

fellowship with the Southern Appalachian Leadership Training Program in the fall of 1976, and I accepted.

County residents were asking about a number of issues. They wanted to know how to file for black lung benefits, Social Security, and after the April, 1977, flood, how to get governmental assistance. So we helped with the information we had been gathering and did what we could. For the flood work, we formed the Flood Preparation Group.

Then, in January of 1980, I learned that the county housing agency was going to move the entire town of Beauty, about 100 families, with federal funds. They said it was to prevent the town from being flooded out, but there were rumors — rumors we never proved — that a coal company wanted to mine the land the town was on. I partly grew up in that community and knew every family that lived there. My husband's parents had been relocated by a coal company a couple of years before. We knew how upset they were: "We don't want



THE KFTC SCALES OF "JUSTICE" SHOW OFF THE IMBALANCE OF THE TAX BURDEN

to move again; we've already moved once." There was talk about moving them to a new housing project. "We don't want to move into a strange neighborhood," they said.

The people of Beauty began to form an organization to stop the relocation plan, the Concerned Citizens of Martin County; then all the other community groups that had ever been in place, like the Flood Preparation Group and the Citizens for Better Roads, joined in. Several other individuals joined in, too. I knew there were enough people in Beauty — I knew their nature — that once someone tried to take something away from them or push them around, they would fight back. They got together two or three times a week for meetings and went over the proposal. They learned what it said and learned about the regulations.

They understood from the beginning what had to be done in order to save their homes. They made trips to Louisville and Washington. There were letters, phone calls, newspaper articles, TV reports and lots of officials coming to meetings. Finally, we got through to the head officials at the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington and they didn't approve the project. They said it didn't have proper citizen participation. A whole town had been saved.

I really did not have any idea that we could go that far and I could do

part of it myself. I don't like to see someone in a political position taking advantage of people. I found myself talking to people at their level, talking their language and understanding their ways of life. I may have knowledge of different parts of the country. Maybe I have met different people, maybe have been exposed to things and places a lot of them have no knowledge of. But I'd like to feel that they are comfortable when they talk to me — and I think they are. I think they trust me. I have been honest with those in this community. I still don't want to think of myself in the leadership role, other than maybe helping get things done.

Until the Appalachian Alliance's study was done on who owns the land and minerals and who pays the taxes, I don't think I ever realized that taxes were part of the problem. I don't think that I have been overtaxed, but the tax burden is on the homeowner and the corporations are just taking a free ride.

We have such a poor tax system that it's got to result in poor county government services and a poor school system. We never had political leaders who cared about those things. They were interested in what they could personally gain from political offices.

They let the big corporations come in and take everything out of the county, to take it away from less fortunate people who would have been able to take care of themselves if they had not been stripped of the opportunity.

It seems like the big coal and land companies become more greedy all the time, just reaching and raking in everything. Why, a surface land owner pays over 300 times as much in property taxes as a mineral owner for the same value of holdings. This isn't fair, especially in a state where mineral owners can get out their minerals regardless of what the surface owner wants. In 12 eastern Kentucky counties we studied, a total of only \$1,500 was collected in mineral property taxes in 1978 — and those minerals are worth billions.

When we began to challenge local property assessments of corporations, I never expected to become as involved as I have, especially on the state level. I never thought there would be anything I could do. I had an interest in finding out what groups in other counties were doing and what they were thinking about. I came to meetings, hoping to be one of the crowd. I never thought we would form the Kentucky Fair Tax Coalition (KFTC) and that at statewide meetings I would be leading them.

It has been quite a learning experience. I don't know if I had any real hopes that we would get a bill passed in Kentucky to tax unmined minerals, the large holdings of out-of-state corporations. They make a lot of money on coal and other minerals, but don't pay any property taxes on them.

When the KFTC got a tax bill filed, we learned that working with the state legislature is not much different from working with local politicians. I came out of that campaign kind of disappointed at the actions of the speaker of the house and the other representatives involved. There were just a few people in Frankfort blocking the bill. It seemed like the only thing to do was to go talk to them. We had great popular support and support from enough legislators to give us hope. But the bill never got debated and voted on.

The KFTC members got up long before breakfast and traveled to the capitol. We demanded a meeting with the speaker, Bobby Richardson, and after much hesitation he finally agreed



AT A LEGISLATIVE HEARING, GLADYS MAYNARD SITS WITH APPALACHIAN ALLIANCE COORDINATOR BILL HORTON

to give us 15 minutes – all 50 of us. I expected at least a friendly reception in the capitol. When we met with Richardson – after he walked in with two security guards and several of his aides – we politely asked him why the bill never got a chance. His explanation plainly showed he had not read the bill.

As I sat there, it was a great disappointment to hear a man in his position make some of the statements he did. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. He didn't know what was in the bill! He said it couldn't be done, even though 19 other states tax minerals in the ground. In fact, it insulted me that he would make a decision for all the other representatives and not let it come to the floor for an open debate and vote. I didn't know one person would have that much power and control of what happened to the bill.

We later learned that the speaker is a lawyer whose firm represents at least one large mineral company. The speaker pro tem has law firm clients that are either in the coal or oil-and-gas business. It seems that they were instrumental in blocking our tax bill so that their law firm clients would be protected. I guess that coal companies own the legislature in that sense.

Back home in Martin County, we have been trying to deal with the absentee land ownership problem. After sitting in on the tax board hearings for the last three years, I realized you could challenge property assessments by filing a letter with the county clerk, asking that the assessments of individual corporations be reviewed.

The Concerned Citizens of Martin County felt corporate land owners were not assessed at fair market value. Last year, under pressure and publicity we generated, the county assessor raised the Pocahontas-Kentucky Corporation and Martiki Corporation assessments from \$50 to \$200 an acre. But we went before the local tax board to ask that they be assessed at more than that. Also, we wanted Martiki's equipment to be assessed at more than \$18 million since they claim to have the world's largest mountaintop removal operation and one of their draglines alone costs about that much.

On July 14, 1982, we went before the local tax board – it was quite a day. I was sitting there, on the witness stand, before the county attorney, Pocahontas's attorney, Martiki's lawyer. Although we didn't get the land reassessed, we did accomplish something by having a hearing, raising our questions. It had never been done

before. Even though we lost at the county level, I feel more strongly than ever that we should press on to the state board, or to the Supreme Court if we have to, to get a fair tax system. It's exciting since residents of other counties are doing the same thing.

There has to be a conflict of interest when some county officials don't push for a fair tax system. It seemed odd that Drewie Muncy, the county attorney, had so many objections to our questions. He was elected to represent the people, but I kind of felt like he was leaning to the corporations. Of course, his law firm represents Massey Coal, which leases from Pocahontas, one of the absentee owners we were challenging.*

I think people are just beginning to realize what the corporations own and what little is coming back from taxes. Due to some of the hard work put in by some concerned citizens, people are realizing this – it was never discussed before. People know the coal will not always be here and, when the companies leave, they are going to leave the land torn up, there won't be much employment. Right now, I'd like to see if they have any intention of turning the land back to the people.

I feel like maybe I'm too critical about the community in which I live. I'd like to be building instead of taking away. I think it's fun when people work together and understand together what the problems are and how to go about dealing with them. I can look back and see an awful lot of changes. If we had the leadership to protect what we have and build it, things would move much faster. I feel sure that if enough people become involved, things will get better and better.

New ideas are sometimes hard to get across, but I'm still optimistic. □

* A complaint to the bar charging conflict of interest has been filed against Muncy, and appeals are in the works against Martiki and Pocahontas-Kentucky.

BY MELVIN DIXON

BOBO / BAOULÉ



Ashanti carved wooden door panel, Ghana

I *Take me to the water*
(After a legend as told by Bernard Dadié)

Fleeing into night and day and night again and troubling the forest with our fears of capture, hiding from brushfire and a rain of spears that tell us our villages are sacked, we arrive without fetish or food at the edge of a dangerous, dangerous shore, all of us anxious for the message of the waves:

“Give up, give up your most treasured possession. Give up, give up what you value most high.”

And we keep coming to the water
No way to cross over
We keep coming to the water
No way to turn back.

Clanging bracelets, armbands of cowries, then anklets in leather and beads, silver rings and bright woven cloth, all this piles high and higher but not high enough to calm the raging surf:

“Give up, give up what you value most high. Give up, give up best of black skin and blood.”

Anger. Murmurs of dissent and disbelief. A laying on of hands. And you, Queen Pokou, mother, lift me with nervous fingers. Your face hollows like a talking drum losing voice. Your eyes sink like weights for gold. You step forward from the crowd and toss me trembling into rapids that are troubling, troubling, troubling with death.

And they keep coming to the water
For a way to cross over
They keep coming to the water
For a way to go on.

I cannot rise for air. Many must think me dead as I do too with some scaly darkness coming over, over me. A great fish has swallowed me whole, giving breath and rounded eyes to see hippopotamuses lined in a row and on their backs my people crossing into safety. Their thankful praying quiets the surf and last I hear is the voice of my mother drumming pain: “Baoulé, he is gone. Baoulé, he is dead.”

“No, no,” I try to say. “No, I’m still alive!”
But the Great Fish swims the opposite way.
“Do not be afraid,” the Great Fish tells me.
“Do not be afraid. You have given them a name.”

Coming to the water they
Found a way over
Coming to the water they
Found a new home.

II *O wasn't that a wide river? Got one more river to cross.*

For years it seems we travel like this:
Myself alone inside the greater skin.
Silvery and dark is my growing there,
stretching arms and legs to the dance
of waves. I eat what the Great Fish eats.
From his round eyes I see how dark
this water is, how dangerous, how deep
as dreams of walking on land fill my sleep.

Then on a leap we break the surface,
the Great Fish and I. We see enormous
woods and sails speeding across the sea.
Down below again I think I hear some black
man's cry and a splash and splash some more.
The body wrapped in chains, fighting for release.

"Do not be afraid," the Great Fish tells me.
"Do not be afraid. They have changed their names."

Sudden cough and blood like he is hooked
and fighting metal, he vomits me. I awake
upon a white beach shore, clutching around
at this, the answer to my prayer for ground:

III "You there, *nigra*."

"Baoulé."

"Huh?"

"Baoulé."

"Naw, boy. You Bobo, now."

"Baoulé."

"Bawlay? You mean Bobo Bawlay."

"Baoulé. Ba-ou-lé."

Whips snake on my skin. The bite
of leather fangs. My back
a track of teeth. At my head
guns ready to smoke.

"You there, Bobo."

"Bobo."

"Nice boy, Bobo."



*Benin catfish
design, Nigeria*

On the edge of my breath: *Baoulé*.
And laboring for centuries on dry rock
moving, moving, moving towards the sea,
hungry for salt and the taste of scales

I keep coming to the water
For a way to cross over
I keep coming to the water
For a way to go home.

Martinique, Cuba, Haitian sun.
New Orleans market and Virginia Beach.
Little Rock, Selma, Birmingham.
East St. Louis, Chicago, Harlem, New York.

"I am afraid," I call out everywhere.
"I am afraid that we have lost our names."

Then the voice of the Great Fish answers:
"No more troubling, troubling the water.
You got to trouble, trouble the land."

And he is gone from my aching ears
forever.



*Baule carved
wooden door
panel, Ivory
Coast*

IV Dear Mom,

Arrived safely! Hope everything is fine back home. Crossing
the Atlantic took longer than expected. We had a day's
stop-over in Paris and I saw the Eiffel Tower. It was grand!
I arrived in Abidjan on an Air Afrique DC-10 and found the
city full of supermarkets, discos, taxi cabs, and even an
indoor ice skating rink nearby.

Last week I started my Peace Corps project in an upcountry
village among the Baoulé people. Ever hear of them?
They're real friendly and make you feel quite at home. I'm
learning their language by practicing a song they sing about
Queen Pokou who sacrificed her son to an angry river god.
I'll sing it for you when you visit next spring.

Give my regards to all the Bawlays. Especially Great-Uncle
Bobo and Cousin Jim. That was a swell *bon voyage* party
you all threw for me. You'll like the Ivory Coast, I'm sure.
It's full of surprises.

Write soon,

Bobby

The Baoulé Legend

By Bernard Dadié, Translated from
the French by Melvin Dixon

Once long ago, a very long time ago, a friendly tribe of our brothers used to live beside a quiet lagoon. The many young men in the tribe were noble and courageous. The women were beautiful and full of joy. And their queen, Queen Pokou, was the most beautiful of them all.



Baule ivory bracelet, Ivory Coast

For a long time, a very long time, peace was among them. Even the slaves, sons of captives from times past, were content just being around their happy masters.

But one day enemies came like driver ants by the droves. The people had to leave their bedsides, farms and the fish-laden lake. In order to escape in time, they had to drop fishing nets and abandon everything.

They fled into the forest so quickly that bits of loin-cloth and flesh were left stuck to thorn-bushes. They had to escape even farther without a chance to rest or make a truce, for the ferocious enemy was hard on their heels.

And last in the long march was their queen, Queen Pokou, carrying her child on her back.

Watching them pass by, the hyena yapped. The elephant and wild boars ran away. The chimpanzee and the startled lion lept out of the way.

Finally the edge of the brush appeared, then the savanna and the palmyra trees. The group struck up again its song of exile:

Mi houn Ano, Mi houn Ano, blá ó
Eboló nigué, mo ba gnan min —

Ano my husband, O help me husband Ano
The spirits of the bush are carrying me away!

Exhausted, hungry and worried, they arrived one evening at the bank of a great river whose rapid current was breaking against huge rocks. And the river was roaring and its waves were rising to the tops of trees before subsiding again. The fugitives stood frozen in terror.

They looked at one another with dismay. Was this the same water that used to bring them food not too long ago?

The same water that used to be their friend? It had to be an evil spirit, indeed, to turn it against them so.

But the conquerors were getting closer and closer.

For the first time the high priest spoke: "The water has turned unfavorable," he said. "And it will be appeased only when we offer it the most valuable thing we have."

And a chant of hope resounded among them:

Ebe nin flé nin bā
Ebe nin flé nin nan
Ebe nin flé nin dja
Yapen'sé nin djā wali

Somebody's calling his son
Somebody's calling his mother
Somebody's calling his father
To the marriage of the beautiful girls.

And each one gave up his bracelets of gold and of ivory and whatever else he had been able to save.

But the high priest pushed them back with his foot. He held up the young prince, the baby only six months old, and said, "This is our most precious possession."

The mother was frightened and held her son tight to her chest. But the mother was also the queen. Right at the edge of the abyss she raised the smiling child above her head and threw him into the roaring river.

Suddenly hippopotamuses, enormous hippopotamuses, surfaced from the water and, lining up one after the other, formed a bridge. And on this miraculous bridge, the escaping people crossed over singing:

Ebe nin flé nin bá
Ebe nin flé nin nan
Ebe nin flé nin dja
Yapen'sé nin djā wali

Somebody's calling his son
Somebody's calling his mother
Somebody's calling his father
To the marriage of the beautiful girls.

The last to cross over was Queen Pokou, who found the people prostrate before her on the other side. But the queen was also a mother, and she could only say "baouli," which means: the child is dead.

From that moment on the queen and her people kept the name of Baoulé. □

Melvin Dixon, a first-generation Northerner whose roots are in the Carolinas, has published poetry in Callaloo, Iowa Review, Présence Africaine (Paris), Okike (Nigeria) and other places. He is associate professor of English at Queens College in New York. "Bobo Baoulé" first appeared in Callaloo No. 7, Vol. 2 (October, 1979). Reprinted by permission of the author and publisher. Copyright ©1979 by Melvin Dixon. All rights reserved.

Bernard Dadié, born in 1916, is one of the most respected writers of French-speaking Africa, best known for Climbié, Le Pagne Noir and Légendes africaines. He is minister of culture in the Ivory Coast.

Illustrations from African Designs from Traditional Sources, by Geoffrey Williams (Dover Publications, ©1971).

TO MAKE THE WORLD WE WANT

AN INTERVIEW
WITH DOROTHY
COTTON BY
ELIOT WIGGINTON
& SUE THRASHER

Highlander Center, the residential school that cultivates the special power of adults learning from each other, is 50 years old this October. Now located in New Market, Tennessee, the school worked with the young CIO unions in the 1930s and '40s, with the nascent Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and '60s and with the blossoming of Appalachian activism in the '70s and into the present.

To help celebrate its fiftieth birthday, Highlander board member and *Foxfire* editor Eliot Wigginton joined Sue Thrasher of the Highlander staff in preparing a book which Doubleday agreed to publish, sight unseen, with the royalties to help in some small way Highlander's work over the next 50 years. The book, to appear in the fall of 1983, is composed of lengthy interviews — most of which were done specifically for this book — with some 30 individuals who, at some point in their lives, had some contact with the school. Interviews with the co-founders, Myles Horton and Don West, were included, of course. So were interviews with early staff members and friends like Ralph Teffteller and Zilla Hawes Daniel and May Justus. And so were interviews with labor, civil-rights and Appalachian activists like Ralph Helstein, Lucille Thornburg, Studs Terkel, Pete Seeger, Julian Bond, Andrew Young, Rosa Parks, Marion Berry, E.D. Nixon, Edith Easterling, Sue Kobak and Hazel Dickens.

"They are all people," says Wigginton, "with their figurative sleeves rolled up who are still trying to make a positive difference in a confusing and often threatening world."

Asked to characterize the book, Wigginton wrote: "I'm too close to the project at this moment to be able to judge objectively. I think it's a good book, though. Good and solid and decent and basically hopeful. Like the school whose work it celebrates."

Dorothy Cotton is one of those with her sleeves still rolled up. She was among a handful of people who plunged into work with Martin Luther King, Jr., in the earliest days of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). And she continues to give many of us guidance through her work at the Martin Luther King Center for Social Change in Atlanta.

Cotton grew up in Goldsboro, North Carolina, where her father worked in a tobacco warehouse. After high school, she went off to college in Petersburg, Virginia, and was quickly drawn into the Civil Rights Movement. She has been involved ever since — between her days with SCLC and the present, she directed a Headstart program in Birmingham, managed social services for the city of Atlanta in the mid-'70s and was regional director of ACTION from 1978 to '81. She recently sat down with Eliot Wigginton and Sue Thrasher to record her memories of the '60s and her hopes for the future.

Dorothy Cotton:

"We *all* can be more. Like a caterpillar in a cocoon, you could grow wings. And when you're ready and your wings are strong, you can fly and soar to great heights."

Dorothy Cotton:

There was a preacher in our town, his name was Wyatt Tee Walker. Wyatt was the Baptist preacher at the Gilfield Baptist Church in Petersburg, Virginia, and I was a member of his church. I was in college there at Virginia State College, and a lot of us flocked to his church. He was this young, handsome, dynamic preacher; and in those days everybody got all dressed up to go to church, you know, hats and gloves. You know how we used to do.

We went to hear him preach and really got involved in the church. He was one of those preachers who dared to take the gospel to the streets. In other words, to live it. Well, black folk could not use the public library — if you can believe that — because the public library was housed in some building that had been given by some family, and the excuse the town fathers gave (and it probably literally was the town fathers in that day) was that in the will it was left for the white folks.

So Wyatt looked at this library situation and said, “We cannot have that.” He asked the national NAACP to help us make a case and take it through the courts, but they had too many cases at the time. So Wyatt, being the renegade or whatever he was, said, “We will protest here locally.” He formed the Petersburg Improvement Association, which was a take-off on the Montgomery Improvement Association. This was in the late '50s, and Wyatt used to say I was kind of his right arm, since I was secretary to the association.

Anyway, we began trying to integrate the public library. Then we moved from the library to the dime-store where they had a lunch counter for whites only. I don't think I knew consciously what I was getting into; I remember walking with a picket sign one day at the dimestore, and this elderly black man said, “Why don't you stop all this mess out here in the street?” You know, we were six or seven folks picketing, and the folk up on the hill were wishing we would stop all that “foolishness in the street.” And then this man said to me, “Lady, ain't you got a table at home?” I remember putting my picket sign down and going to talk to this man: “Look, mister, if your wife were down

here shopping and she wanted to have a cup of coffee at this lunch counter, do you realize she would have to go all the way home? Don't you feel she has a right to have a cup of coffee here also?” So I'm convincing this black man on the sidewalk, but I was really convincing myself that the cause was right.

So we were doing some interesting things in Petersburg. Then Reverend Walker met Dr. King somewhere in his travels and invited Dr. King to come to Petersburg to speak. Dr. King liked what Wyatt was doing with us in the Movement, and he asked Wyatt to come to Atlanta to help him formulate the Southern Christian Leadership Conference [SCLC].

Wyatt said, “I will come if I can bring the two folk who helped me most here.” And that was a fellow named Jim Wood, who is dead now, and myself. I was working during the summers to finish my master's degree in speech therapy at Boston University, but I said to Wyatt, “Well, I'll go down for about six months” — and that was 20 years ago!

So I came to Atlanta to work with Dr. King and Wyatt Walker. At that time we were about five folk; of course we grew into the hundreds as the various campaigns happened, but when we came in 1960 to Atlanta, we certainly didn't know the Movement would take the turn that it took. There was no way we could have known then of its eventual scope, size, importance.

Even those of us who were so intimately involved with Dr. King, I think, didn't realize what we were in. If we had, we would have had tape recorders. When we were driving along with Dr. King in the car he would have these great and fun philosophical discussions, arguing with Andy Young on some theological point. If I had only had sense enough, I could have had 10 books filled with just fantastic discussions. His *humor* in all of it, and the way he could recall all of the philosophers and theologians and how they counterpointed. I was just really enthralled by it all.

In those early days of SCLC, we heard about a Citizenship Training Program at Highlander, and early in 1961 I went to a Highlander workshop at Monteagle, Tennessee — my first visit. Myles Horton knew Highlander's “demise” — at least in Monteagle — was imminent,* but the Field Founda-

tion was still willing to fund the Citizenship Schools, so another place for that program was needed. So SCLC got the program from Highlander, and we spread it around all of the Southern and border states.

Luckily we were able to get the people who were with it initially at Highlander — Septima Clark and Bernice Robinson. Andy Young was the director, and I was called the educational consultant, and Septima was a teaching specialist. I heard Andy say one time that the Citizenship Schools really were the base upon which the whole Civil Rights Movement was built, and that's probably very much true. I can hardly think of an area of the South from which we did not bring a group of folk — I mean busloads of folk, sometimes 70 people — who would live together for five days, and we *did* it! We had fantastic sessions!

For five days we'd work with people we had recruited, some of whom were just off the farms. Like Fannie Lou Hamer, who stood up and said, “I live on Mr. Marlowe's plantation.” And talked about how Pap, her husband, had to take her to the next county because they were going to beat up Pap and her if she didn't stop that voter registration talk. She stood up and talked about that and taught us the old songs they sang in the meetings to keep their spirits up. You know, we sang a *lot* in the workshops then.

Was the main thrust of the Citizenship Schools, after they went to SCLC, still teaching people reading and voter registration and basic skills of that sort?

Dorothy Cotton:

Oh yes. The very basic stuff. And, of course, we learned that from Septima and Bernice, and the Highlander folk. We kept the same model and probably expanded it some. I remember a session that I did on “How to Teach,” because we were trying to make teachers out of these people who could barely read and write. But they could teach, you

* For the story of Highlander's trial and forced closing at Monteagle, see *Southern Exposure*, Vol. VI, No. 1.

know. They could teach. If they could read at all, we could teach them that c-o-n-s-t-i-t-u-t-i-o-n spells constitution. And we'd have a grand discussion all morning about what the constitution was. We used a very non-directive approach. You know: "What is it?" And after an hour's discussion, we would finally come to a consensus that it was the supreme law of the land.

Then we'd start talking about parts of that document. And, of course, we'd get very quickly to the "Fourteenth A-m-e-n-d-m-e-n-t spells amendment, and the Fourteenth one says what? And what makes you a citizen?" People would say, "You are a child of God" — because we come from the Bible Belt, right? Or people would say things like, "If you register to vote, you are a citizen." But before the session was over, we would know that all persons born or naturalized in the United States are citizens, and they would learn that, and we'd write that.

That's what they were learning to read and write — and the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and the fact that no state can take away your privileges. And then we would translate that into this grand discussion about the fact that Governor Wallace cannot tell you that you cannot march down Highway 80, or whatever. And we would say, "Well, you see when you go home, rather than just throw out answers or speeches to people, how much better it is to discuss with them what they need to know."

So then the folks went home and worked in voter registration drives and went down to demonstrate. You know, it was Miss Topsy Eubanks — I quote her all the time — who said in a workshop in Dorchester,* "I feel like I've been born again!" And she was probably 60 years old then. She went back to Macon and was seen sitting in the courthouse as a poll watcher. She'd never thought of herself as being that before. But demonstrations grew up around people. The enlightenment that happened for them there in Dorchester became a flowing out from that experience.

One woman told me she had argued with her son, who was involved in the demonstrations, trying to get him out of that "mess in the street." And he started asking her questions, like, "Do you feel it's right for you to be treated the way you're treated, and for black

DOROTHY COTTON



folk to only get jobs pushing brooms?" And, "Do you feel it's right just to be a second-class citizen and have to sit in the back of the bus?" And she said, "And the cobwebs commenced a-movin from my brain!"

So the cobwebs "commenced a-movin" from a whole lot of folk's brains. And they went home on Friday, and they didn't take it anymore. They started their little citizenship classes discussing the issues and problems in their own towns. "How come the pavement stops where the black folk section begins?" Asking questions like that, and knowing whom to go to talk to about that, or where to protest it.

Eventually, in later years, the so-called black militants — you know, the guys who were black power with the fists and the berets and the jackets and the boots — they started coming to Dorchester also. They came in cussin us out, telling us we were against the f---g revolution, and if you want a new school system burn down the f---g building and "off" the superintendent.

We somehow — thank you, Father — had the sense to say things like, "Well, if you gonna burn down a school, do you know how to build one?" And, of course, they didn't have any answer to that. "If you gonna blow up the bridge, which one of you is an engineer? Do you know how to build one back? If you gonna

burn down that factory, you better first talk to Miss Lucy over there. Her husband works there, and that income is their livelihood. Now if you burn down the factory, Miss Lucy will kill you."

We finally got them to do some of the activities, like the trust walks. We said, "You take Miss Lucy on a walk through the grounds out here, and when you come back, you tell us what she said." Of course, we had to do that more than once cause they came back not telling us what *she* said, but what *they* said to her. "But did you listen to what *she* said and what *she* wanted?" If you want to have change, of course, the bottom line is that the folk for whom the change is meant must be involved in it.

How were decisions made at the staff level in SCLC?

Dorothy Cotton:

It was interesting how Dr. King worked with his staff; he relied on them a great deal. I've never known another situation where people worked with someone who was at one time the "boss" and who was also their "friend" and someone they genuinely loved being with. We were relaxed and casual, and yet we could go into some serious, heavy sessions.

Like the Good Friday that Dr. King went to jail. I'll never forget. We were sitting in Room 30 at the A.G. Gaston Motel in Birmingham, Alabama. We sat in that room for what seemed like 24 hours debating what we should do next. The demonstrations were at their height with the dogs and the fire hoses in Kelly Ingram Park and all of the marches, and we were all strategizing. And some of the little middle-class ladies were hiding away in a corner making picket signs for us and driving us in their fancy cars through back ways to get us downtown onto the main streets.

The whole town was really kind of at a standstill, and the momentum was just great. And so many people had been arrested. There must have been 3,000 students in jail. I'm not sure of the numbers, but the schools

* A United Church of Christ center in McIntosh County, Georgia, 30 miles south of Savannah, used frequently for the Citizenship Training Project workshops.

READING, WRITING & VOTING

When Dorothy Cotton and her SCLC co-workers took over the Citizenship Education Program and began to spread it all over the South in 1962, the program had already enjoyed an eventful life. It was Highlander's most important contribution to the Civil Rights Movement, according to the school's founder, Myles Horton.

The program began on Johns Island, South Carolina, a large island some 15 miles south of Charleston, where well over half the 6,000 people were poor and black. They fished and farmed, or went into the city to work in homes or factories. Sickness and disease were rampant — in 1952 alone, 68 children died of diphtheria. And despite the presence of schools, illiteracy was all too common, especially among the older people. In 1960, the median number of years of school completed was only seven and a half.

Septima Clark, a Charleston school teacher who had begun her career teaching on Johns Island in the 1930s, was concerned about conditions there, and she had been to Highlander. In August, 1954, she returned, bringing along her cousin Bernice Robinson, a Charleston beautician, and Esau Jenkins, a remarkable island man. He was active in church, school and civic affairs, he was interested in politics, and he was determined that the islanders would learn to read and write. He wanted them to be able to help themselves, and he wanted them to pass the literacy test and register to vote.

Jenkins ran a bus line into Charleston for Johns Island workers, and he taught a little school on the bus. Driving back and forth, he would talk to his passengers about voting and how to register, and he would help them to memorize the sections of the state constitution they had to be able to "read" before they could register.

But Jenkins knew this was no substitute for learning to read, and he brought his frustration with him to Highlander that summer. As Bernice Robinson tells it, he was emphatic about his wants: "I need a school. I need somebody to help me. Tell

me how I can get a school to teach my people." Highlander was experimenting with locally based adult education programs, and soon Horton began visiting Johns Island regularly, getting to know the people and their problems. It took some time, but Jenkins got his school.

Bernice Robinson became the first teacher, and she recently described the school's early days in an interview with Eliot Wigginton. She says, "The first thing Esau did was run for school board. He lost, but there were three vacancies, and he came in fourth. He used that as a stepping stone to tell people, 'See, if you were registered to vote, I could have made it.'

"From that he started to look for a building. It was a hard thing to find a place. They found this dilapidated old school building and came up with the idea of buying it if Myles could find a way for them to borrow the money and then repay it. They worked that out and they acquired the place.

"By the time they got it all set up, it was the end of 1956. That's when they approached me about being the teacher. 'You know,' I said, 'I never been no teacher and I'm not going to be a teacher. I told you up there at Highlander that I would help you all in any way that I could, and I would even help a teacher with the school, but I ain't no teacher!'

"Well, they just laid the law down to me. 'There is nobody else to do it. We don't want a certified teacher because they are accustomed to working by a strait-laced curriculum. They wouldn't be able to bend, to give. We need a community worker to do it who cares for the people, who understands the people, who can communicate with the people, and someone who has been to Highlander who knows Highlander's philosophy, so there's nobody to do it but you. Either you do it or we don't have the school.'

"So I said, 'Okay.'

"It was a pretty big job, but the thing that made it a little bit easier was that we could only have classes three months out of the year since December, January and February were the only months the people weren't planting and digging in the fields. That was what they called their 'laying by' season; the other months they worked in the fields until dark and they'd be too tired to come. And we decided, for the first school, to meet only two nights a week from seven o'clock to nine.

"Then I had to do all the recruiting, too. I went around to the churches to explain what the adults who came would learn, and tell them that the school would be free, and all that. Luckily, I had been to NAACP meetings on the island and various work-



Bernice Robinson:

"At the end of five months, all the pupils received their voter registration certificates, they could read and write their own names, and do arithmetic. After that, it just grew like crazy."

shops, so I really knew the people. I also knew that many of them had enrolled in public school adult classes every year and that they'd start filtering out in about a month and the classes would close because they didn't fill these people's needs – so I knew this first school would have to be different.

"I didn't really know exactly *how*, and I didn't really know where I was going with it because I had nobody to show me anything about how to teach a school, and so I was quite nervous. In fact, the first night I guess I was *more* nervous than the people.

"I started them out with some materials I brought that two of my sisters-in-law who taught elementary school used to teach kids how to read and write. But then something hit me while I was talking, and I realized then that I had no kind of materials to deal with *adults*. I would *have* to put them on a different level. So then I asked them what *they* would like to learn. They told me that they wanted to read a newspaper, they wanted to read the Bible, they wanted to know how to fill out an application blank to get a money order so they could order things by catalogue. I just made notes of all the things they said they wanted to learn, and I threw out the material I had brought with me because it was too juvenile.

"We got along well after that. I was able to get a book out of the post office that had real money orders and forms in it. Let's not put in print how I got it, but that book had to be back in the post office by seven o'clock the next morning, so I worked all night on that one night tracing those forms off on onion skin paper. Then I'd copy them up on the blackboard and teach them how to fill them in.

"Then I used newspaper ads like the specials from the grocery store as arithmetic. 'If two pounds of beans are 49 cents, and you want four pounds of beans, how much will it be?' Or I used problems like, 'How many gallons of gas would it take you to go from here to Charleston?' If they wanted to measure to put up a fence, we'd work out the math for that.

"I became so involved with those people that nothing else really mattered. Just to see an old woman finally recognize her name meant something

to me. I can never explain or express how I felt when I put the names of all the students up on the board and I said to this 65-year-old woman, 'Now, can you find your name up there on that board?'

"'Yes, Ma'am, I sure can.' She took the ruler out of my hand. 'That's my name there, Annie, A-n-n-i-e; and that's my other name down there, Vastine, V-a-s-t-i-n-e.' I had goose pimples all over me. That woman could not read or write when she came in that class.

"At the end of five months, all 14 of the pupils that I started with had received their voter registration certificates, they could read and write their own names, and they could do arithmetic.

"After that, it just grew like crazy. People started registering on the island as an outgrowth of that class. When students got their registration certificates, they would be at school ahead of me, and as soon as I walked in the door, they were waving them in my face. 'I got it! I got it!' And their enthusiasm bubbled out into the community to people they knew who could go and register who hadn't before."

From this beginning, the citizenship schools spread to the other Sea Islands near Charleston and then to other places in the South, under the guidance of Septima Clark and Bernice Robinson. By 1963, after the program's transfer from Highlander to SCLC, Clark was able to report that more than 26,000 adults in 12 Southern states had learned enough to register, and that volunteer teachers were running more than 400 schools attended by 6,500 students. In 1970, she estimated that nearly 100,000 people had learned to read and write through the schools. □

For more information on Highlander and the Citizenship Education Program, see Frank Adams, Unearthing Seeds of Fire: The Idea of Highlander (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, Publisher, 1975), and Carl Tjerandsen, Education for Citizenship: A Foundation's Experience (Santa Cruz, CA: Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation, 1980). The Schwarzhaupt Foundation provided financial support for the early citizenship schools.

were virtually closed down because so many students were locked up.

The leaders, of course, were the first to go to jail. And we sat in that room debating whether Dr. King should now lead the next march, because surely he would be arrested. We debated notions like, "Dr. King should stay out of jail because we need him to travel around the country now to raise bail money for the other folk who are in jail." Dr. King eventually stood up and put on his overall jacket and didn't say a word. But we knew that the decision was made and that he was going to go. We made a circle in the room and sang, "We Shall Overcome," and he just went upstairs, and he didn't say anything. That's how decisions got made, I guess. He listened to all the deliberations, you know. He listened to all the deliberations.

Is that the kind of quality that makes a leader? Someone who really listens to what you have to say, who isn't really separated from you in terms of status, someone who's inspiring?

Dorothy Cotton:

It's so elusive. Was it the times? Was it the situation? Was it the fact that he inspired hope in people who had no hope, and he knew that they needed that most at that time? Was it that he defined the issues so clearly for people? Was it that he articulated so well the issues and the goals?

Deep down in ourselves we knew that we needed to change things, but Dr. King *said* it – he articulated it. You know, when Rosa Parks wouldn't get up from her seat, he could interpret that for people, and then people quietly within themselves could say, "Oh, yes. I ain't gonna take this no more," and start to feel that they *wouldn't* take it and therefore would walk instead of riding the buses.

And he projected where we could go with the Movement. He kept saying, "My people will get there." And we felt that he had a vision of where "there" was. "I may not get there with you, but my people will get there."

[A large portion of our interview was devoted to Dorothy Cotton's feelings about young people and about education for future action – where do we go from here?]

People should not be separated by color. Color is an artificial barrier. My brown skin is not what makes me. It's the totality of my experience that makes me. *Ideally*, I would never refer to you as white and me as black. *Ideally*, I believe ultimately, when the Kingdom comes, we will all have learned how to live together and work together on common problems and issues that we see. The superficial divisions will disappear. I think color just divides people, and ultimately that is what wars are fought over. Even movements will have to learn that we are all made in the same image.

I had a conversation with a 13-year-old boy who lives next door to me about two weeks ago. He dropped out of school, and it took him about two weeks before he could admit it to me. I had been challenging him since his mother died: "Hey, John, you might be the next mayor of this town." I just felt he needed some encouragement. But he said something that made me feel so sad: "Well, you can't be nobody if you ain't already somebody." When he said that

to me I really kind of stood there. I gave him a spiel, and yet I walked on up my driveway feeling really helpless.

I started asking myself, "What happens in the classroom?" And that caused me to reflect on what happened to me. I lived in what we called a shotgun house — a shack, you know — where you looked in the front door right out the back with the outhouse in back and all of that. I don't remember any books in my house or even a newspaper, and there was nobody in my family or on my block that I knew about that had gone to college, but somehow I *knew* I was going to college.

There was a teacher that helped motivate and inspire me, and I really will never forget Miss Rosa Gray, who was the high school English teacher and drama coach. One day I had to do something in class — some speech or performance — and she said, as I finished, "There's your ready-girl." I still remember when Miss Gray said that. It gave me something to start to live up to. Then, somehow, I got to be the lead person in all of the plays in high school, and I just really felt close to her. I felt like a leader with her and because of her, and I then sort

of played that role. Right on through college I got into leadership positions.

I felt close to Rosa Gray. She was very special to me. Who is special to that 13-year-old next to me? What teacher became special to him? I think with both parents and teachers there's a big cop-out going on. It's like we're scared of kids. Parents are scared of their own children. Teachers are afraid of them. Who is close to anybody? We have gotten afraid of it. Children need the touching physically and mentally and emotionally and spiritually. Uplifting them, inspiring them, taking an interest in them. I think there's a real lack, and we need to learn how to do that again.

Everything's out of control now! You think of every area of your life, and you feel like somebody else or something else controls it and has the power over it. Not you! Your health care, your education. . . . That boy who is my neighbor feels helpless. He has no sense of power, himself. He doesn't feel like he's anybody. And he feels no ability to change his situation. I think the schools *could* help him first learn how to observe the situation in which he finds himself, and then to know that he does have some power.

It's almost like we have to do Citizenship Schools everywhere because that kind of thing is what we learn: who the mayor is, what his duties and powers are, how he got there in the first place, and learning that *you* have something to say about who he or she is. You have something to say about that, and you have something to say about your livelihood, your lifestyle, public policy. I learned more about civics when I was teaching and running the citizenship schools than I ever did in any civics class in school. Today young people don't know how all that happened.

We are to blame for that because we didn't *teach* them what we did. We didn't teach them how Dr. King made a decision to take an action. We have not described these actions to them. You know, we didn't just jump out into the streets and march. I mean a lot of things happened before we marched, sometimes sitting up, not only all night, but for *days* in retreats agonizing over an issue before we acted.

Now, I have gotten invited to speak on some college campuses. I can go

"The cobwebs 'commenced a-movin' from a whole lot of folks' brains. And they went home and didn't take it anymore. They started their little citizenship classes in their own towns, asking questions. . . ."

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAM SESSION AT DORCHESTER CENTER, 1969



in and do my speech, and I ask myself: "How can I make them feel, feel what we went through?" when they never saw any "white only" signs or lynchings, and I know that some of them *can* really get with me. I mean, I can sing an old song like, "I've been in the storm so long, I've been in the storm so long, children, I've been in the storm so long, Give me a little time to pray." And I look up, and they're crying, and so am I. I tell em what the storm was, that they had to pick the cotton before the sun went down or go back to slavery, and I always intersperse some of the old songs with the talking about it. And I know now I do that to help them *feel* rather than be intellectual about it — to feel what it was then — which enhances their need to know and experience what we went through.

Now one problem is to help them see what has to be done next. I don't

GRADUATION DAY, PETERSBURG



think they even have clear goals, and I don't think kids know how to analyze the problems and to see what issues there are. I think we haven't helped them to see what the next issues are.

Help me to see what the next issues are. During the generation when all this was happening, things were a good deal more clear-cut — I mean, you could only eat at certain kinds of restaurants; you could only stay in certain kinds of motels; you had separate waiting rooms for trains and interstate buses. Is it harder today?

Dorothy Cotton:

I think in a way what we need is simple. It may be so simple that we cannot grasp it, because we are so used to complicated issues. First of all, I'd probably help young people focus on what kind of world they want to live in. I don't think it takes a long time to learn that an over-involvement with material consumption is not fulfilling. I'd like to talk to folk about what material things they want to get, but also to "seek ye first the Kingdom," because even after you get the *things*, you will find an emptiness there.

We are not used to looking at what life is all about. We don't know what life ought to be about or what the good life really is. If we focused on that, then we could start to look at what causes it to happen. I really think that we are searching for something we wouldn't even recognize if we found it, because we haven't taken the time to think about it.

To me, it is knowing why I am here in the universe at all. I think I know. Would you believe it? I think I know. I have at this point a feeling and interpretation and understanding of what God is: a spiritual force in the universe. And somehow I am a manifestation of that force — as I think we all are — and we are here to fulfill the purpose of that great spirit. What we have to do is simply relax and be open to the flow of that spirit within us. Does that make sense to you? To be open to it? I think if we are, then we start to feel attuned to all growing things and to life itself. Life is a force that flows and connects us all.

For self-satisfaction and for pleasure? So that you become an agent by which it gets extended to other people? So that your purpose becomes to make the world better?

Dorothy Cotton:

Would you believe all these things happen? Number one, it *is* pleasurable, because one does start to feel peaceful and that's a pleasurable feeling. Also, one does impact other lives because people feel that kinship and that at-onement, if you will. You start to relate to people in a different way, and you impact other people's lives in a very positive way. I could go back to the Scriptures at this point, and talk about the "peace that passes understanding." It's not something that one knows intellectually; you just know that one can be peaceful about life, and then you start to fulfill whatever the divine plan is *for* your life. You make all kinds of things happen, and if everybody knows this, then the whole world is better.

I heard somebody use the analogy of the caterpillar becoming a butterfly. The caterpillars spin cocoons around themselves, and inside there they start to work on themselves, and the reason they do that is because they flash on the fact that they could be more than little creatures crawling around in the dirt. They could be more. And my friend John can be more.

We *all* can be more. If we were pulled into our quiet place like that caterpillar into that cocoon, we could start to grow wings. But we've got to learn each stage of that lesson, because if we broke open that cocoon and said, "We're gonna let that creature out of there," before it was ready, then we'd destroy it. That doesn't mean that we can't have some help along the way. That's what Highlander's about, and the King Center and some other places. It would be wonderful if the school system were about that: helping people understand that you can be more; that when you're ready, and your wings are strong, you can fly out and soar to great heights. □

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Ruby Pickens Tartt, an Alabama woman who helped save local black folklore from obscurity in the early years of this century, has now herself been rescued from the obscurity into which she had lapsed. With the recent publication of Toting the Lead Row, a biography and collection of her work by Virginia Pounds Brown and Laurella Owens, the University of Alabama Press has invited readers to visit her world.

Once considered Alabama's premier folklorist, Tartt led a life marked by ambivalence – upholding the genteel social conventions of turn-of-the-century Alabama on the one hand, disdaining a traditional Southern woman's role on the other. Born to a wealthy family in Livingston, Alabama, in 1880, she attended Livingston Female Academy, where she learned something about liberation, school management and painting. She continued her art education in New Orleans and New York City, then returned home to marry her childhood sweetheart, Pratt Tartt, in 1904. Back in Livingston, she became a gracious hostess whose charm and love of a good tale drew many visitors.

But her avocation was hardly so

conventional: roaming the back roads, collecting spirituals and work songs, play-party games, ghost stories and life histories from the black sharecroppers and servants of Sumter County. Her attitude toward her informants – one of paternalistic affection – carried its own ambivalence: although she often protested injustices dealt them, as late as the 1960s she questioned the wisdom of assuring black people the right to vote.

Tartt's interest in her black neighbors' lives is discussed at length in Toting the Lead Row, though her biographers neglect to explore the more subtle problems of gathering oral history and don't ask whether she was able to reach past her position as a lady of a leading white family to truly know her subjects. For all its defects, though, the book is an important work with plenty of good tales to read.

In the excerpt reproduced here, Tartt tells what occurred when she happened upon one of her informants at a moment when he could tell her no tales – but gave her a far more valuable story of real life.

– Elizabeth F. Shores

illustrations by Maxine Mills-Donnan

Alice

by Ruby Pickens Tartt

It was the first day of March, the month that begins the year in the Deep South, but no plows were in the field, no brush was burning in the “new ground” around Josh Horn's cabin, and no cheerful bustle and singing came from within. Nothing could have seemed more peaceful than this small four-room cabin set far back in the woods, yet I was filled with the certainty that something had happened.

A tall, gaunt old man, clad in worn and patched clothes and an old felt hat, came stumbling up the path from the nearby barn. This was Josh Horn, the slavery-time Negro over 90 years old whom I had come to see.

When he was nearer I called to him, but there was no answer. It was only a moment, however, before remembrance seemed to flood his face. Bringing his shaking hands together so that the fingertips touched, he raised them and appeared to pray. Tears came from his closed lids. He drew a deep breath and in a clear voice said: “Alice is dead, Miss Ruby. She done ceasted and gone on to glory. Free at last hallelujah!”



As I sat by him in the open hall, or dogtrot, Josh talked of his long and happy life with Alice.

“Alice didn’t linger on me long. She warn’t bad off no time hardly. Us thought yesterday she was comin back this way. Stead of that, she was goin. First she had a little inner-hostle neuralgy, but the way it was, as I recollect it, she seem be feeling right smart all day. Then last night me and her was back in the kitchen and I got through eatin first, so I come and set down on the swinger to get some air. The moon was shinin mighty bright and I could see the plum bushes over there in bloom, and directly I heard Alice say, ‘Who is you? Who that come with you ’sides yourself?’ But didn’t nobody answer. Then the children run in with the lamp and I commence lookin around, but twarn’t nobody there. Then I asked her who she seed, and she say it was a big tall man all dressed in black. He rid up to the kitchen door on a big white horse, and he stood right beside her, and seem like somethin in white swished by her, said course that could have been his white bosom shirt. If it had been a dream about a white horse, I’d a knowed it was Death, but this here was like a vision, and I allowed Alice goin be all right, but she warn’t.

“’Bout midnight I saddled ole Dolly and rid over town for the doctor. He come and set ’bout an hour. I always pays and it’s a comfort to know I can get him, but he never said what ail Alice. I knowed it warn’t no conjure, cause Alice never had no fallin out with nobody in her life, and you got to have enemies to get conjured. He couldn’t help her none, he said, just make her misery easy so she could rest, and that’s what she doin now – restin.

“Alice was the brightest Christian I ever seed. Well, us both bet on religion every time, but it look like Alice studied it so strong til twarn’t nothing for her to have a vision. Just fore day I was settin there by her and Alice say, just like I’m tellin you, that she seed herself right through that window there layin in a black coffin, said a angel in a pretty white dress with little trimmin at the bottom come to her bed, and she said she asked the angel what it was, and the angel said: ‘You is passin through death, and I come to warn you all don’t never go in more debt, cause your spirit will be uneasy and look like it’s wanderin round till the resurrection.’ Then Alice talk bout Death the collector, said it was one time can’t nobody dispute the figures. ‘You can’t stand him off,’ she say.

“Then she commence singin that pretty little song bout:

Travelin on, travelin on,
Soon be over.

Look like that was always a comfort. Then she said the angel must of took her body on down the hill to Zion graveyard, right down there where I been in the woods. It was so strong and so straight, look like it warn’t no vision.

“Then Alice said she getting ready to go, and she riz up in the bed, and look at me settin by her and said, ‘What is I gonna wear, Josh?’ just like she fixin go over town on Sunday.”

Pointing to a small mirror over a shelf, Josh continued: “I turned the lookin-glass over against the wall so couldn’t nobody see theirselves and have no bad luck. Then some folks say if the *spirit* see itself, it will keep on comin back to look in the glass again. But Alice spirit had done gone, cause she had a home in the gloryland waitin for her. Them is *evil* spirits what hangs around, or comes back, cause they ain’t got no restin place to go to. I didn’t forget to stop the clock just soon as I shut her eyes, and twas exactly four, bout the time I generally gets up to start the fire in the stove for her.

“Alice been countin so heavy on goin that makes me hate to see her look so troubled bout what she gonna wear. Us didn’t get around to no funeral insurance this year, so Alice didn’t get no robe, but I got her a pretty Sunday dress, but it ain’t been paid for, and that’s how come she never wore it. I hates mightily to put it on her.

“I ain’t never seed nobody hate debt worse than Alice do. If she knowed she goin home to glory in a dress ain’t paid for, Alice’d feel hard toward me bout it. It comes from Mr. Nixon at the crossroad. He ain’t push me much *yet*; he’s got a heap of patience, but it look like when a man ain’t got no money, it’s the very time folks wants him to pay his debt. When he got plenty don’t seem to make much difference.

She seed herself right through that window there layin in a black coffin, said a angel in a pretty white dress with little trimmin at the bottom come to her bed.



“Wish us didn’t have to bury Alice before us boy Press got here and can see her, but I clean forgot that today was Saturday. If it warn’t for tomorrow bein Sunday us could hold over till he got here. But if Alice stay in the house over Sunday it will sure bring death in the family fore the year is out. Sides that, the church members done gone ahead and started the grave, and if it left open through Sunday, folks say gonna be another death fore *next* Sunday. There’s a heap to buryin if you studies it, and I don’t want to bring disaster on nobody if I can help it.

“Looks like it’s fixin to cloud up a little. I sure hope it don’t rain till time for the buryin anyhow. Course Alice don’t need it to rain on *her* to get to heaven; she can go without no sign, but I don’t want it to sprinkle in no open grave, somebody sure to die in three days if it do. All I axe is for the sun to go in the grave first — that’s unfailin good sign.”

Far down in the swamp a hound bayed. “That’s old Roger,” Josh said. “You see, dogs is smart; they knows a heap about death. Grandchildren say old Roger been settin down there in the wood side the grave tryin to see Alice’s spirit glidin away. Plenty dogs can do that if the person in the grave, but Roger’s smarter than any dog I ever seed. He knowed all day somethin was wrong. Ain’t et no vittles nor played with the little grandchildren none, and they mighty friendly together. Me and him gonna miss Alice so. Soon as he seed her this mornin Roger left home.

“Seem like I never been thout Alice. Me and her was play-children together when she was a little gal nursin the calves over to the next joinin plantation, belong to Mr. Redheaded Jim Lee.

“When we was bout half growed up, I reckon it was, me and Alice got married. But in slavery time they call it ‘jumpin the broom,’ cause they didn’t low you no time for no celebration. You just took up and went from there, but me and Alice loved one another from the first. Maybe us had a few little words now and then, but sun never sot on no vexation twixt us. We just made that rule; pretty soon never needed no rule — just naturally got along with one another, and us kept it up till the last. Alice was so trustable.

“Me and her didn’t neither one have no book learnin cause us come along in slavery time and warn’t lowed to have no schoolin then. But us was all lowed to pray, and didn’t never have to stick us heads in the washpot and pray easy, like plenty black folks did. Marse Ike was good bout that; twas a old house with a dirt floor in the quarters where us could go and wouldn’t disturb nobody when us got happy and shouted.

“Me and Alice had children fast — 16 of em, but the second one come first year of Surrender and that give us a chance to give them 14 what us raised a little schoolin, much as us could. You see, schoolin helps a heap of folks, and I is glad the children is got some. But I been thinkin — it ain’t always book learnin that counts the most; sometimes it’s learnin what you gets just studyin what other folks *does*, that lets us in the light. It’s mighty nice though when us gets letters from the children and Alice can tell by how it looks which one it’s from. Us knows Birmingham, and Detroit, and Chattanooga every time us sees it.

“Now the children done showed us how to find most any little verse us knows in the Bible, by what it look like on the page. Taint exactly like readin, I know, but me and Alice pleasures us-selves mightily with it. That first day Alice took sick she showed me ‘The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want,’ and it come out just exactly even, where she pointed, so it bound to be right. Alice could point to more of them than I could, cause she had more time to study them than I does. But Alice ain’t never set idle and done nothin in her life; she said it was the devil’s cushion, and seem like she hated laziness worse than a cat do a wet floor. I’m gonna miss Alice. She was so helpful. In cotton-choppin time or any time in the field Alice toted the lead row:

Oh Lord, trouble so hard,
Nobody knows my trouble but God.”

I felt again the silence as I saw the loveliness of the woods in early spring. Without looking at me, Josh pointed to the blossoms on the wild plum thicket in the corner of the cleanly swept yard. What had been dead all winter was now living. To Josh this

Now the children done showed us how to find most any little verse us knows in the Bible, by what it look like on the page.



seemed inconsistent. "I just can't look at it no more now with Alice gone. Them new little maple wings, and the plum blooms, and Alice in there dead. Lord Jesus have mercy!"

Then, turning quickly to me with a face at once sad and bright, he said: "I hopes us don't have no late freeze; it'll set us back so. The plums was all killed last year, and black folks sure do bet on plums and dewberries."

I shook the old man's hand. It was hard and calloused; his tired eyes seemed almost closed. "Got to say good-by now. I hates to see you go home empty-handed, but I can't hold my thoughts today, there's so much to press my mind."

The little church with its burying ground was not far from Josh Horn's cabin by a path through the woods, but it was some distance by car. After I left the highway the "dim road," as Josh called it, seemed meandering and aimless. Finally I reached the steep red hill; then a sudden curve through a bit of dense woodland brought me in sight of the church. Its color was more the stain of time than of its original white paint.

The black cloth, or mourning sheet, had been placed on the altar. The preacher rose and gave out a hymn and the congregation sang.

Soon as my feet strike Zion
There won't be trouble no more.

Josh stood with his head lifted, and with a clumsy gesture his trembling hand wiped the sweat from his forehead. Then a calm peace seemed to come over him. He appeared oblivious for the moment of everything but the singing; he tried to join in, but the muscles of his throat seemed tight and his lips dry.

The preacher read from Alice's favorite chapter in the Bible: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"That's what it says," shouted Josh. "That's the verse Alice used to point to when us was heavy laden." The preacher continued to read, but few could hear him. Their voices were blending into delightful chords, with a beautiful moaning through their teeth. A young Negro woman began shouting in perfect time with the patting of the others' feet, throwing her arms in the air, while older women tried to hold her. Then the congregation sang.

I ain't been to heaven but I been told,
Thank God almighty I'm free at last.
The streets is pearl and the gates is gold,
Thank God almighty I'm free at last.

Six men carried the black painted pine coffin down the steep hill just back of the church. The congregation followed. A plum tree in full bloom was shaking off the white petals of its fragrant blossoms as the sun "went first" into the grave.

The ceremony was short. After covering the grave the people sang one of the loveliest of all spirituals.

Cause there ain't nobody to go there for you,
You got to go to the lonely valley,
You got to go there for yourself.

After the benediction I stayed to say goodbye to Josh. The old man's face had lost some of its rich plum color. It appeared gray and drawn, and his good-humored mouth was expressionless. Words seemed to mean nothing to him now.

"I wants to get on toward home now," he said. "My tiredness done come down on me. I ain't ketched nothin but a nod these last few days and nights sittin beside Alice. I didn't want to leave her with nobody else then, she looked so bothered, but me and old Roger can rest now."

*I reached the steep hill; then
a sudden curve through a bit
of dense woodland brought
me in sight of the church.*



Elizabeth F. Shores is a freelance writer now at work on a history of black education in Arkansas. She lives in Little Rock.

Toting the Lead Row: Ruby Pickens Tartt, Alabama Folklorist, by Virginia Pounds Brown and Laurella Owens, is excerpted with permission, copyright ©1981, by University of Alabama Press. It is available from the press, P.O. Box 2877, University, AL 35486, for \$19.95.

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ONE DETERMINED

How Wyman Westberry beat the Gilman Paper Company — and brought

I first met Wyman Westberry in the summer of 1970. I was straight out of college, a “Nader’s Raider” working on a project in Savannah, Georgia. Westberry was then, as he is now, a millwright at the Gilman Paper Company’s plant in St. Marys, Georgia. The project in Savannah was a study of the influence that one large company — a paper mill — had on the surrounding community. Westberry had read a newspaper story about the project and telephoned one night to say, in effect, if you’re interested in company towns, I’ve got something you’ll want to see.

He called near midnight, while I was sitting behind a broken desk in our project’s office in Savannah. That first time, and in all the hundred phone calls I have had from him since then, he called through the operator person-to-person. He’d seen my name in the newspaper, Westberry said, and he wanted to ask for my help — really, Ralph Nader’s — in his city. Then he began to tell me his story.

An older, more jaded version of myself might have dismissed the caller as a probable nuisance. We were under the gun as it was, in a rush to complete our Savannah report, and the last thing I was seeking was additional complications. But I was 20 years old, and this was the early bloom of the Nader movement. A few days after Westberry’s call, several members of the project, including me and my wife, took the three-hour drive down the Georgia coast to St. Marys. Ever afterwards we have been glad that we did.

St. Marys sits at the very southeastern corner of Georgia, separated by a river from Florida and by a few dozen miles from the Okefenokee Swamp. Offshore is Cumberland Island, once the preserve of Rockefellers and Carnegies.

By 1970 most of the estates were ruins, and wild horses, pigs and deer ran untrammelled across the dunes. The land around St. Marys was covered with Southern pines, often planted in rows, like corn, and harvested after 20

years or so of growth to be taken to the nearby paper mills. The city itself was a settlement of small frame houses, some on paved roads and some on dirt, divided into a black and a white part of town. Along with the pine trees, there were elaborately twisted live-oak trees, with grayish-

green Spanish moss dripping from their branches.

St. Marys advertised itself as the second-oldest settlement in America, after St. Augustine; in the middle of town a graceful antebellum mansion, suggesting links to the past, had been converted to a public hall. A block



MAN

By James Fallows

big changes to St. Marys, Georgia

away, where the main street made a dead-end at the waterfront, there was a diner with a jukebox, which constituted the principal night spot in town.

The St. Marys mills, which began operation in 1941, had expanded and modernized several times since the Gilman Paper Company had moved

south in search of cheaper labor. By 1970 it was a medium-sized mill, producing about 900 tons of paper a day. To Gilman, the St. Marys plant represented the company's entire output of paper; to St. Marys, Gilman represented the only meal ticket in town. Four thousand men, women and children lived in St. Marys. The mill's payroll varied between 1,500 and 2,000. Those who didn't depend on the mill directly often did indirectly, as merchants and tradespeople whose major accounts lay on the other side of the mill gate. "It can be safely stated that not less than 75 percent of the economy of Camden County is directly dependent on Gilman Paper Company," the mill's manager said in a speech in 1967.

Physically, the symbol of the mill's pre-eminence was its enormous smokestack, from which issued billows of steam, smoke and the many gaseous by-products of paper production. All paper mill towns have an unmistakable rotten-egg odor; the smell is nearly impossible to eliminate, since the methyl mercaptans that create it can be detected at concentrations of several parts per billion in the air. But in this, as in many other things, St. Marys displayed conditions at their extremes. The smell here was far stronger than in other pulp towns; you could almost feel the acrid particles on your face. The oak trees that stood downwind of the factory had small leaves and were bare of Spanish moss. Close to the mill, some of the oaks were skeletons with no leaves at all. A fine grit covered cars that were parked on the street; it ate at their rubber fittings and their chrome.

Psychologically, the mill's presence was as inescapable as its odor. The company once circulated a newspaper expressing its creed:

"REMEMBER THIS — IF YOU
WORK FOR A MAN,

in Heaven's name, WORK for him.
If he pays your wages which supply
your bread and butter, work for him;

speaking well of him; stand by him and stand by the institution he represents."

The Gilman headquarters were in Manhattan, where the Gilman brothers — Charles and Howard — presided over the company and led a cosmopolitan life as patrons of the arts. But since the late '40s, the Gilman family had delegated nearly all authority for local operations to the resident manager in St. Marys, one George W. Brumley. Brumley had been a colonel in the army during World War II, and he retained command presence in St. Marys. There he was known by such names as "the big man" and "the king." He had become a major landowner and was the largest single shareholder in the St. Marys State Bank. His greatest tactical advantage was that nearly everyone else in St. Marys stood in a position of dependence upon him. The result was a climate of suspicion and fear. Wyman Westberry drew all the shades in his house before he would talk with us — and this was a marvel of courage.

Wyman Westberry is a shortish man, quite powerfully built. At the time I met him in 1970, his dark hair was already receding, even though he was only 28 years old.

Westberry had grown up in Jesup, Georgia, the sixth child out of 10 and the youngest son. His father was a dealer for Sinclair Oil who later went to work for the state department of agriculture. It was a tight but not impoverished setting, and one strong on basic right/wrong religious values. Westberry was always industrious. He took jobs and saved money from the time he was young. In high school, he says, he concentrated on girls and football. "I was normal then."

After high school, Westberry moved from here to there, attending college briefly in Savannah, taking night courses at the City College of New York while working construction during the day. In 1964 he was drafted, and while in the army he demon-



photo by Jeanne M. Rasmussen

strated some of the literal-mindedness about questions of honesty that was later to have such an impact on St. Marys.

Near the end of his service, Westberry was assigned a short tour to his engineering company's headquarters at Fort Belvoir, outside Washington, DC. There he found that his company had been substantially beefed up, in preparation for dispatch to Vietnam. But of the 100-plus men in the company, only 10 or 12 were eating in the mess hall. "I asked the question, 'Why is this?'" Westberry says. "Some of the guys said, 'Just eat over there and you'll find out why.' So I did. They were serving hot dogs twice a day, for lunch and at the evening meal, and for the morning it was what we called S-O-S [same old shit]. The good quality of meat and food was just not there."

One evening a short time later, a soldier named Marshall came running into the barracks saying, "Wyman, Wyman, come here with me!" Marshall had been working KP. The officers in charge of the mess hall had told him to put the steaks and other top-grade food off to the side, and then they had dismissed him. He, Westberry and another soldier (a one-time law student) went back to the mess hall, where they saw a lieutenant and two sergeants loading the food into the trunk of a car.

Several days later Westberry and the former law student went to the U.S. Capitol and found the office of Senator Richard Russell of Georgia, who was then chairman of the Armed Services Committee. They were told by his assistant that they would have to file a formal complaint against the food services of the U.S. army, which they did.

"The first part of the next week I was singled out of formation," Westberry says. "The captain told me that he did not appreciate any such complaint, and that I would be restricted to the company area until further notice.

"I told him, 'You may keep me here a week, you may keep me here a month, or you may keep me here for the balance of my military service. But one day you are going to have to let me go, and at that time I am going to tell Senator Russell that I've been penalized for speaking out about wrongdoings.' That was in the morning time. At lunch time, when I went through the mess hall, the mess

sergeants said, there's the goddam squealer, there's the guy who complained about our food.

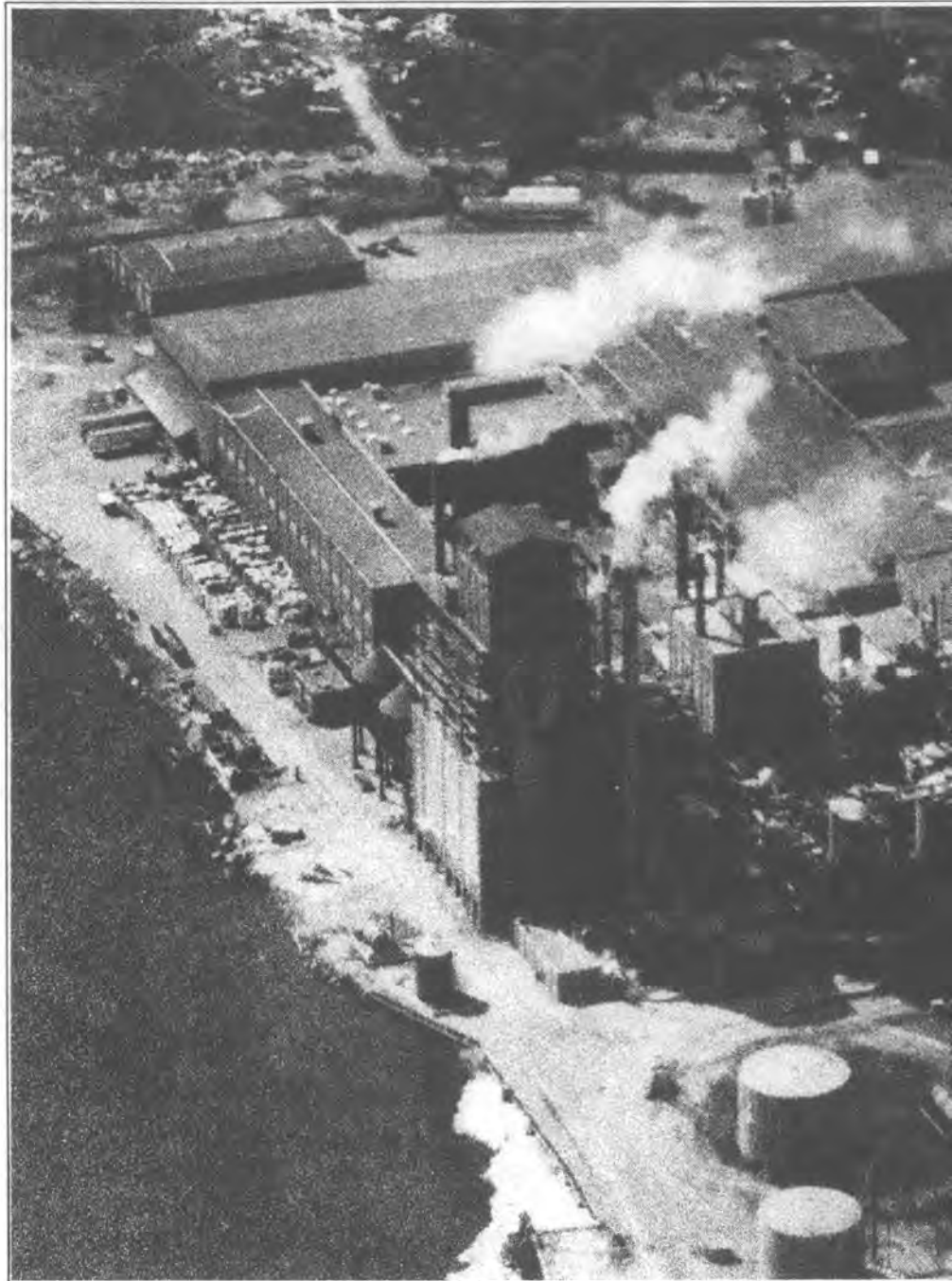
"That afternoon, I was singled out of formation and told to report to battalion headquarters. I went down there and was waiting to see the major. I started to salute when I saw him, but he reached out to shake my hand. He said, 'I want to thank you for being conscientious enough to bring to attention any wrong-doing you see. We would have liked for you to bring it to our attention first, but we know about it now and we'll make the

change.' He gave me a three-day pass, and when I got back, I noticed that 75 percent of the company was eating in the mess hall. The major also required the officers to eat there so they'd see what kind of food we were having. All the mess cooks were gone, too — not a single one of the old ones was there.

"That was when I realized that you could buck the system, if you were right, and if you stuck to your guns."

That lesson was put to the test in St. Marys.

Aerial view of the Gilman Paper Plant



The original object of Westberry's complaint — the reason he called me in Savannah in 1970 — was the Gilman mill's pollution of the nearby waters of the St. Marys and North rivers. In the late 1960s, paper mills all over the country were beginning what was to be a long and very expensive process of reducing air and water pollution. Gilman was several steps behind the pack. The 18 million gallons of waste water the plant generated daily were discharged into the river with no treatment at all. Although the Gilman plant produced

only one third as much paper as did the Union Camp mill in Savannah (which was the focus of the Nader project), the two plants released roughly the same amount of organic pollutants into the water.

The water pollution showed up as a dirty white foam that scudded along the river. At the water's edge, the marsh grass had been burned from its normal deep green to a dead gray. The recreational life of St. Marys focuses on the water, and when people took their motorboats across to Fernandina Beach, Florida, they could see the foam being churned up by their wakes.

When he moved to St. Marys, Westberry took up waterskiing and started to notice the pollution. "At first I wondered why I was the only person doing any waterskiing," he says. "When I came out of the water, I found out. I'd try to rub that foam and chemicals off my body." It was after one such waterskiing session that Westberry made his call to Savannah.

At the same time that Westberry was taking his first steps towards outside assistance, he was also attempting to alter the balance of local political power. The state elections held in 1970 provided an opportunity, one Westberry was quick to exploit. Carl Drury was a 30-year-old physician who had grown up elsewhere in Camden County and moved to St. Marys in 1967. In 1970 he decided to run for a seat in the state legislature. As a doctor, he was one of the few people in the town not completely dependent on the mill; as the product of a well-established local family, he had an independent political base.

The two men had quite different personalities — Westberry careful and deliberate, Drury ebullient and given to grand gestures — but at the time they had a shared political purpose. Dr. Drury's campaign provided a vehicle for Westberry's challenge to the established order in St. Marys, and Westberry, with his bulldog tenacity, kept turning up information that Dr. Drury could use.

Dr. Drury's opponent, the incumbent state legislator, was Robert Harrison, whose personal history told a lot about the way St. Marys worked. Harrison was a lawyer, but it would be more accurate to say that he was *the* lawyer in St. Marys. In addition to serving in the legislature, he was the attorney for Gilman's St. Marys

mill, attorney for the cities of St. Marys, Folkston and Kingsland, for the local school board and the hospital authority, and for Camden and Charlton Counties. In other words, he had it all wrapped up. If a dispute arose over the mill's obligation for city or county taxes, Robert Harrison would speak for the mill — and for the city and for the county. His brother, Kenneth Harrison, published the major local paper.

In running against Robert Harrison, Carl Drury made the Gilman Paper Company's influence, as personified by Robert Harrison, the issue in the campaign. He concentrated on the advantages the company enjoyed as a local taxpayer. Like so many companies that had moved their mills to the South during the Depression, Gilman had negotiated for favorable tax treatment from St. Marys. Under an agreement with the city signed in 1958, the mill was guaranteed that the valuation placed on its assets for property tax purposes would be permanently frozen at its 1958 level. If the mill built new facilities, 10 percent of their actual cost would be added to the valuation. The same agreement provided that if the company bought any new land, the land would be totally exempt from city tax. (Wyman Westberry later discovered that George Brumley had exploited this provision, by placing parcels of his own land in the company's name, to shield them from taxation.)

Because of these agreements, in the early 1970s the mill's value was listed on the city tax digest as \$3 million. On the Camden County digest — which had to be approved by the state of Georgia and was less directly under Gilman's control — the value was \$15.4 million.

On September 9, 1970, the day of the primary election, Drury lost in St. Marys but had enough support elsewhere in the district, largely because of family ties, to take the Democratic nomination away from Harrison. In normal cases that would mean that the seat was his. But this case was far from normal. In the middle of October, just 10 days before the general election in which his victory would be ratified, Dr. Drury was approached by the company doctor for the Gilman plant, who presented Dr. Drury with a choice: he could leave town and withdraw



photo by Jeanne M. Raarnussen

from the election, or he could face an ugly scandal.

Dr. Drury was told that Henry Bloodworth, another Gilman employee, was prepared to accuse him of rape. Bloodworth would be willing to forget his charges if Dr. Drury disappeared. Carl Drury refused the offer. Henry Bloodworth thereupon presented an affidavit from his 16-year-old daughter, Suzanne, saying that Dr. Drury had tried to rape her when she was in the hospital recovering from a tonsillectomy.

For a moment it looked as if the counterattack might succeed. Dr. Drury's medical license was immediately suspended. A grand jury was convened to look into the charges. Nonetheless, he managed to survive the general election, and in February, 1971, as he took office as a legislator, the grand jury issued a report that cleared him of the charges. The report pointed out that Suzanne Bloodworth's friend, a supposed eyewitness to the attack, had been taken to Robert Harrison's office by Mr. Bloodworth and asked to sign an affidavit she had never read. The Camden County juvenile judge said that "a majority of the people in this county think this was a framed-up political deal."

From his seat in the legislature Carl Drury was able to ask for investigations of Gilman's affairs, from taxes to pollution control. The director of the state water-quality agency, a gruff figure named Rock Howard, ordered Gilman to speed up its anti-pollution efforts. Georgia's attorney general ruled that the tax agreement between Gilman and St. Marys was unconstitutional. Then the legislature passed a law requiring that cities use the county tax valuations, which were approved by the state, in determining city taxes. This meant that Gilman's annual taxes in St. Marys would rise from about \$45,000 to \$227,000. A federal grand jury was convened to look into various irregularities in Camden County politics.

While these political challenges were proceeding, Westberry continued to attract outside attention to St. Marys. Stories about the situation, with titles like "The Mill that Runs a County," kept appearing in the Atlanta and Jacksonville papers. In the

summer of 1971, Ralph Nader released a report called *The Water Lords*, of which I was the principal author, that made an unflattering comparison between Gilman's position in St. Marys and the way other companies behaved in other mill towns. In May, 1972, Harrison Wellford and Peter Schuck, two of Ralph Nader's associates who had overseen the Water Lords project, published an article in *Harper's* called "Democracy and the Good Life in a Company Town." That same spring, Mike Wallace and CBS's "60 Minutes" descended on St. Marys, and *Newsweek* also carried a column describing the situation. With these doses of national publicity, the stakes went up. The news of St. Marys reached Manhattan, where the Gilman brothers, known for their refinement, found their family name identified with a squalid company town.

It was at this point that those who had enjoyed dominion in St. Marys for so many years apparently decided that something must be done. They could see regulators attacking, tax assessments soaring, reporters crawling over their backs. They may have realized that, for all the election-time publicity about Drury, Westberry had been at the center of it all. The rape charge had not stopped Drury; stronger measures were necessary. According to evidence later presented to a federal jury, that meant killing Westberry.

In the spring of 1972, when activity in the legislature was at its peak, Tommy Thomas spoke to Lawrence Brown at the Gilman plant. Thomas was a supervisor at the plant; Brown was a towering black man who weighed 260 pounds. Thomas said he would pay Brown \$1,500 if Brown would kill Wyman Westberry.

Brown replied that he was worried and could not rest easy until he got assurances of protection from the top. He'd have to hear it from the "big man." A few days later, Brown was told to show up in the parking lot of a high school in a neighboring town. There he saw George Brumley, plus Tommy Thomas and Robert Harrison. He asked if he'd be protected if things went wrong. He got a nod of assent from the big man, George Brumley himself.

According to his later testimony, Brown never intended to go through

with the deal at all. He was interested only in the money; once he got it, he'd skip town. Soon after his conversation with Thomas and Brumley, he approached George Beaver, who worked in the same "lab" as Brown did at Gilman Paper. Beaver was a friend of Wyman Westberry, and Brown told him that he should let Westberry know that certain people wished him ill.

Beaver immediately told Westberry, who confronted Brown himself and then drove with Brown across the state line to Florida. Once there, he called the FBI from a pay phone to tell them that he had a federal case to report, and a man standing alongside him who'd been hired to kill him. The FBI and its state counterpart, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, swooped into St. Marys. They suited Brown up with body bugs to record his later conversations with Tommy Thomas. They started tapping phones.

On the strength of the evidence gathered, a federal grand jury was convened to take testimony about the murder plot in May, 1972. But at this point Lawrence Brown pulled a second switch. When his turn came to testify, Brown said that it had all been a mistake. There had never been a plot to kill Wyman Westberry. The only plotting had been done by Westberry and Drury, who had offered him \$10,000 to tell ugly lies about Brumley, Harrison and Thomas. Then, after the grand jury had finished with him, Brown returned to his original story. There *had* been a plot, he said, and the only reason he denied it before the grand jury was that the same men who hired him to do the killing threatened to kill him if he talked.

Federal and state investigators wrestled with the case through the summer but took no definite action. But in late summer, Jeff Nesmith of the *Atlanta Constitution* ferreted out news about the investigation. On September 19, 1972, the *Constitution* ran a story about Lawrence Brown and Wyman Westberry at the top of page one, headlined "Offered \$1500 to Kill — Now He's Missing." The "he" referred to Brown, who could no longer be found.

To those who had been bedeviled by Wyman Westberry, this must have seemed the final straw. They had tried to shut him up permanently, and the plans fell apart. Surely they could at least do something to drive him

away. Would it be so difficult to find grounds on which to fire him?

On September 26, 1972, seven days after the story in the *Atlanta Constitution*, Westberry lost his job:

“Dear Mr Westberry:

“This is to advise you that effective immediately, you are terminated from your employment with the Gilman Paper Company. The reason for your discharge is that evidence has come to our attention that on or about March 21, 1970, you poured a substantial amount of toxic or acid-type liquid on a black construction employee who was then using what, until that date, had been a sanitary facility utilized exclusively by white employees. The black employee suffered first- and second-degree burns.

“The evidence of your culpability in this matter has just been brought to our attention.

“As you know, your general conduct has been a matter of grave concern to us, not the least of which is the controversy concerning Lawrence Brown. I understand that this and other matters are presently being

investigated by appropriate government agencies, and I am confident that your involvement in these other matters ultimately will be resolved by the government agencies. I mention this to make it clear that you are being terminated only for the offense noted in paragraph one above and that we have not taken any other matter into consideration in our decision.”

This was slightly too clever an approach. It was clever in attempting to besmirch Westberry in the one way surest to scare off his outside allies — the accusation that he was a violent racist. *Someone* in the Gilman plant was a violent racist, for two-and-a-half years earlier someone had poured “white liquor” on a black man named Amos Rawls as he sat on a toilet, leaving Rawls with serious burns on his head and groin. But over the previous two-and-a-half years no one had identified Westberry as a likely suspect. The government investigators had taken evidence and had given up; the company had closed the books. Then, the day after the *Atlanta Constitution* made the St. Marys

murder plot front-page news, new evidence came to light.

On that day, September 20, three letters were written, all of them accusing Westberry of the crime. One, sent to George Brumley, was from the mayor of St. Marys, the improbably named Richard Daley. Daley was a good-looking, ambitious young man, the labor movement’s equivalent of a Jaycee. In addition to his civic duties, he was president of the electrician’s union, traditionally the most docile of the three unions representing workers at the plant. Daley said in his letter that another member of his union, L.N. “Buddy” McGhin, Jr., had just come up with evidence that Wyman Westberry was the person who had burned Amos Rawls.

The second letter, also to Brumley, came from a second union president, Jerry Ridenour of the Pulp and Sulfit Paper Mill Workers. Ridenour had also heard from McGhin. In his letter Ridenour enclosed letter number three, a statement from McGhin himself, saying that he’d heard black workers voice suspicions about Westberry.

The charges were obviously concocted, but for the moment that didn’t matter: Westberry was out of a job. At this point he began a third offensive. He had worked first with outside allies and second with local politicians; now he turned to the courts. There he began a protracted legal struggle for survival, and revenge, that stretched over the next four years.

Westberry made the gesture of appealing through Gilman’s in-house complaint system to get his job back. Once that appeal had been denied, he appealed to authorities outside St. Marys. Westberry’s union, Local 1128 of the International Association of Machinists, traditionally had been the most independent of the unions that operated at the mill. At a meeting where Westberry explained his case, the union voted to take his case before a federal arbitrator. Westberry hired his own lawyer, a 30-year-old labor specialist named Fletcher Farrington, to represent him at the hearing — and also to file a \$2,225,000 damage suit in federal court against the hierarchy of St. Marys. The suit was directed against the Gilman company and the

On the streets of St. Marys



photo by Worley Thorne

inflation opportunity's
garden pro-
gram. (Journal Photo
by Rocco Morabito)

3 Indicted In St. Marys Case

—GILMAN PAPER COMPANY—

By JOE CALDWELL
Journal Staff Writer

A federal grand jury in Savannah, Ga. has charged three men, including a former state legislator, with false statements to federal officials and the jury about a man who was induced to kill



Harrison

Brown \$1,500 to kill Westberry.

It further states that Brown, Harrison and Brumley stated under oath before the grand jury foreman that he would testify truly to material matters in which the grand jury was concerned.

That testimony was "as to the material fact... whether Brumley, Harrison and Thomas offered Brown a sum of money to kill Wyman Westberry."

The indictment states that Brown testified to the grand jury that he never was offered a sum of money by Brumley, Harrison and Thomas to kill Westberry.

Count two against Brumley, Harrison and Thomas charges that the three "did a false and willfully use a false and fictitious document, knowing that the document contained a false material statement."

The indictment states that on or about May 31, 1972, Brumley, Harrison and Thomas offered



Brumley

offered Brown \$1,500 to kill Westberry."

It further states that Thomas' statement to the agents "were fictitious and knew that Brown had never made such a statement to Thomas."

The fourth count, also against Thomas, states that Thomas, while being interviewed by FBI special agents David B. Cook and Louis P. Jones on June 10, 1972 made false statements about the reason for Brown's travels to Vero Beach, Fla., on May 11, 1972, and his stay in that area between May 12 and 15, 1972.

According to the indictment, Thomas told the agents that Thomas and Brown traveled to Vero Beach and remained there to "protect" Brown.

Said statement by Thomas to agents Jones and Cook was fictitious and false as Thomas knew that these well and reasons for the

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—ZONING CODE REVIEW— Urges Input From Residents

By REG CROWDER
Government Affairs Staff

three familiar figures — George Brumley, Robert Harrison and Tommy Thomas. It asked damages on grounds that they had "conspired among themselves to deprive plaintiff of his life."

The "white liquor" arbitration didn't begin until May, 1973, eight months after Westberry had lost his job. Three months later, the federal arbitrator came down resoundingly on Westberry's side. There was not one bit of evidence, he said, that the company had ever considered Westberry the culprit before the fateful day, September 20. It was clear to the arbitrator that Wyman Westberry had been "unjustly dismissed." In compensation, the company was ordered not only to give him his job back but also to restore his benefits and seniority and to make up for all his lost pay.

Two months passed. The first anniversary of Westberry's dismissal came and went, and still Gilman made no move to put Westberry back on the job. On October 1, 1973, Farrington went to the U.S. District Court in Savannah and asked that Gilman be ordered to comply with the arbitrator's order within 24 hours. That afternoon, Westberry's phone started

ringing; would it be convenient for him to begin work the next day? Westberry said it would, and on October 2 he walked back onto the job.

To those who had followed the case, this outcome was simply astonishing. Someone had challenged the gods — and won. When he was fired, his enemies might have considered it good riddance to a traitor; his friends saw him as a heroic martyr, but a martyr all the same. Now he had come back from his martyrdom, demonstrating that it was possible to fight back and survive.

"It was a good feeling, to come back here," Westberry said. "A lot of people had felt there's no way under the sun you can beat those people, with all the power they've got."

That was not the end of Westberry's legal assault. His suit charging Brumley et al. with conspiracy to kill him had been thrown out by the district court judge in Savannah, on grounds that federal courts did not have jurisdiction in such a case. On January 22, 1975, a little more than a year after Westberry returned to his job, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed that decision; let the conspiracy suit proceed, it said. One week

later, the impact of this ruling was registered in a notice posted inside the Gilman plant.

"It is with deep regret that the Board of Directors announces that George W. Brumley has decided to take early retirement, effective February 1, 1975."

Robert Harrison also resigned as counsel for Gilman Paper. When the conspiracy case went to court, he and Brumley would not be appearing as official representatives of the company.

As it happened, their day in court never came. The company's attorneys — who by now were dealing directly from Manhattan, no longer leaving the Westberry negotiations to the local talent — offered to settle the case. Westberry accepted, for a sum that has never been publicly disclosed. But even though the trial was aborted, it had done what mattered: the person most responsible for the set-up in St. Marys, George Brumley, and the one in position to help him most, Robert Harrison, had been driven from their positions. Whatever else happened in St. Marys, they would never again have the tools with which to dominate the town.

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If Brumley and Harrison thought they had tasted the worst of Wyman Westberry's medicine, they soon discovered that they were wrong. In October, 1975, eight months after George Brumley's resignation, Brumley and Robert Harrison were indicted by a federal grand jury. Along with Tommy Thomas, they were ordered to stand trial on federal charges that arose from the alleged conspiracy to murder Wyman Westberry.

The reason for this development was that Wyman Westberry's influence, direct and indirect, had reached even into the U.S. Department of Justice. The Justice Department had looked into allegations about the murder plot once before, in 1972, and had decided to do nothing, mainly because the star witness, Brown, kept changing his story every week. But Westberry kept sending documents to attorneys general John Mitchell and Edward Levi, assistant attorney general Henry Peterson and J. Stanley Pottinger, head of the civil-rights division of the Justice Department. He made repeated late-night calls to (among others) Harrison Wellford, co-author of the *Harper's* article, who on leaving Nader had become an aide to Senator Philip Hart.

Westberry's badgering could be a nuisance — as those interested in his case have learned over the years. (His lawyer, Fletcher Farrington, even called him "pestiferous.") But his persistence was also one of the secrets of his success. During a chance encounter in Washington early in 1975, Wellford buttonholed Stanley Pottinger and asked whatever became of the St. Marys case. Pottinger sent a "tickler" down through the channels of his organization, asking the same question. At the other end of the tickler was Steven Horn, a 28-year-old attorney who eventually put the pieces of the case together in convincing enough fashion to win an indictment from a grand jury.

At the trial, the defense lawyers did everything possible to discredit Lawrence Brown's credibility as a witness. "He could tell 45 lies to 45 people and keep them straight," Westberry's friend George Beaver said privately of Brown — and he was on Brown's side. The clinching evidence seemed to be the recording made by Lawrence Brown's "body bug." It captured a meeting between Brown and Tommy Thomas,

in which Brown said, "I'm ready, I'm ready for him," and Thomas replied that he had to "cool it" because the FBI was in town.

The case was sent to the jury on the morning of January 21, 1976. That same afternoon the jurors filed back into the courtroom to announce their verdict: all defendants guilty on all counts.

In St. Marys, the effect was comparable to the impeachment of a president, the dethroning of a king. "There was a sense of shock," said one resident who had moved there to work for one of the utility companies. "And then almost dancing in the street when the idea sunk in that *he* [Brumley] was going to jail."

Once again, there was a legal anticlimax. Brumley, Harrison and Thomas appealed their convictions, and the start of their year-and-a-day prison sentences was postponed until the appeal was decided. In October, 1977, three judges of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously overturned the conviction and directed that all three defendants be acquitted. Their ruling was based mainly on reinspection of the evidence; after reading through the trial transcript, they found Lawrence Brown's testimony

too weak to support conviction.

By the time the news reached St. Marys, though, it no longer really mattered. George Brumley was not going to jail, but neither was he coming back to St. Marys. His days as the big man were finished, and in the town he had once dominated some fundamental changes were beginning.

Brumley returned to his retirement home in Sea Island, Georgia, a resort up the coast from St. Marys. His place at the mill was taken by William Davis, long his assistant, who practiced a more conventional version of company civic relations. Robert Harrison quietly resumed his law practice but kept his distance from local politics. Lawrence Brown became a deputy sheriff in another Georgia town.

In 1976 when Richard Daley ran for re-election as mayor, he won by fewer than 100 votes. In 1978, he lost to Alvin Dickey, a rawboned, salt-of-the-earth character who, as a shrimper, had always been independent of the mill and aggrieved about its water pollution. A new city council came in with him, of which Westberry's buddy Russell Tyre was a member. The council voided the previous tax agreements the city had made with Gilman, including a con-

The other industry in St. Marys



photo by Jeanne M. Rasmussen

tract drawn up under Mayor Daley's auspices in 1975 after the state had ruled the previous tax agreements unconstitutional. The council started out asking Gilman for \$900,000 in back tax payments; it finally agreed to accept \$300,000. Under constant pressure from the state, the company has greatly reduced its air and water pollution.

"There's a far more relaxed atmosphere in the town, and at work," Tyre said while he was on the council. "If people have gripes, they're not afraid to stand up and gripe. In the last two years, we've circulated a petition to do something about pollution. Two hundred people signed it, including some salaried supervisors. Ten years ago, you could have held a gun on a salaried supervisor and not get him to sign."

There was one other change in St. Marys which guaranteed that all the other changes could never be reversed. Through the early 1970s, the U.S. navy laid plans for its fleet of enormous Trident submarines, each one of which would carry 24 nuclear missiles. The navy planned to base some of the Tridents on the West Coast, in Puget Sound; in December, 1976, it announced that Tridents also would be based at King's Bay, Georgia, just outside St. Marys. New facilities were built — the largest peacetime construction project in the Navy's history, a 16,000-acre, \$1.5 billion-plus project. By mid 1982, 3,500 people worked on the base. The first Tridents are due in November, 1989, and growth will continue until about 1998. Eventually as many as 30,000 new people might come into the area.*

"There's competition in the labor market now," Carroll Myers, who spent his working life with Gilman until he retired with a disability, said in 1980. "Now you can go to work for the navy if all you need's a job. Before, they could tell you, 'If you don't like it, leave.' They let Brumley run things, and there was so much power I think he got obsessed with it. They can't do that anymore."

* The next issue of *Southern Exposure* — a special report on the military in the South — will carry more on the King's Bay project.

As Wyman Westberry drives from his house to the plant each day, he can pass the house where Henry Bloodworth has lived ever since his daughter accused Carl Drury of rape. Driving by, Westberry sees the new woodwork and siding that was installed at the Bloodworth house shortly after Suzanne Bloodworth swore out her affidavit. If he turns the opposite way at the end of his street, perhaps to head towards Antoinette's restaurant for breakfast, he can tell whether Robert Harrison is in his office by checking for the brown Cadillac parked outside.

One evening in 1980 as Westberry was preparing to put his boat into the river, I noticed a grimace cross his face. He nodded toward a person standing a few feet away and told me to take a look at him. "That's Buddy

McGhin," he said as the man passed out of earshot — the man who had testified nearly a decade earlier that he saw Westberry throw "white liquor" onto Amos Rawls. When we reached Westberry's home, he pulled a document from a pile next to the couch. The paper was a Gilman Paper Company announcement, dated February 24, 1977, announcing that Buddy McGhin had been promoted to "permanent salaried employee as a supervisor." "That would have come maybe 20 years down the road, without the white liquor," Westberry said. "I pity him for being so weak. But I also feel that if he'd been man enough to stand up to these people, a lot of this would never have happened."

Westberry has made his peace with some of his former antagonists. In 1972, when Jerry Ridenour was

A St. Marys welcome was not extended to troublemakers . . .



photo by Jeanne M. Rasmussen

president of the Pulp and Paper Workers Union, he wrote one of the letters to George Brumley accusing Westberry of throwing white liquor. "I fell into the error of believing idle gossip," Ridenour told me eight years later. "I was told something about Wyman, and I checked it out and thought it was authentic. Later on I found out that it was all a lie." Westberry's reputation within his own union is such that in the fall of 1981, without opposition, he was elected president of Local 1128 of the International Association of Machinists.

Others in town seem unsure how to regard him. His position is somewhat comparable to that of a man who has beaten cancer. Everyone is impressed, but some are uneasy. "You can't take anything away from Wyman," one of his friends told me. "But the differ-

ence between Wyman and me is that I've got a family."

This Westberry concedes. "I thank God it was me that they picked on in the labor movement. I had accumulated some money. I was in a position to fight back."

True, Wyman Westberry was in a better position to be brave than most people in St. Marys. He had no wife and children, whose welfare might have deterred him from sticking out his neck. He had built up a savings account and was not saddled with debt. He could withstand one full year with no pay without being driven into submission.

But something more than being in the right position was involved in Wyman Westberry's victory. No matter how well situated he might have been, he would not now be living evidence

that one person can change a system unless he had been unusually skillful in interweaving three strategies of reform.

The first was his understanding that, when the local balance of power was stacked in favor of the other side, he had to look for help from powerful outsiders. In the army, this meant appealing to Senator Richard Russell. In St. Marys, it meant enlisting Ralph Nader, the *Atlanta Constitution*, CBS News and others whose base of support lay outside the influence of the Gilman Paper Company.

Westberry constantly coupled that approach with his second effort, which was to do everything possible to affect the local balance of power. Many "reformers" with the burning zeal of a Westberry lack the personality, the family history and the other ingredients that give a politician his appeal. Recognizing that they themselves stand no chance of being elected, they tend to give up on electoral politics as a means of reform. Westberry understood that the trick is to find someone who does have the politician's gifts and then use him as a vehicle for your cause.

Finally, Wyman Westberry understood that ultimately he might have to turn to the courts. Less scrupulous "reformers" have clogged the court schedules by filing nuisance suits. The difference with Wyman Westberry is that he did not take the step toward litigation until he had endured injustice of the most extreme sort, in the form of an apparent murder plot against him and the denial of his livelihood.

Wyman Westberry draws from his struggles in St. Marys the same moral he took from the army mess hall episode: if you struggle long enough, and you are right, justice will eventually be done. Others' experiences with life have left them with darker conclusions, but Wyman Westberry's endurance and success cannot be dismissed. □

like Wyman Westberry.



photo by Worley Thorne

James Fallows is Washington editor of The Atlantic. This story, in somewhat different form, first appeared in The Washington Monthly, May, 1982. Used by the permission of the author and publisher.

STORIES & OPINIONS

by Margaret Jones Bolsterli

I grew up in a house full of stories and things, but I yearned for conversation and ideas. I doubt that I had a word for it before I went off to college, but I knew there was something missing, and instinctively I knew I would have to leave the South to find whatever it was. I could not imagine any Southerners much different from us.

My family dealt in anecdotes and cautionary tales which, though entertaining and instructive, did not evoke real response. I wanted to be engaged in a process; I wanted to swat the ball back over the net, impossible with a good story which is, after all, a finished drive. Stories, by drawing the attention to images and memory, hinder the exchange of information so vital to conversation, undoubtedly the reason why Southerners are so adept at telling them. When there are so many topics that could get you killed, best deal in fiction and be safe. And although everybody may know it's the truth that's being told, whatever is presented in a story gets treated as fiction.

The things in our Arkansas house were the flotsam of our century in one place — whatever flotsam, that is, that had survived the 1927 flood, that awesome lake of water which stretched from Cairo, Illinois, to the Gulf of Mexico and was the subject of endless stories around our house. A disaster has to be anticipated, endured and cleaned up after to qualify as major, and the '27 flood met all these requirements.

It had been anticipated for years, since my family lived near the point where the Arkansas River runs into the Mississippi and had looked for a flood every spring. Indeed, there had been so many incidents of "high water" that, like the people near a volcano who pay no attention to the single

trickle of lava that appears running halfway down the mountain side and so are unprepared for the real eruption, the family simply found it interesting when the levee broke in 1927 and water got high enough to run into the yard. Nobody even got out of bed that night to investigate the sound of water sloshing around under the house, but at dawn a motor boat provided by the Red Cross tied up to a porch post and evacuated the family, with only the clothes they could put on, to the highest ground within 50 miles, the levee itself.

When the family got back three months later, there was a foot of silt on the floor of the house and water marks six feet high on the walls. The only furniture left were the few pieces held together by pegs; the glue in everything else had come unstuck. We were left with only a few trunks, a bed, a chest of drawers and an old mahogany secretary. My father took the legs off the secretary and used them to build a dining table; iron beds replaced the lost wooden ones except for the magnificent, primitive, plantation-made four-poster that my grandfather, my father, my brothers and sister and finally I were all born in. I was not there yet in 1927. I didn't have to be; I know what it was like because I've been told.

Even that house was gone by the time I have my first memories at two. My mother knew by 1933 that the smell of the flood could never be washed out of it. She didn't like it anyway, because the kitchen was in a separate building, so she insisted on a new one. To please my father's sister, who lived with us, it had to be built on the same spot, so we lived in the commissary until the new house was ready. The trunks containing letters, family papers and photographs which had survived the flood

sitting safely in the old attic were moved to the new one and the story of our lives went on.

In the photographs, my grandfather, veteran of every major battle fought by the Army of Tennessee, who had died in 1904, was still glaring out from what in my childhood I thought was a tintype heaven, his weak chin hidden by a fan of white whiskers. At least I came to imagine that his chin was weak, probably because of the stories told of his willingness to let the farm go to ruin while he hunted anything that moved or read anything he could get his hands on. Cotton in the field never kept him out of the woods or away from a new book. His library floated around in the house during the flood, and my mother told of drying out the books and ironing the pages so we wouldn't have to live like savages with nothing to read.

The people in the pictures and stories were as real to me as the children in my class at school because I knew in minute detail not only what they looked like, but also what they had said and done. Cousin Frierson, who died in 1906 from acute indigestion, was standing right at my elbow in his little belted-tweed jacket and buttoned shoes every time it crossed my mind to taste a green pecan. Dead 25 years before I was born, he was talked about as if he had just stepped into the wings. (It was impatience that killed him; he could have waited for those pecans to get ripe.)

We were all together in that place, one generation mixed with the others, and who's to say that I did not hear their voices as I was sure I did when the wind blew hard enough through the walnut trees in the yard that my father, as a boy, had inadvertently planted by dumping a load of nuts there with his little red wagon. He had



hauled them from somewhere else on the place and put them there to dry for the walnut cakes that Aunt Mitty, the cook, made so well. Forgotten, they sprouted and grew and by the time I was six were at least four feet in diameter.

And who's to say I did not see a ghost in the driveway one night, as I was sure I did, whirling in the moonlight like a dust devil?

The stories and things went together. The old dresser that wouldn't soak apart had a bottom drawer strictly reserved for sick children. You had to be too ill to go to school but well enough to be allowed to look in it. It was the last resort of a mother near the end of her rope to keep an irritable child busy and it seldom failed. Among other things in it was a tomahawk so dull the victim might have been bludgeoned but hardly scalped. (The Indians who left it, the Quapaws, are said to have been too amiable to have been much interested in scalps anyway. They are also the only Indians noted by the French explorers for their sense of humor.)

The house is built on the site of a Quapaw village and the tomahawk, a mortar and pestle and hundreds of arrowheads had been plowed up on the place. But there were relics of later eras too: *pince nez* from God knows where, strings of beads, a tuning fork, old watches that didn't work and a huge brass compass that did, the very compass that had been used by my great-grandfather to survey the county when it was still wilderness. The drawer was so full it was too heavy for a small child to open, but none would have dared to try because it was clearly understood to be a privilege for the convalescent only.

A privilege for the not-quite-convalescent was to be allowed to be in the old Big Bed which had survived

the flood. It deserved its name, for each of its massive posts must have come from a small tree. My grandfather's initials were carved on one post at the eye level of a seven-year-old. To a sick child this bed became a carriage if there was an obliging well child to sit at the foot with legs dangling to play coachman. My brother Bob drove me cheerfully through endless colds, measles and chicken pox, and I remember the loneliness of mumps because by the time I had it he was lost to adolescence.

But I digress. As I said at the beginning, I yearned for ideas. I'd heard enough stories to last a lifetime by the time I went to college and met people who conversed. It was exciting to say something, anything, and have something pertinent said right back without any crabwise movements. I got to be pretty good at conversation myself after getting over the shock of hearing for the first time in my life "nice" people say, "That's not true," and "I don't believe you." I was innocent of this gambit because objective truth is so irrelevant to higher, fictional truth that nobody in my family would have dreamed of sacrificing a story to it. I remember the pleasure and stimulation of those early conversations, how alive I felt, and intelligent. But I do not remember a single thing we talked about.

The man I married was adept at conversation, too. We could go anywhere and exchange information with anybody, and we taught our children to do the same thing. They can converse intelligently on many subjects, and because of the changed times and the places where they have lived,

they don't worry about getting killed for expressing their opinions. When they were small we moved around to follow my husband's work so our house, wherever we were, never had interesting things in it like the house I grew up in. I became enamored of Danish furniture: no clutter, smooth lines and surfaces, well-jointed drawers that didn't stick and were periodically emptied.

But oh we did talk, and still do; we discuss weighty matters. *Swat* and the ball flies over the net; *whap* and it's my turn again. But there is something amiss: my sons, who can converse endlessly without anecdote, could not rise to a story if their necks depended on it. They are like me in their passion for the exchange of ideas, and they are the spitting images of some of the men in those old tintypes, but I look at them and see strangers. Sometimes talking to them reminds me of flying over the neighborhoods around airports, the ones with identical little houses and no trees in the yards. You can tell by looking at those houses from a thousand feet up that they don't have any interesting things in them. Or stories either. So I have started writing things down for them, reparations perhaps for bringing them up among strangers in ghostless houses furnished in the International Style. □

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BY THOMAS N. BETHELL

IN DEFENSE OF FREEDOM'S VICTORY!

The Ordeal of the FEDERATION OF SOUTHERN COOPERATIVES

On December 31, 1979, a federal grand jury in Birmingham, Alabama, served a subpoena upon Charles Prejean, director of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC), instructing him to turn over "any and all documents in connection with federal funding of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives and its affiliated cooperatives for the years 1976-79."

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives has been in business since 1967, attempting to support and coordinate the bootstrap economic-development efforts of about 30,000 low-income rural families organized into 130 cooperatives of various kinds in 14 states throughout the South. It has its headquarters in the small community of Epes (pronounced "Epps"), Alabama, about 90 miles southwest of Birmingham. FSC is very much a product of the 1960s, growing out of the Civil Rights Movement and the war on poverty, and from the beginning it has depended heavily on federal funding.

Government support aided the organization, especially after the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976 because

people familiar with the federation's origins and sympathetic to its goals were appointed to a number of high places in the administration. By the end of 1979, the federation was raising money at a rate of nearly \$2.5 million a year, about double the level it had ever reached before, and 95 percent of its funding was coming directly or indirectly from Washington.

The federal government has many ways of determining whether its funds are being properly spent. It has a panoply of routine administrative oversight procedures; it has auditors and inspectors general. Grand juries, however, investigate *criminal* matters only. An organization known to be the object of this kind of special scrutiny acquires a taint, and remains suspect until the jury has finished its business. Federal agencies are reluctant, for obvious political reasons, to demonstrate strong continuing support for any organization operating under a cloud of official suspicion. Private foundations, with only a few exceptions, think the same way.

Thus the Federation of Southern Cooperatives found itself locked in a legal and financial limbo while the investigation continued throughout

all of 1980 and through the first five months of 1981. By that time, of course, the Carter administration had been turned out of office, and the Reagan administration was moving to shut off federal support for organizations like the federation. Then on May 20, 1981, the United States Attorney for the Northern District of Alabama, J.R. Brooks, announced: "I have decided to decline prosecution."

Brooks offered not so much as a word to explain why the investigation had been undertaken in the first place, why it had been allowed to drag on so long, or why he had finally decided to let it drop.

Nor were any of his superiors willing to discuss the case, not even to the extent of merely estimating what the investigation cost the taxpayers. Meanwhile the federation has been dealt one crippling blow by the investigation and another by the adoption of President Reagan's domestic budget.

What had happened in Alabama? Was the investigation legitimate — or was it an attempt to do by official intimidation what the federation's foes were unable to do by other means?

YOU CAN'T EAT FREEDOM

If you take a map of the deep South and draw a line across it from Vicksburg to Montgomery, you will find the little town of Epes, headquarters of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, at about the halfway point, in the middle of Sumter County, Alabama, close to the Mississippi line.

The names along the line call up extraordinary images. Vicksburg. Jackson. Meridian. Selma. Montgomery. The surrender of the Confederacy in this corner of the South did not come until more than a month after Lee had capitulated at Appomattox, a fact which later served as a slender reed of pride for many people who were otherwise humbled by the bitterness of Reconstruction. There were places in Sumter County where old unreconstructed Confederates met for years — for *decades* — to talk of revenge, where the only law was vigilante law, and where Nathan Bedford Forrest, beaten as a rebel general and reborn as the first Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, found ready recruits.

Here the blacks who had been set free by proclamation found themselves still enslaved to economics, tied to soil which had been left exhausted first by war and then by the deliberate indifference of the victors. Carpet-baggers and other opportunists of every stripe settled upon Alabama. When economic recovery came, finally, it came in a perverted form, compelling poor whites and especially poor blacks to sharecrop land that yielded profits for a few at the expense of the many.

The more recent history of these names on the map is still vivid in memory: Freedom Riders making their way from Birmingham and Montgomery to Selma and Jackson, firebombed and beaten along the way and locked up when they arrived; George Wallace in a university doorway at Tuscaloosa, trying to thwart history; men and women marching from Selma to Montgomery in support of the right to vote, state troopers trying to club them back into submission; James Meredith lying wounded on a road near Meridian.

In places like Sumter the political

and economic pressure on low-income blacks was particularly relentless. Jobs were hard to come by, easy to lose. Black farmers who had borrowed heavily for years to buy their own land risked losing it when they registered to vote. The same banker who had been unruffled by late loan payments in the past suddenly discovered regulations requiring him to be less lenient. There were other problems, of course: agribusiness encroachment meant that small Southern farmers generally were in peril, and mechanization meant the loss of jobs even when political retaliation was not a factor. The combination of these burdens could be overwhelming.

The 1970 census would confirm that Southern blacks were losing their land at the rate of more than 300,000 acres per year; that blacks owned only 98,000 farms across the entire region, compared to 560,000 in 1950; and that the black farm population had dropped during that same time from 3.2 million to less than a million. The census-takers also found that more than 50 percent of the black families still living on the land were living in poverty, compared to 17 percent of the rural white population. The median family income of blacks in rural southwest Alabama was \$2,460, compared to \$9,585 for the United States as a whole.

In retrospect, one of the most remarkable things about the 1960s is that so many people were able to



MEMBERS OF THE MARENGO COUNTY (ALABAMA) CITIZENS CO-OP SHOW OFF THEIR PRODUCE

channel so much energy *not* into political confrontation — although there was plenty of that too — but into searching for workable solutions. Some turned to the ballot box, looking to the acquisition of political power as a solution; still others concentrated on trying to change conditions on the land, looking to economic independence as a solution. And some people tried to do both.

In 1966, small groups of black farmers quietly began getting together — sometimes only with each other, sometimes with VISTA volunteers and CORE or SNCC workers and other federally assisted poverty warriors — to talk about saving their land, if they still owned any, or about buying some, if they were sharecropping. Charles Prejean, now going into his fifteenth year as director of the Federation

CHARLES PREJEAN, DIRECTOR OF THE FEDERATION OF SOUTHERN COOPERATIVES



photo by Reesa Tansey



FSC MEMBER WITH HIS MULE AND HIS CORN CROP

of Southern Cooperatives, was teaching adult literacy courses in Louisiana back then, and remembers how it was:

"People agreed that it was important to learn how to read and write and do arithmetic; they understood how that would benefit them in the long run — but they had a more immediate need to put food on the table. They wanted to learn how to do *that*. Right away. And we didn't know how to teach it. So we started looking for solutions, looking into things like credit unions and the whole co-op movement.

"We began sending people off to study co-ops, sending them as far away as Wisconsin, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan. They saw with their own eyes how people could learn to pool their resources, even when those resources were very limited. You didn't have to have tremendous resources. But you *did* have to have the ability to trust each other, to depend on one another. And we had that, the blacks in the South."

Prejean laughs. "It was forced upon us, you might say."

Co-ops began to sprout in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and other Southern states, and co-op organizers succeeded in stirring up interest and support, first at the Field Foundation and then at the federal Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and the Ford Foundation.

One of the earliest, and most immediately controversial, of the co-ops was the Southwest Alabama Farmers Cooperative Association (SWAFCA), organized in 1966 by black farmers in a 10-county area, including Sumter. SWAFCA organizers managed to mix black-power politics and hard economic sense into a dynamic combi-

nation so appealing that more than 2,500 farmers signed up within a few months.

SWAFCA made headlines with its clenched-fist rhetoric, and that may have helped to win support, especially among younger black farmers. But their enthusiasm would have evaporated quickly without direct evidence that the co-op idea could produce results. It did — more quickly than anyone had dared to hope. Over the course of a single year, SWAFCA farmers found that by purchasing in bulk they could cut the cost of farm supplies nearly in half. And when it came time to sell their crops, they discovered the advantage of marketing cooperatively: food-processing companies no longer could arbitrarily set the prices they would pay, and couldn't play off one struggling farmer against another.

SWAFCA insisted on getting higher prices for its members, and when SWAFCA held firm, the processors discovered to their dismay that other farmers in the area were holding firm as well. The immediate effect of this classic exercise in grassroots economic power was that prices paid to farmers for peas and cucumbers in southwest Alabama went up about 100 percent in a single season.

This was heady stuff. But SWAFCA's economic success produced an immediate political backlash. The food-processing companies, supported by a phalanx of local white politicians, protested loudly to Governor Lurleen Wallace that a bunch of uppity blacks were using federal OEO money to overturn the economic status quo of southwest Alabama. The local politicians clambered aboard a corporate jet provided by Whitfield Pickle Company, one of the processors most heavily affected by SWAFCA's marketing prowess, and flew to Washington, where they proceeded to enlist the active support of the entire Alabama congressional delegation. Lurleen Wallace then flew up from Montgomery to join them, and the whole group descended upon OEO headquarters, prepared to do battle with director Sargent Shriver.

But OEO support continued — and when Governor Wallace tried to veto an OEO grant to SWAFCA, Shriver successfully blocked her, demonstrating the kind of executive-branch clout that would be conspicuous by its absence in the case of the FSC

investigation more than a decade later.

SWAFCA's initial success was inspiring, but co-op organizers quickly discovered that replicating it was no easy job. Regardless of whether they were trying to buy land, build houses, market vegetables or help people find jobs, start-up capital was always a problem. Where do you get money, and where do you find people who have the skills you need to learn, and how do you pay them, and where do you find people who know how to raise money, and how do you pay *them*?

At a meeting in February, 1967, representatives of 22 co-ops decided to address this basic dilemma by putting together a new umbrella organization intended to serve as a means of connecting and supporting all the diverse co-op efforts struggling to get under way in the South. They created the Federation of Southern Cooperatives and elected Charles Prejean, the 26-year-old teacher of adult literacy and student of the co-op movement, as director.

The assignment they gave to the new federation was all-encompassing:

Help us survive, they said, whether we're involved in marketing crops, purchasing farm supplies or consumer goods, running stores, forming credit unions, building houses, catching fish, selling crafts, planting fruit trees, running cattle, buying land, raising pigs or looking for jobs. If we need money, help us find it. If we need training, find us the experts. If we can't read, find us teachers. If we can't balance our books, help us to learn accounting. Help us to get out of debt, school our children, provide better medical care for our families, look after our old people.

To do all these things the new federation was, itself, organized along the lines of a co-op, with members belonging to state associations and each state association selecting one representative to serve on the board of directors. The federation and its members pledged to observe the basic historical principles of the co-op movement: open membership, democratic control (one member, one vote), limited return on investment, patronage refunds to members in proportion to participation, constant education, constant expansion.

FORT SUMTER

At first, the federation maintained a headquarters in Atlanta (where it still operates a fund-raising office) and a principal field office in Lafayette, Louisiana. But one of the organization's early goals was to find a base big enough for a training center and demonstration farm. The federation finally found the land in Sumter County, Alabama, and it was a pretty good chunk of land, too — some 1,325 acres — located near Epes, a few miles from Livingston, the county seat.

Actually, it was the Panola Land Buyers Association that found the land and asked the federation for help in buying it. The association had been formed by a few dozen tenant farmers who were evicted from cotton plantations after registering to vote and who began meeting together to figure out a way of acquiring land of their own. The plan agreed upon was that if the federation could get money for the down payment, the Panola farmers would build some houses and work some of the acreage, and the federation could use the rest to start its training center and demonstration farm.

Although the land was technically available on the open market, it soon became clear that the market was not entirely open and that the land would not be sold without a fight. The federation pulled together enough money — about \$50,000 — to make the down payment and qualify for a 10-year mortgage (against a total sale price of approximately \$500,000), but that turned out to be just the beginning, not the end, of the process. A group of white “developers” suddenly materialized — despite the absence of any economic boom in the area — and contested the legality of the sale. They managed to hold it up for nearly three years.

Their leader was the mayor of Livingston, a man named I. Drayton Pruitt, Jr., who is also an attorney of much skill. At the time he was, moreover, one of the owners of the local newspaper, the *Livingston Home Record*. And, perhaps most important, he is the heir to a family that has always thought of Sumter County as its own.



TRAINING SESSION AT THE FSC CENTER IN EPES

Although blacks accounted for more than 75 percent of the county's population of 17,000, they held no political offices in 1968 and owned less than 10 percent of the land. Voter registration drives spurred by the Voting Rights Act of 1965 had not yet challenged the hegemony of the white minority. The proprietary sense of control held by the Pruitts has been shared, traditionally, by perhaps half a dozen other families. They were all represented among the “developers” who rose to oppose the federation.

Pruitt and his allies ultimately lost the land battle, although not until after the federation had persuaded the federal courts to intervene on grounds of civil-rights violations. The defeat was not taken lightly. It was the first time in anyone's memory that anything like that had happened to the Sumter County gentry.

Gradually the acreage at Epes was transformed. The federation built a dormitory which could accommodate 80 trainees at a time, a cafeteria, classrooms, administrative offices and a “materials production center” including a printing operation, a darkroom and a videotape recording studio. On the demonstration farm the federation raised pigs and vegetables, built greenhouses and repaired farm equipment in its own welding shop. The staff grew in time to number more than 100, although that included state coordinators based in

each of the 14 states where federation members operated co-ops.

In 1969, soon after the federation received a \$2 million grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Pruitts and their friends noticed a marked increase in the number of blacks doing things like registering to vote, failing to get off the sidewalks when they encountered whites and otherwise demonstrating political assertiveness not in keeping with Sumter County tradition. As far as the whites of Sumter County were concerned, federal dollars were being used at least indirectly to help blacks run for the school board, the probate judgeship and other county offices. When black candidates were elected to a number of offices in neighboring Greene County, whites in Sumter County shuddered and headed for the ramparts.

“Nobody wants what happened in Greene County to happen here,” said John Neel, at that time editor of Drayton Pruitt's newspaper. When he said “nobody,” it was clear who he meant. Thereafter the newspaper maintained a dim view of the federation and the strange goings-on at Epes. Under the impression that millions of dollars have been sluiced narrowly into Sumter County alone, many whites still wonder where the visible results are — missing the point that the federation distributes assistance widely throughout the whole South.



SEABRON HANKERSON, MEMBER OF THE EAST GEORGIA FARMER COOPERATIVE, WITH HIS HOGS

Failing to see tangible evidence of federation spending (in buildings, spectacular new crops or what have you), people in Livingston tend to assume that federation staff members have been pocketing zillions.

Almost from the beginning, however, the federation's growth was financially precarious. Lyndon Johnson's poverty war had lost its early momentum by the time the federation moved to Epes, and the Nixon administration's well-publicized hostility to OEO resulted in a number of funding cutbacks in 1971, often on the flimsiest of pretexts. When the federation balked at an OEO-sponsored "evaluation" which would have enriched a Boston consulting firm by more than \$380,000 — nearly as much money as the federation was receiving that year from OEO in support of all its programs — federal funds were abruptly cut off.

A few months later, the Ford Foundation advised the federation that *its* support would be withdrawn unless the federation agreed to focus support on fewer co-ops so that the limited money available could be used to greater effect in creating a few highly visible success stories. Again the federation balked — arguing that it was struggling to create a truly regional marketing system and couldn't abandon that effort without abandoning its members — and once again its funds were suddenly cut. The combined loss of OEO and Ford funds

amounted to nearly a million dollars.

But the federation wobbled on, sustained by small grants from other foundations and by occasional transfusions from other federal agencies. The Field Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund refused to follow Ford. The U.S. Labor Department provided support to train 90 co-op managers and 400 co-op members

in such diverse skills as raising cattle, setting up credit unions and managing paperwork. The Commerce Department's Office of Minority Business Enterprise provided support for a three-year program of management training and technical assistance for 2,500 rural businesses in seven states.

In bad times the federation laid off staff people; in good times it hired them back. When it got funds from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to start a clinic at Epes, local doctors protested to the county medical society, the protestations made their way to Washington, and the funds were withdrawn. FSC members went ahead and built the clinic anyway, using volunteer labor and donated materials, and managed to equip it with examining rooms, x-ray equipment, a lab and a pharmacy. In time they found doctors and nurses to staff it.

Then came news of the Corps of Engineers plan to link the grain elevators of the Midwest and the coal mines of Appalachia with the port of Mobile by connecting and channeling the Tennessee and Tombigbee Rivers. The Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Project would be the biggest earth-moving operation since the Panama Canal; it would involve dredging 170 miles of river channel, digging 45

WENDELL PARIS ADDRESSES THE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE FOR THE TENNESSEE-TOMBIGBEE WATERWAY



miles of canal, building five dams and 10 sets of locks. It would cost billions of dollars. And since the Tombigbee River flows along the federation's property for about a quarter of a mile, the project would come right past its door.

As the project went forward, the federation staff members realized that it would be no bonanza for black workers unless they organized effectively to demand their share of the jobs. Although 40 percent of the total population along the waterway is black, black workers landed less than 15 percent of the jobs that became available in the early phases of construction. The federation protested. The Corps of Engineers seemed to be indifferent, the unions were hostile, the local politicians were patronizing.

By 1974 a federation staff member named Wendell Paris was fed up with this state of affairs and decided to confront it head-on. With black leaders from Sumter and several other counties, he launched the Minority Peoples Council (MPC), with the explicit goal of "struggling for 40-percent minority utilization in the present waterway construction jobs, in all training programs and in the jobs that will follow its completion."

With assistance from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, MPC produced a report documenting a pattern of discrimination in waterway hiring practices. At hearings on the waterway, MPC was there, hammering away. It helped fire a salvo of lawsuits against the Corps, construction unions, waterway contractors and state employment agencies. In a short time the Minority Peoples Council had a very high profile — one which generates intense hostility in Sumter County to this day.

Much of that hostility seems to be directed personally at Wendell Paris, a Sumter County native who takes pride in the claim that his father was the first black man to register to vote when the Supreme Court threw out some of Alabama's more discriminatory restrictions in 1946. "My political activism goes back to my birth," he says, and those who have watched him at work believe it. He is, they say, a persistent, effective and dedicated organizer.

In 1978 — no longer a federation staff member but still closely associated with it — Paris decided to take



GERMAN GLASSCHO OF THE SANTEE PRODUCTION AND MARKETING CO-OP IN GREELEYVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA, SELLS SUPPLIES TO A CO-OP MEMBER

on the county school system. The immediate issue concerned the appointment of a white principal at Livingston Junior High School, where enrollment was overwhelmingly black. But the underlying issues were more complex. Although the school-age population of Sumter County was predominantly black, most of the school board members and the county school superintendent were white. Moreover, Sumter County whites were in the process of responding to Justice Department desegregation orders by organizing private, segregated "academies." Livingston lawyer Robert Upchurch, a colleague and close friend of I. Drayton Pruitt who has worked with Pruitt on the battle to block FSC from acquiring land at Epes, drafted the charter for these schools — an apparent conflict of interest, since Upchurch was also chairman of the county board of education, a position to which he had been re-elected every four years since 1952. There was also a widespread belief among black parents that county officials were siphoning tax money from the public schools to the new "academies."

When the school superintendent insisted on replacing the Livingston Junior High principal with a white man who had been accused of making racist remarks and getting into fist-fights with black pupils, Paris led the black parents of Livingston in a boycott of the school.

Both sides agree that this was

something of a turning point, a moment perhaps as important as the day when Pruitt and Upchurch lost their fight against the federation's land purchases. The initial boycott against the school was lifted after six weeks when the unacceptable principal was replaced, but Paris organized the Sumter County Coalition as an ongoing citizens' group, pressuring the school board on matters ranging from repairing buildings to putting books in the library to improving the curriculum.

To the Pruitts and Upchurches of Sumter County, the federation seemed to be behind all of this agitation. Take the Minority Peoples Council, for instance. Supposedly it was operating independently of the federation, but it was largely a Wendell Paris creation, Paris was a former FSC staffer, and FSC did not deny that it was providing "technical assistance" to the Minority Peoples Council.

Or take the school boycott. Supposedly it had nothing to do with the federation, at least not directly. But there was Wendell Paris again, out there organizing something called the Sumter County Coalition.

The *Home Record* fulminated against "government-funded activism." County officials telephoned Washington, protesting that Labor Department and ACTION money was being used to organize black voters. Who were these CETA workers the federation was supposedly training for waterway jobs? Who were these VISTA people



WOODROW KEOWN, FSC CHAIR, SPEAKS TO A MEMBERS' CAUCUS AT AN ANNUAL MEETING

the federation was supposedly using to help train co-op farmers?

A new round of rumors went into circulation. The federation was spending federal home-weatherization money on the homes of staff members and their friends. Demonstration crops were failing. Little pigs were dying. "There were many complaints, and not just from the whites, that there was something wrong at the federation," Sumter County Probate Judge Sam Massengill told reporter Phil Primack. "They were receiving enormous amounts of money, and no one seemed to be receiving tangible benefits. The feeling was that the money was being used for political activity."

The federation's defense — that it was not supporting political activism financially but that it could hardly be blamed if people in Sumter County wanted to exercise their constitutional rights — convinced none of its opponents. Something had to be blamed for the changing political climate they did not want to accept. Black voters registered in large numbers for the 1976 elections, and black candidates came close to winning a number of offices. In 1978, blacks won two of the five seats on the county board of education. In Greene County, immediately north of Sumter, blacks were running the show. In Wilcox County, just one county away to the east, a black man had gotten himself elected sheriff in 1978. Yes, and the tax collector in Wilcox was black. What would happen next?

THE COTTON PATCH CONSPIRACY

Among the dogged opponents of change there is always hope that something or someone will appear at the last possible moment to save them from the otherwise inevitable. Once upon a time they threw in with Nathan Bedford Forrest. Later, with George Wallace. Three years ago they might not have had a savior in sight, but that did not mean that they could not mount a holding operation while they waited.

Their holding operation began in earnest on an evening in May, 1979, when more than 100 of the influential whites of Sumter County assembled at the Cotton Patch Restaurant, just beyond the county line in neighboring Greene County. Among those reportedly present were State Representative Preston Minus, whose district consists of Choctaw and Sumter counties and who is the sponsor of legislation aimed at restricting black voter registration; Massengill; Pruitt; Upchurch; Sumter County Tax Assessor Joe Steagall; newspaper editor John Neel; staff representatives of both of Alabama's United States senators; and Representative Richard Shelby, whose Seventh Congressional District includes Sumter County.

The sole topic of the meeting,

(continued on page 57)

TEN WAYS TO BEAT THE FBI

What should your organization do if it's suddenly faced with a couple of FBI agents at the door or a subpoena from a federal grand jury? *Southern Exposure* asked Federation of Southern Cooperatives Executive Director Charles Prejean and FSC Training Center Director John Zippert for some of the lessons they learned in the course of their 16-month ordeal and came up with this list.

(1) Anticipate an Attack. "If you stand up for your rights in America and have some success in changing people's lives, you are going to suffer some abuse from the power structure," says Zippert. "Call it an occupational hazard." He should know. At age 22, while organizing in Louisiana in the mid-'60s, he became the focus of a probe by the Louisiana Un-American Activities Committee, a state agency that spent a quarter of a million dollars unsuccessfully searching for something to indict him on. "I have learned to be very careful in my public and professional responsibilities, in handling money, travel vouchers, taxes, everything — because I knew this would happen again."

If your organization receives government money, you are especially vulnerable to politically inspired investigations. Don't take the money unless you hire an experienced accountant and plan to follow the procedures fully. Document everything to be consistent with your approved objectives. Separate overt political activities from the organization. "We made a conscious decision when Wendy Paris decided to get involved in local electoral politics to take him off the payroll and have no funds directly supporting him. The FBI looked high and low for a check written to him, but they couldn't find a single one," Zippert laughs.

Indirect support of politics through separate organizations and the partial involvement of staff "on their own time" can be arranged with proper care. The essential lesson is to follow the terms of your grant contracts and build a written record that documents your compliance.

(2) Get an Experienced Attorney. In a political investigation, you can expect the judicial system to consider you guilty until proven innocent; you cannot rely on the system to follow the rules of law voluntarily. You need an attorney familiar with political trials as soon as possible. Don't talk to the FBI or any government agent without a lawyer. "You need someone like Howard Moore, who is not timid, who is extremely capable and who can stand toe-to-toe with the Justice Department attorneys," says Prejean. "It's best to have someone nearby who you can consult with on a daily basis, but you must choose someone like Howard who commands respect and who has the commitment to face such an attack with you."

"Howard challenged everything the U.S. Attorney did," Zippert recalls, "and he caught him in several mistakes. He was so intimidating that I think they finally realized that if they were going to indict us on something, they would have to have a very solid case. And of course they didn't have that."

It obviously helps to build relationships in your day-to-day work with accountants, tax lawyers, journalists and criminal trial lawyers who can be called on for help. Keep a file of their names and, if appropriate, involve them in a project or on your board. For friendly lawyers in your area, contact the Grand Jury Project, the National Lawyers Guild and Center for Constitutional Rights, all at 853 Broadway, New York, NY 10003; also try state chapters of the ACLU and National Conference of Black Lawyers.

(3) Plan a Defensive and Offensive Strategy. Based on the type of investigation and your resources, you can prepare a legal and extra-legal counterstrategy. Pay special attention to your strengths and weaknesses for engaging in a public and/or sustained fight. "People on the outside are reluctant to stand with you, in a public way, to face the FBI," observes Zippert. "On the other hand, the people we work directly with are deeply religious and feel they have nothing to hide." The federation adopted the position that it would cooperate with the grand jury investigation of *specific* allegations; as months passed and the Justice Department continued to waffle on the

purpose of the probe, more people understood its essentially political nature and gained confidence in openly defending the federation.

"Perhaps we could have been more aggressive earlier by refusing to cooperate or bringing a countersuit of our own," Prejean notes. "But we didn't have the resources, support or additional legal help that would have required. We were making plans when the investigation ended to hold a national demonstration in Alabama, to dramatize the situation, show our support, embarrass those officials who had perhaps unwittingly become a part of the local power structure's efforts to kill the federation. If we had to do it over, we probably would organize for that kind of thing earlier." What the federation did do is instructive on several levels.

(4) Designate Staff Duties. "Knowing that we were innocent, we decided to isolate a few staff members to the defense work and insist that the majority continue their primary responsibilities as agricultural specialists or credit union specialists or whatever, continuing the basic service program of the federation," says Prejean. "If we had let the entire organization become consumed with the defense," Zippert explains, "then I think the objective of the grand jury inquisition would have been accomplished. The power structure here wanted us to spend all our time and resources fighting an external threat. We had to approach this as one in an ongoing series of attacks, each one of which was designed to stop our program."

(5) Consolidate Internal Strength.

FSC CENTER DIRECTOR, JOHN ZIPPERT



"This kind of attack produces many strains, even among senior staff," says Prejean. "There is an initial fear about the possibility of going to jail, which is understandable. It raises doubts among newcomers in the organization about whether something is going on that they don't know about but might be in jeopardy for. So we had many discussions with the staff and board, and we also devoted attention to educating our membership and the local leadership of the cooperatives about the situation. We kept them up to date through the newsletter and monthly meetings. They would suggest ideas of what to do, and they tried to influence the congressional delegations from their states and to rally support from organizations and individuals in their areas for the federation. Initially there was a problem of some disarray and distrust, but as time went on folks pulled together and the external threat brought about a greater degree of cohesiveness and commitment."

(6) Build National Support. Prejean explains: "We recognized at the outset that we would have been blown out of the water if we had contained the problem in its parochial context. We knew the deck was still stacked against us in Epes, Alabama; and we knew that in isolated communities grand jury and FBI powers are often used to intimidate, harass and eliminate dissidents. And no one ever knows about it, because those that are the victims don't have the contacts or resources of even a federation to bring it to the larger public's attention or mount an effective defense. Removing the battle from the local setting and involving people from the outside who were against this type of judicial abuse was crucial. That meant involving black and white figures of national prominence to privately and publicly pressure the Justice Department, attract press coverage, raise funds, reassure our foundation supporters and keep us from being isolated. We couldn't have won without that type of national coalition."

(7) Build Local Support. "On the other hand," Prejean continues, "you must have local support to withstand such an attack. That includes local attorneys, which we used. We had to mobilize our allies in Sumter County and across Alabama. We had to explain

what was happening and ask for the assistance of a cross section of individuals and organizations in the state to advocate our case to supporters outside the South and to various government officials. You definitely learn who your friends are in this kind of struggle. The fact that we had worked with such a cross section of the population, people from different positions and with various politics, helped us build a strong base of support and to isolate those attacking us."

(8) Use the Press Carefully. "It was very difficult to get the media to focus any attention on the situation," says Zippert. "We tried '60 Minutes,' the *New York Times*, all of them, but what the federation is doing is not glamorous — there's no glamor in feeding pigs or setting up a credit union. And what the white power structure was doing was too complicated for them to condense into a headline. It wasn't a dramatic confrontation in the media's eyes — nobody was getting shot, people weren't screaming in the streets. We had more success from the liberal magazines that use freelance writers who could come here and who had the space to tell the story. But to get the big media, you are almost forced into a situation of doing something totally irrational to get their attention. You really have to depend on putting out your own materials, doing your own publicity. If we had the funds, we could have conducted our own investigation. The National Committee came in and found out about the Cotton Patch Restaurant meeting, but there's more that could be uncovered."

(9) Use National Intelligence-Abuse Specialists Carefully. "The national organizations that specialize in grand jury abuses were helpful, but some of them were inclined to view our case in as part of a general threat to constitutional protections. Given this view, it was felt a refusal to cooperate would best dramatize the severity of that treat. We considered that action, but only as a part of the full range of options that would best represent the principles of our organization. We did not want to be tricked into being seen as anarchists. And we knew, given the Southern judicial system's general treatment of blacks, that we would have to be prepared for the strictest

sentencing. I'm going to do everything possible *not* to go to jail, but if I have to go to jail because there's no other recourse, then I'll go. The dramatic is not always the best way to go."

(10) Plan for the Long Haul. Prejean cautions: "You can't let frustration overwhelm you when you're under attack. The power structure can defer progress, which can be very costly, but they can't impede it forever. You know you're going to win; it's a matter of time and timing, and if you have the patience and courage to keep at it, you will make gains. It took us 10 years to build 40 units of housing in Sumter County because of the opposition from the white power structure.

"Eventually, the white minority will make accommodations and become more sophisticated in trying to maintain some control. They will use their economic resources to influence more subtly the direction of the county as blacks gain more control of the government; we have to prepare for that, plan alternatives now. We are trying to build coalitions in the area with some whites, but the accommodation process takes time. It is conceivable that some whites will resort to violence to stop these changes. There could be a resurgence of the Klan in this county. I'm afraid the person that they would like to get is Wendell Paris, who has been a very visible leader of the Sumter County Coalition and who is running for probate judge this year. He's being very cautious about his safety, and we're trying to caution him even more.

"The power structure will try other ways to weaken the federation and the other types of organizing going on in the county; we know that. They will try to create splits within the black community, among the leadership. In fact, they've convinced one black guy to run against Wendy and the white incumbent in the primary race for probate judge, to split the black vote. Obstacles will continue to be put up, and we will no doubt face more direct attacks where we need the support of people outside the county.

"Regionally, we are now evaluating the federation's program given new conditions, including the economy and the scarcity of financial help to support rural economic development.

We think the work of rural development can be done more efficiently by a greater degree of cooperation among the regional groups concerned with similar issues in the same areas. Rural development includes economic enterprises, training leadership, research, housing, land ownership and legal issues. No one group can do all these things. So we're looking at the groups that have been doing one or two of these and are now talking among ourselves about how to target our resources to bring about better efficiency and overall progress.

"There are five organizations that are beginning this process; we're all located in Atlanta, so it was easy to begin this dialogue: the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, the Southern Regional Council, the Voter Education Project, the Emergency Land Fund and the Southern Office of the American Civil Liberties Union. We have fashioned a proposal that reflects our agreement not only in principle but in practice of how to act together. We're calling ourselves the Southern Rural Alliance and we're now seeking resources from foundations. We will select black majority counties in four states — Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and South Carolina — and will coordinate our activities in economic development, voter registration, legal assistance for greater empowerment, research of issues for local and state activism, protection of the black land base from greater dilution, legislative initiatives that support our joint work in social and economic progress. It's a package of services directed at specific counties for changing political and economic control, for the long-term building of more egalitarian communities.

"We are talking about building on the work of the past and on the new commitment, seriousness and understanding that people now have of what the risks are and what control of their lives involves."

"This is definitely *not* the time to hide," Zippert emphasizes. "That is not the way to defend yourself from the right wing. This is a time when more people have to stand up. I've seen this before, what goes on, and it takes people who know you cannot hide to step forward and push ahead. That's the only way to defeat a right-wing attack." □

(continued from page 54)

according to sources who were present, was the Federation of Southern Cooperatives. Rumor and fact intermingled and blurred. Two of the participants were accorded rapt attention. Daniel Chambliss, an Alabama Department of Education official, purportedly familiar with the training center at Epes, reportedly said it was "nothing more than a perpetual grant-writing machine," and that when he had been out there to look at a training session "all I saw was a bunch of people playing volleyball." Carl Jacobs, a VISTA worker who had quit his job at the training center, reportedly circulated tales of kickbacks required by the federation when it helped member co-ops with financing.

The talk went on like that for quite a while — several hours, by some accounts. When the meeting ended, there was a consensus that the federation ought to be investigated.

The sequel to the Cotton Patch gathering, which ultimately generated a federal grand jury investigation, remained unexplained. But some of the steps are a matter of public knowledge.

It is known, for example, that Massengill, Pruitt and Steagall signed a letter to Shelby asking for an investigation. It is known that when Shelby received the letter in Washington, he wrote to the General Accounting Office (GAO) — the investigative arm of Congress — requesting the GAO to look into the question of federation misuse of federal funds. In GAO's opinion, as reported to Shelby in a letter from Comptroller General Elmer Staats, a full-scale investigation was unwarranted. Staats pointed out that the inspectors-general of the various federal agencies assisting the federation had it within their power to look more closely at the federation's records if they wanted to.

At about the same time — early in December — the federation's Atlanta office received an unexpected visit from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Agents asked Prejean for a great deal of information — but they asked for it in sweeping rather than specific terms. They wanted copies of all funding proposals the federation had written. They wanted copies of curricula used in training sessions. They wanted a complete membership list. They wanted lists of everyone who had attended training sessions.



MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA SEA ISLAND SMALL FARMERS CO-OP ON JOHNS ISLAND, IN THEIR FIELDS

Prejean recalls explaining that the federation would cooperate with any agency specifically investigating *specific* allegations of *specific* wrongdoing by *specific* individuals, and asked the FBI agents what — specifically — they were looking for. They declined to tell him.

"I pointed out," Prejean recalls, "that the General Accounting Office had already looked at us, and we didn't understand why they were requesting additional information." The federation's lawyer, Howard Moore, telephoned the FBI agents seeking an explanation of what they were after. They politely declined to tell him. He told them, in return, that the federation was willing to cooperate in running down any specific allegations of individual wrong-doing, but that if they could not be specific the federation could not agree to turn over any records.

"And that was the last we heard from them," Prejean says. "Until December 31."

The subpoena that arrived that afternoon was no more specific than that the FBI agents had been. Howard Moore suspected, understandably, that his client had been selected by someone to be the prey of a fishing expedition.

Throughout the nearly 18-month course of the federation's difficulties with the Birmingham grand jury, his advice always was: "Make them tell you exactly what they want. Otherwise, no cooperation." He warned

Prejean that holding to that principle could mean a contempt citation, possibly a jail sentence. But in Moore's opinion there could be no compromising on the principle.

In February, 1980, the federation received a second subpoena, and this one, in wording at least, was more precise than the first. The grand jury (or at least J.R. Brooks, the United States Attorney in charge of it, and through whom it always spoke) wanted, among other things, copies of all federation proposals funded by any government agency, all financial reports compiled in connection with funded programs, all documentation of work carried out on such programs, all payroll records covering persons paid with federal funds and a long list of other "relevant and pertinent" data. This time the federation complied, even though the grand jury gave no hint of what it thought it was looking for. Complying took some doing. By the time all the reports, computer printouts, memos, notes, time sheets, vouchers and cancelled checks (some 40,000 of those alone) had been pulled together, they filled 22 file drawers.

When the files had been shipped to Birmingham, the federation staff attempted to go back to business as usual, but that was not to be. FBI agents from Tuscaloosa began to appear in Sumter County and elsewhere within the federation's territory, driving out to visit with co-op members

photo by Reesa Tansey



MEMBERS OF THE FREEDOM QUILTING BEE OF ALBERTA, ALABAMA, AT THEIR CRAFT

and with people who had attended training sessions. These unannounced visits continued all through the spring, into the summer, into the fall. The agents fanned out in wider and wider circles, eventually visiting more than 200 people in five states.

The questions implied that certain conclusions had already been reached: "Did you know that the federation was ripping off the government?" Women who had stayed at the dormitory while attending training sessions were asked: "Who did you have to sleep with while you were there?" Agents drove out to look at demonstration greenhouses. Plans called for the greenhouses to have 12 inches of gravel on the ground, to help hold in heat. The agents appeared with shovels and rulers. They dug and measured, making sure that the federation had actually supplied the gravel the government had paid for. Their behavior amazed some people, amused a few, but mostly made people very uncomfortable — about their investigation, about the federation.

It might not have been so bad if somebody with a name had been denouncing the federation regularly, in the state house or in Congress or somewhere else. Then people might have seen the political attack for what it was. But a grand jury investigation combines a certain dignity with a certain mystery. It does not strike most people as the stuff of yahoo. Prejean began to notice

its effects. He had trouble getting his calls returned. When he would get through to foundations and federal agencies that had been supportive in the past, he would be told, he says, that "They just couldn't consider us until the investigation was over."

The federation was not without friends, however. Coming together from a few foundations and from a prestigious list of organizations working for civil rights, civil liberties and social change, they decided to form an *ad hoc* committee to publicize the federation's dilemma and to put pressure on the Department of Justice — pressure to drop the other shoe, to indict somebody for something or to close down the investigation. The "National Committee in Support of Community-Based Organizations" formally organized itself in September, 1980, with Leslie Dunbar, then director of the Field Foundation, as its chairperson. Dunbar wrote later:

"Our committee was organized . . . to show confidence in the federation, to give it tangible support and to defend community-based organizations generally. It was for most of us a new and untried task: how to monitor a federal grand jury investigation?"

The task was a bit like trying to put socks on an octopus. Meetings with representatives of the Justice Department were inconclusive. The representatives were generally vague and evasive — if necessary using the stock response that since the investi-

gation was in progress they could not comment on it. At one high-level meeting, federal officials said that the investigation was looking at the possibility that a federation staff member was being paid for two full-time jobs, and at the possibility that one of the federation's funded projects did not exist. They provided no details. No word ever came from the grand jury or its mouthpiece to clarify what the investigation was all about. Instead, finally, at the end of May, 1981, shortly before U.S. Attorney Brooks, a Democrat, resigned to make room for a Reagan appointee, came his terse announcement, "I have decided to decline prosecution."

Dunbar believes the story would have ended differently if the federation had been unable to rally support from the outside world. Prejean concurs:

"I think that after a while, some folks became fearful of the implications of what they had done. They realized that we were not going to roll over, that we would eventually sue to get this thing settled, and that *they* would be subpoenaed, *they* would have to go to court, *they* would have to give testimony under oath. There were so many state and federal officials involved, you know, and some of them are very sensitive to the changes that are taking place in Alabama. This is all speculation, of course. But it's informed speculation."

Three weeks after the apparent conclusion of the grand jury investigation, a back-page story in the *New York Times* explained, by happenstance, how the government might have proceeded to clear up any alleged misuse of funds. The story reported that Harvard University, after a three-year audit, was found to have misused \$2.1 million in federal grants, spending the money on such things as student housing, entertainment and consultants. Harvard thereupon made suitable arrangements to straighten things out to the government's satisfaction. Writing to the federation's friends, Dunbar pointed out the rather obvious double standard at work, noting that if it was all right for the government to proceed quietly against Harvard by civil inquiry, it would surely have been all right to proceed against the federation in the same manner.

MINUS JUSTICE

No one really expects that the federation's opposition within Sumter County will now stop. It will not fade away now that it no longer has the active collaboration of a federal grand jury. If it needs an object on which to focus its animosity, Wendell Paris will still do fine. In the 1980 election he won a seat on the county board of education — the seat occupied for 28 years by Robert Upchurch. And this November he is running for the job of probate judge — the chief administrative office in the county. Sam Massengill has that job now and would like to keep it.

He's getting help from Preston Minus, the state representative who was a leading figure at the Cotton Patch meeting back in May, 1979, and has been busy in the state legislature. He has sponsored three bills of special interest to the voters of Sumter County. One of them would require the re-registering of all voters, using a formula that would give voters very little advance notice of the places and times to register, and which would have the registrars' office open at inconvenient hours. (The state constitution prohibits re-registration, so Minus calls it "re-identification.")

He got the same law applied to neighboring Choctaw County in 1978 and the results were dramatic. Prior to re-registration, there were 6,679 whites and 5,269 blacks registered to vote in Choctaw County, a 56-to-44 percent division that accurately reflected the population of the county. After re-registration, according to the Alabama Legal Services Corporation, white registration stood at 5,200, black registration at less than 3,000.

It's not clear whether Minus can pull the same stunt successfully in Sumter, now that black voters have seen what happened in Choctaw. Unofficial reports indicate that black voters in Sumter have been re-registering in larger numbers than anticipated and will heavily outnumber whites in the 1982 election. Anticipating this, Minus has introduced another bill requiring polling places to switch from paper ballots to machines using punchcards. Nobody in Sumter



BILL EUBANKS (LEFT), FSC AGRICULTURAL SPECIALIST, EXAMINES CROPS WITH MEMBERS

County has voted with punchcards before.

The third law that Minus has sponsored gives landowners of 15 acres or more the right to exclude themselves from municipal annexation. The six municipalities in Sumter County are predominantly black. In 1980, black mayors were elected in two of them — Emelle and Geiger — and two out of five city council seats in Epes went to blacks. People living beyond the city limits naturally would like to have city water, sewers, sidewalks and paved streets; annexation is about the only way that those services can be provided, and it's also the only way a small town can make itself big enough to qualify for some types of federal and state assistance. But annexation would increase the percentage of black voters within these municipalities, making it unlikely that whites could regain power. It happens that although there are comparatively few whites living near these towns, they own most of the land. As a practical matter, patchwork annexation is impossible. The Minus law thus would be aptly named, because it would give the minority the power to stymie the will of the majority.

These laws are intended to apply only to Minus's two-county district. Today there are many black legislators in Montgomery who would oppose such laws if they could — but the state legislature has a long-standing rule that "local legislation" is decided only by legislators from the local area. Only Preston Minus could debate the legislation that Preston Minus introduced. Not surprisingly, the bill passed.

Fortunately, none of these innovative acts (all written, allegedly, with the help of attorney I. Drayton

Pruitt) has gone into effect yet, because they must receive "pre-clearance" from the Department of Justice under the terms of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

And so the battle against racism and discrimination continues in the South. There has been much progress since the days when sheriffs and state patrol officers felt free to turn dogs and fire hoses on people marching to uphold their constitutional rights. The weapons today are more likely to be grand juries, or FBI agents, or discriminatory legislation, or the elimination of federal aid. The struggles of the 1980s don't televise as well as the pitched battles of the 1960s did. But they go on anyway, in Sumter and Pickens and Greene and Choctaw, and back and forth across the rural South. For the men and women fighting, the best weapon they have is a measure of economic independence — and that, finally, is what the Federation of Southern Cooperatives is all about. And for those outside the counties who have ears to hear and eyes to see, supporting those efforts and defending organizations like the federation will continue to be essential to their ultimate triumph. □

Thomas N. Bethell is a contributing editor of the Washington Monthly and editorial director of the Rural Coalition, which supports the work of FSC. This article is based on "Sumter County Blues: The Ordeal of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives," a longer report he prepared for the National Committee in Support of Community-Based Organizations. Copyright ©1982 by the Committee, used by permission.

For copies of the full report or additional information on the Federation, write John Zippert, FSC, P.O. Box 95, Epes, Alabama 35460.

The Moment of Freedom

No event in American history matches the drama of emancipation. More than a century later, it continues to stir the deepest emotions, and properly so. Emancipation accompanied the military defeat of the world's most powerful slaveholding class and freed a larger number of slaves than lived in all other New World slave societies combined. Clothed in the rhetoric of biblical prophecy and national destiny and born of a bloody civil war, it accomplished a profound social revolution.

The death of slavery led to an intense period of social reconstruction, closely supervised by the victorious North. Former slaves confronted former masters as free laborers in a system predicated upon contractual equality between employer and employee. They gained, if only temporarily, such citizenship rights as the right to vote and hold public office. Emancipation represented the moment of truth, its acid test. The upheaval of conventional

Company F. 13th U.S. Colored Infantry
Nashville Tenn Exchange Barracks
October 8th 1865

Sir I have the honor to call your attention
To the necessity of having a school for
The benefit of our regiment We have never
Had an institution of that sort and we
Stand deeply in need of instruction the
majority of us having been slaves We
Wish to have some benefit of education We
In the future We have established a literary
Association which flourished previous to our
March to Nashville We wish to become a
People capable of self support as we are
lucky where prejudice reigns like the
of mind that would have an attendance
To cast a cloud over my future after have
been in the United States service I had
a leave of absence a few weeks ago on
a furlough and it made my heart ache to
see my race of people there neglected
and ill treated on the account of their
education being inappreciable of
complaints or applications in
behalf of
Education totally neglected
and workings of
behalf of
are

Edited by
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Fields, Joseph
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expectations stripped away the patina of routine, exposing the cross purposes and warring intentions that had simmered — often unnoticed — beneath the surface of the old order.

Faced with unprecedented events, ordinary men and women become extraordinarily perceptive and articulate. Blacks at this moment of revolutionary transformation were no exception. The actions of the timid and reluctant as much as those of the bold and eager expose the inner workings of society.

Former masters struggled to impose new constraints, but freedpeople nonetheless asserted their independence through direct speech and yet more direct action. An extraordinary number of ex-slaves, many of them newly literate, put pen to paper in the early years of freedom. Hundreds of others, entirely illiterate, gave depositions to government officials, placed their mark on resolutions passed at meetings, testified in courts and dictated letters to more literate blacks and to white officials and teachers.

Numerous federal agencies recorded the testimony of people generally dismissed as historically mute, so emancipation in the American South has left behind an unparalleled documentation of the thoughts and actions of men and women just out of bondage. The work of these government agencies placed them in close contact with ordinary people of all sorts, and their bureaucratic structures provided a mechanism for the preservation, if not resolution, of people's protests and pleas.

One agency, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands — better known as the Freedmen's Bureau — illustrates the point. Although the bureau often failed to do more than make written note of the abuse of freedpeople brought to its attention, its agents across the South conducted censuses, undertook investigations, recorded depositions, filed reports and accumulated letters authored by ex-slaves and interested whites. Other agencies created thousands of similar, though more dispersed, records. Together, these records, now housed in the National Archives of the United States in Washington, provide the fullest documentation anywhere of the liberation of any people and the simultaneous transformation of an entire society.

The materials convey, as no historian can, the experiences of the liberated: the quiet personal satisfaction of meeting an old master on equal terms, as well as the outrage of being ejected from a segregated street car; the elation of a fugitive enlisting in the Union Army and the humiliation of a laborer cheated out of hard-earned wages; the joy of a family reunion after years of forced separation and the distress of having a child involuntarily apprenticed to a former owner; the hope that freedom would bring a new world and the fear that, in so many ways, life would be much as before.

In the fall of 1976, with a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, and under the sponsorship of the University of Maryland, the Freedmen and Southern Society project launched a systematic search of records at the National Archives that could yield a documentary history of emancipation. The editors selected more than 40,000 items, representing perhaps two percent of the documents they examined. Indexed and cross-referenced topically, chronologically and geographically, their selection is the basis for *Freedom*, a multi-volume documentary history of emancipation to be published by Cambridge University Press. The first volume of *Freedom*, entitled *The Black Military Experience, 1861-1867*, will appear in the fall of 1982.

The editors of the series — Ira Berlin, Barbara J. Fields, Joseph P. Reidy and Leslie S. Rowland — have assisted *Southern Exposure* in presenting a sample of the material here.



MISSOURI BLACK SOLDIER TO
HIS ENSLAVED DAUGHTERS
AND THEIR OWNER

The Emancipation Proclamation and the advance of the Union army into the Confederate interior marked the beginning of freedom for blacks. But many slaves did not wait for freedom to

come to them. Long before Lincoln's proclamation, they fled slavery, leaving bondage, as they had entered it, with little more than the clothes on their backs. Some of them took refuge within Union lines, where federal officers first employed them as laborers and — after Washington signaled approval — enlisted the able-bodied men as soldiers in the Union army.

The transformation of slaves into soldiers altered the expectations of former slaves and their old masters. Once black men donned Union blue, nothing was the same. The following letters from Private Spotswood Rice, a former slave from Missouri, to his children and to the children's owner, suggest how military enlistment made loving fathers into fierce liberators.

[Benton Barracks Hospital, St. Louis, Mo., September 3, 1864]

My Children

I take my pen in hand to rite you
A few lines to let you know that I
have not forgot you and that I want
to see you as bad as ever now my dear
Children I want you to be contented
with whatever may be your lots be
assured that I will have you if it
cost me my life on the 28th of the
mounth. 8 hundred White and 8 hun-
dred blacke soldiers expects to start
up the rivore to Glasgow and above
there thats to be jeneraled by a jeneral
that will give me both of you when
they Come I expect to be with, them
and expect to get you both in return.
Dont be uneasy my children I expect
to have you. If Diggs dont give you
up this Government will and I feel
confident that I will get you Your
Miss Kaitty said that I tried to steal
you But I'll let her know that god
never intended for man to steal his
own flesh and blood. If I had no
confidence in God I could have confi-
dence in her But as it is If I ever had
any Confidence in her I have none
now and never expect to have And I
want her to remember if she meets me
with ten thousand soldiers she [will?]
meet her enemy I once [thought]
that I had some respect for them but
now my respects is worn out and have
no sympathy for Slaveholders. And
as for her cristiananty I expect the



KENTUCKY BLACK SERGEANT TO
TENNESSEE FREEDMEN'S
BUREAU ASSISTANT
COMMISSIONER

Throughout most of the war and in the post-war years, it fell to black non-commissioned officers to represent their men and to articulate their aspirations. John Sweeny, a free black boatman from Kentucky who rose to the rank of sergeant, acted forcefully to establish a school for his regiment. In so doing, he explained why so many blacks, whether freeborn or freed, believed education to be essential to their newly won status.

Nashville Tenn October 8th 1865

Sir

I have the honor to call your attention To the necessity of having a school for The benefit of our regiment We have never Had an institution of that sort and we Stand deeply inneed of instruction the majority of us having been slaves We Wish to have some benefit of education To make of ourselves capable of buisness In the future We have established a literary Association which flourished previous to our March to Nashville We wish to become a People capable of self support as we are Capable of being soldiers my home is in Kentucky Where Prejudice reigns like the Mountain Oak and I do lack that cultivation of mind that would have an tendency To cast a cloud over my future life after have been in the United States service I had a leave of absence a few weeks a go on A furlough and it made my heart ache to see my race of people there neglected And ill treated on the account of the lack of Education being incapable of putting Thier complaints or applications in writing For the want of Education totally ignorant Of the Great Good Workings of the Government in our behalf We as soldiers Have our officers Who are our protection To teach how us to act and to do But Sir What we want is a general system of education In our regiment

now that you did not accept it Just hold on now as long as you can and the worse it will be for you you never in you life befor I came down hear did you give Children any thing not eny thing whatever not even a dollers worth of expences now you call my children your pro[per]ty not so with me my Children is my own and I expect to get them and when I get ready to come after mary I will have bout a powrer and autherity to bring hear away and to exacute vengencens on them that holds my Child you will then know how to talke to me I will assure that and you will know how to talk rite too I want you now to just hold on to hear if you want to iff your conchoscense tells thats the road go that road and what it will brig you to kittey diggs I have no fears about geting mary out of your hands this whole Government gives cheer to me and you cannot help your self

— Spotswood Rice*



Devil has Such in hell You tell her from me that She is the frist Christian that I ever hard say that aman could Steal his own child especially out of human bondage

You can tell her that She can hold to you as long as she can I never would expect to ask her again to let you come to me because I know that the devil has got her hot set againsts that that is write now my Dear children I am a going to close my letter to you Give my love to all enquiring friends tell them all that we are well and want to see them very much and Corra and Mary receive the greater part of it you sefves and dont think hard of us not sending you any thing I you father have a plenty for you when I see you Spott & Noah sends their love to both of you Oh! My Dear children how I do want to see you

[Spotswood Rice]*

[Benton Barracks Hospital, St. Louis, Mo., September 3, 1864]

I received a leteter from Cariline telling me that you say I tried to steal to plunder my child away from you now I want you to understand that mary is my Child and she is a God given rite of my own and you may hold on to hear as long as you can but I want you to rememor this one thing that the longor you keep my Child from me the longor you will have to burn in hell and the qwicer youll get their for we are now makeing up a bout one thousand blacke troops to Come up through and wont to come through Glasgow and when we come wo be to Copperhood rabbels and to the Slaveholding rebbls for we dont expect to leave them there root near branch but we thinke how ever that we that have Children in the hands of you devels we will trie your [vertues?] the day that we enter Glasgow I want you to understand kittey diggs that where ever you and I meets we are enmays to each orther I offered once to pay you forty dollers for my own Child but I am glad

* Rice, a tobacco roller and the slave of one Benjamin Lewis, had enlisted in early February, 1864, at Glasgow, Missouri. On the date of this letter, he was hospitalized with chronic rheumatism.

for our moral and literary elevation these being our motives We have the Honor of calling your very high Consideration Respectfully Submitted as Your most humble serv^t

John Sweeny*



TEXAS FREEDMAN TO THE
VIRGINIA FREEDMEN'S BUREAU
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER

Like John Sweeny, blacks found many ways to give meaning to their liberty in the years following the war. In addition to establishing schools, they took new names, found new residences, sought new employment and organized churches and fraternal societies. But nothing more fully represented the new world of freedom than the reconstruction of black family life. During slave times, masters had sold black men and women throughout the South to suit their own purposes, separating husbands from wives, parents from children, and brothers from sisters, changing their names and otherwise obscuring their family connections. As a result, reconstituting family ties was no mean task. Nonetheless, blacks took it up with enthusiasm, often looking to the Freedmen's Bureau and other governmental agencies to facilitate the search and even to provide transportation for a distant loved one. One such inquiry came from Hawkins Wilson, a Virginian who had been sold to Texas as a young man and who wished to find his sister and through her his other relatives.

[Galveston, Tex.] May 11th, 1867

Dear Sir,

I am anxious to learn about my sisters, from whom I have been separated many years — I have never heard from them since I left Virginia twenty four years ago — I am in hopes that they are still living and I am anxious to hear how they are getting on — I have no other one to apply to but you and am persuaded that you will help one who stands in need of your

services as I do — I shall be very grateful to you, if you oblige me in this matter — One of my sisters belonged to Peter Coleman in Caroline county and her name was Jane — Her husband's name was Charles and he belonged to Buck Haskin and lived near John Wright's store in the same county — She had three children, Robert, Charles and Julia, when I left — Sister Martha belonged to Dr. Jefferson, who lived two miles above Wright's store — Sister Matilda belonged to Mrs. Botts, in the same county — My dear uncle Jim had a wife at Jack Langley's and his wife was named Adie and his oldest son was named Buck and they all belonged to Jack Langley — These are all my own dearest relatives and I wish to correspond with them with a view to visit them as soon as I can hear from them — My name is Hawkins Wilson and I am their brother, who



was sold at Sheriff's sale and used to belong to Jackson Talley and was bought by M. Wright, Boydtown C.H. You will please send the enclosed letter to my sister Jane, or some of her family, if she is dead — I am, very respectfully, your obedient Servant,

Hawkins Wilson**

[Enclosure]

[Galveston, Tex.,
May 11, 1867]

Dear Sister Jane,

Your little brother Hawkins is trying to find out where you are and where his poor old mother is — Let me know and I will come to see you — I shall never forget the bag of biscuits you made for me the last night I spent with you — Your advice to me to meet you in Heaven has never passed from my mind and I have endeavored to live as near to my God, that if He saw fit not to suffer us to meet on earth, we might indeed meet in Heaven — I was married in this city on the 10th March 1867 by Rev. Samuel Osborn to Mrs. Martha White, a very intelligent and lady-like woman — You may readily suppose that I was not fool enough to marry a Texas girl — My wife was from Georgia and was raised in that state and will make me very happy — I have learned to read, and write a little — I teach Sunday School and have a very interesting class — If you do not mind, when I come, I will astonish you in religious affairs. I am sexton of the Methodist Episcopal church colored — I hope you and all my brothers and sisters in Virginia will stand up to this church; for I expect to live and die in the same — When I meet you, I shall be as much overjoyed as Joseph

* Pencilled on this letter is the notation, "Will send Teacher as soon as possible." Sweeny, a free black from Green County, Kentucky, enlisted in Nashville in September, 1863, giving his occupation as "boatman." Upon muster-out in January, 1866, he returned to his home county and taught a school whose pupils included many wives and children of other black soldiers still in service.

** The records do not indicate whether Wilson's kin were located.

was when he and his father met after they had been separated so long — Please write me all the news about you all — I am writing tonight all about myself and I want you to do likewise about your and my relations in the state of Virginia — Please send me some of Julia's hair, whom I left a baby in the cradle when I was torn away from you — I know that she is a young lady now, but I hope she will not deny her affectionate uncle this request, seeing she was an infant in the cradle when he saw her last — Tell Mr. Jackson Talley how-do-ye and give my love to all his family, Lucy, Ellen and Sarah — Also to my old playmate Henry Fitz who used to play with me and also to all the colored boys who, I know, have forgotten me, but I have not forgotten them — I am writing to you tonight, my dear sister, with my Bible in my hand praying Almighty God to bless you and preserve you and me to meet again — Thank God that now we are not sold and torn away from each other now as well we used to be We can meet as we see fit and part if we like Think of this and praise God and the Lamb forever — I will now present you a little prayer which you will say every night before you go to sleep — Our father who art in heaven &c, you will know what the rest is —

Dear sister, I have had a rugged road to travel, since I parted with you, but thank God; I am happy now, for King Jesus is my captain and God is my friend. He goes before me as a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day to lead me to the New Jerusalem where all is joy, and happiness and peace — Remember that we have got to meet before that great triune God — My reputation is good before white and black. I am chief of all the turnouts of the colored people of Galveston — Last July 1866, I had the chief command of four thousand colored people of Galveston — So you may know that I am much better off, than I used to be when I was a little shaver in Caroline, running about in my shirt tail picking up chips — Now, if you were to see me in my fine suit of broadcloth, white kid gloves and long red sash, you would suppose it was Gen. Schofield marching in parade uniform into Richmond — The 1st day of May, 1867, I had 500 colored people, big and little, again under my command — We had a complete success and were complimented by Gen. Griffin and Mr. Wheelock the superintendent of the colored schools of Texas — We expect to have a picnic for the Sunday School soon — I am now a grown man weighing one hundred and sixty

odd pounds — I am wide awake and full of fun; but I never forget my duty to my God — I get eighteen dollars a month for my services as sexton and eighteen dollars a week outside — I am working one a furniture shop and will fix up all your old furniture for you, when I come to Virginia if you have any — I work hard all the week — On Sunday I am the first one in the church and the last to leave at night; being all day long engaged in serving the Lord; teaching Sunday School and helping to worship God — Kind sister, as paper is getting short and the night is growing old and I feel very weak in the eyes and I have a great deal to do before I turn in to bed and tomorrow I shall have to rise early to attend Sunday School, I must come to a conclusion — Best love to yourself and inquiring friends — Write as quickly as you can and direct to Hawkins Wilson care of Methodist Episcopal church, colored, Galveston, Texas — Give me your P. Office and I will write again. I shall drop in upon you someday like a thief in the night — I bid you a pleasant night's rest with a good appetite for your breakfast and no breakfast to eat — Your loving and affectionate brother

Hawkins Wilson





AGAINST THE CURRENT

BY FLORENCE REECE

Half a century ago, in 1931, coal miners went out on strike in Harlan County, Kentucky. Florence Reece, then a 30-year-old mother of eight and a miner's wife, did as much as anyone to nurture the strikers' spirits by writing a much-loved and now-famous song called "Which Side Are You On?" (Her song and its story were featured in a special 35-page report on Harlan County in Southern Exposure, Spring/Summer 1976, available for \$4.50 from the Institute for Southern Studies.)

But Florence Reece did not retire her pen with that one song. Poetry, stories and journals have always been an everyday thing with her, and now she has published a collection called Against the Current, including some personal notes about how putting words down on paper has enriched her life. This all goes back, she says, to a recitation she had to do in the first grade: "I loved poetry. It always did something to me. When I was very young, if one of our chickens or kittens died, my sisters would say, 'Come, Florence, we are going to have a funeral and you have to preach.' I loved to make up stories and poems."

She also speaks of standing "against the current": "A current isn't just a river or a heavy stream of water. It can be death, sickness, war, strikes, hunger. I know them all. You have to stand tall and strong to overcome them. Sometimes the current will wash you overboard." She and her beloved husband, Sam Reece, managed with love, she says. "Sam and I lived against the current all our lives, but we loved each other more than all the gold and silver in the world. At his death, we were married 64 years; not half long enough."

Here are a few of her poems, filled with her anger, defiance, love and humor. You can order the book for \$8 by writing her at 410 Ocala Drive, Knoxville, TN 37918.

RAGWEED

I am just a windblown ragweed
Blown from night to day
When my family comes in at night
I begin to swish and sway.

My husband he's the big bad chief,
My children second best,
Ragweed do this, Ragweed do that,
I never get no rest.

Sometimes I go to town awhile,
Just to kill a little time,
Ragweed, what are you doing here?
You never have a dime.

If my children move to Canada
Or far across the sea,
I would get a letter every day,
Ragweed come wait on me.

The time is soon a-coming
I feel it in the air.
They will call on old Ragweed.
Old Ragweed won't be there.

THE STRIKE

The strike was on at the Justus mine.
Scabs takin our jobs, we felt like cryin,
The guards came on with guns in hand
These low-down guards could
not understand.

We're peaceful, you know, we don't
want to fight,
But we'll beat you up if you
scab tonight.
They took us to jail, what a disgrace,
But our wives and our sons
they took our place.

They took us to jail, oh what
a disgrace,
But our wives and our sons,
they took our place.
I'm telling you now we had
a hell of a fight.
And we'll keep on fighting til
we win our strike.

CASTLE IN THE SMOKY MOUNTAINS

If I had a millionaire's money
I'll tell you what I would do.
I'd build me a castle in the Smokies
And live there forever with you.

We would sit on our patio at midnight
Listen to the wild varmint croaks,
And sing our love song together
And dance by the light of the moon.

I'd gather wild flowers in springtime
And make a wreath for your hair
You would be mine only, mine forever
So young, so beautiful, so fair.

CAN'T LIVE ON JELLYBEANS

I went up to Washington
To see the President.
He came out on the lawn —
I said, "Sir, I cannot pay my rent."

He said, "Go home, son,
There's nothing I can do."
I said, "This house is too big for one.
I'm moving in with you."

He said, "I know things are bad.
The worst I've ever seen.
But I'm going to make them better.
Here, have a jellybean."

"I can't go home, sir.
I'd surely go insane.
You said yourself the unemployed
Would reach from California to Maine.

Now, if you take away
the food stamps
And all their other means,
What're you going to feed them on?
They can't live on jellybeans.

Now we know you're the big boss
And you will have your say
But if you don't do something
soon, sir,
Hell is going to be to pay."

Bucking the system

By Bob Hall

The success and survival of organized workers in rural, anti-union North Carolina.



Robeson County differs from North Carolina's other 99 counties in certain readily apparent ways. Its centuries-old Indian communities play a

leading role in the county's political, cultural and business affairs, but tri-racial divisions remain a part of daily life, almost as if the six restrooms in the downtown theater were still in use. Residential patterns in the county seat

(Lumberton), smaller towns and the vast farm lands owned chiefly by whites and Lumbee Indians follow a tradition of segregation. Robeson also has five school districts — more than any other North Carolina county — for its population of 102,000 (25 percent black, 35 percent Indian and 40 percent white); there's one district for each of the four towns with sizable white populations and a fifth for the rest of the county. Until a court order

in 1975, city voters could not only elect their own school board members but vote on those of the county as well, which gave Robeson County's Indian-and-black majority population a white-controlled school system.

The district attorney's passion for murder trials earns Robeson another distinction: three men and the lone woman of the 23 prisoners now condemned to die in North Carolina came from Joe Freeman Britt's court,

a proportion that kept Britt in the 1982 Guinness Book of World Records as "the deadliest prosecutor" in the U.S. (He first made the record book in the late-1970s for putting 23 people on death row in 28 months — but North Carolina's capital punishment statute was later declared unconstitutional.) As in other parts of the state, the district attorney is elected; but Britt has never faced opposition in his 10 years in office. "Can you imagine what would happen to someone who ran against him and *lost*?" explains one local observer. "He runs this place with fear." Other Britts, all kinfolk, include judges, county politicians and substantial landowners. Land ownership is an especially fortuitous ticket to elected office in Robeson, the third largest tobacco-producing county in the state; the mayor of Lumberton, for example, is the county's largest individual landowner.

Politics in Robeson County is a three-ring circus. Factions within each race vie for various positions, but an alliance of the highest economic powers from each works to maintain control of the county, while at the same time trying to expand opportunities enough to satisfy a growing demand for better living conditions. Since Robeson also leads North Carolina counties in the proportion of its people who are classified as "underemployed," the demands are understandably getting louder. In the last decade, county officials have enticed a score of new industries into the county, but many still pay wages so low that employees' earnings don't lift their families above the poverty line — hence the term "underemployed."

Of course, low wages are not unique to Robeson County. In fact, North Carolina may accurately be described as the Southern state whose industrialized economy depends heaviest on abundant, cheap labor. Unorganized, nonunion labor. It ranks dead last in the nation in industrial wages paid (an average of \$265 per week in 1980) and the percentage of nonagricultural workers in unions (six percent). In Robeson County, the figures are worse: the weekly wage hovered at \$190 in 1980 and the only union members are those covered by national contracts (the telephone company, post office, a grocery store chain and a

retail outlet).

None of the workers in the county's 80 industrial plants is protected by a union contract, but not because they haven't tried. The opposition has just been better organized and, some would say, more ruthless. "Management in this area has used every dirty trick in the book to frighten, run out or malign workers who get interested in unions," says Mike Krivosh, an organizer for the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO who has spent years working in numerous organizing drives in Robeson and surrounding counties. During the 17-year-long battle with J.P. Stevens, the union discovered that the Chamber of Commerce in neighboring Scotland County was publishing a tip sheet for area factories on the whereabouts of union organizers. The union successfully sued to stop the practice. Two years later, Krivosh learned that the Chamber of Commerce in the next county, Richmond, had the telephone operator at his motel monitor his calls for the names of workers asking for information on unions.

Against this backdrop, it is something of a miracle that workers at the Mueller Steam Specialty Company in Lumberton have persisted for three years in their effort to secure a union contract. "We've been stepped on, walked over, treated like dirt," says John Cook, one of the hardcore union supporters still at Mueller. "They've fired people, laid off whole groups and scared most of the rest up onto the fence where they won't say nothing.

"Everybody's sorta waiting to see what will happen with the hearing," Cook says, referring to the pending decision by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) on various charges the company and union have filed against each other. But with a string of appeals still possible, the final resolution of some 100 issues — including the unilateral cut of Cook's hourly wage by \$2.05 — could be two or three years away.

"If it weren't for this union, I'd have been quit long ago," Cook says in a slow, steady voice. "But I'm going to stick it out to the end. Whether they fire me or whatever. I made a promise when I first got involved, and I'm going to see it through no matter what happens."

"Mueller Steam is redneck country, and they'll do some whites just like they do me. They'll grin and pat you on the back. They'll act like a lamb, but they're curled up ready to strike like a rattlesnake."

— Ernest McDougald



Spirits were a lot higher in the fall of 1979 when workers at Mueller Steam decided to fight a new disciplinary system initiated by the plant president. Mueller had moved into a vacated textile mill in 1973 and by mid-1979 employed 150 hourly workers on lathes, drill presses and milling machines, turning out precision valves for industrial pipes. Employees (45 percent white, 25 percent black and 30 percent Indian) say they were glad to get jobs at the relatively good

wage of \$4 to \$8 an hour, but after a while complaints began mounting. Against decrepit, unsafe machinery that mechanic Cook says was World War II surplus; against a lack of ventilation and an exhaust system that blew hot air from the machines onto workers; against a pay-raise plan of 10 cents an hour per quarter that was arbitrarily awarded and never paid on time; against a lack of advancement opportunities and an environment where supervisors picked their friends

for the good jobs and penalized others they didn't personally like; against little annoyances like inadequate parking, lunchroom facilities and bathroom breaks.

Then came a "point system" which plant president Bob Whritenour promised would "eliminate nonconsistency of enforcing rules" and ensure "equal rights with no regard for sex, race or national origin." Under the system, workers would get points for being late to work, being absent without a doctor's excuse, damaging equipment or spoiling parts. If you accumulated a fixed number of points, you

"Favoritism, that's the way they run everything in here. . . . They don't respect you for the job you do."

— Lois Locklear



would be fired. The plan reinforced the growing feeling that the employees were being "treated like kids." And when it went into effect on September 1, 1979, workers realized it would be used selectively by supervisors against those they didn't like. "Favoritism, that's the way they run everything in here," says Lois Locklear, a Lumbee Indian and one of the relatively few women in the plant. "It was all this," she continued, touching her nose. "Brown-nosing. If you smiled and

made them happy, they didn't care what kind of job you did."

One of the most outspoken critics of the point system, Donny Beck, had joined Mueller in 1976 and was valued as much for his skill on the company's softball team as on the forklift he wheeled around the plant. Impatient, ambitious and in debt, Beck felt hemmed in when he was shifted to a metal-working machine paying \$5.05 an hour and holding no promise of advancement. Shortly after the point system commenced, he fell into a bitter argument with Bob Whritenour over an unexcused absence that cost him several points. He had sprained his ankle, he said, and he didn't need an expensive doctor to tell him to stay off his foot for a day. Whritenour would not budge; the points stayed on Beck's record.

In November, 1979, Beck joined Carl "C.W." McDonald and other Mueller workers at the Red Coach Inn to hear a union organizer McDonald had contacted. Estes Riffe, a Steelworker assigned by the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department (IUD) to an organizing campaign at a nearby glass factory, told the group how to begin organizing to get a union contract with a set of work rules that weren't handed down or arbitrarily applied by management. He gave them cards to pass out to their friends to authorize a union election. While workers gathered signatures by the dozen (with Beck as the most vocal, open union advocate), the AFL-CIO decided the Cincinnati-based International Molders and Allied Workers Union should have jurisdiction if the election were successful. Mike Black, a Molders organizer, coordinated the campaign and prepped the workers for the company's inevitable retaliation.

Friends of Bob Whritenour say he was shocked to hear the rumors of union cards circulating among his employees. He still won't talk to reporters about the dispute, but his brother Ray, the plant manager, admits they moved the company south partly to get away from a union contract at their Brooklyn factory and that Bob considered it a personal affront that workers would go behind his back for outside help. The Whritenours quickly hired some outside help of their own, in the form of Elarbee, Clark and Paul, an Atlanta law firm specializing in fighting unions. Supervisors were instructed to interview

workers for their attitudes about unions, and the lawyers kept a list with a running total of the pros and cons. Rumors spread that the plant might close if the union won. Bob Whritenour showed both shifts a movie which graphically portrays how a plant that voted in a union went through a violent strike. Workers charge they were repeatedly harassed about their union stance; several say that, as the election approached, they were offered promotions to supervisor positions "for their loyalty."

"Two supervisors came to talk to me the day before the election," recalls Lacy Chavis. "They said the plant will move if the union comes in. Then they said, 'You've got to think about your family's welfare.' I said, 'That's what I'm doing now, thinking about my family's welfare.'" A sheepish grin broke across his face. "Then I told them, 'I'm going to vote for myself, not for that man over there or for the company.'"

Spirits were soaring on election day, February 14, 1980. "We passed out caps with the union on them to people as they came in," C.W. McDonald remembers. "We ran out of them right away. The company was having fits." Late that afternoon, the votes were tallied. When the count reached 70 for the union, the company's personnel manager began crying and told the onlooking workers that Mueller "deserved better treatment." The final count was 89 to 46. Ray Whritenour says his brother was so heartsick he couldn't come to work the next day.

"We fooled them," laughs John Cook. "The supervisors was turning in numbers [of probable union supporters] to the lawyers, but they wasn't telling them how strong we really was. It might have cost them *their* jobs. We fooled them right up to the last day."

"They were so confident they had us beat they didn't run as mean a campaign as we expected," says McDonald.

Some of the local business leaders were more than a little perturbed that Mueller failed to prevent what Tony Smith, Robeson County's Industrial Development Commission director, calls the "cancer" of unionism from creeping into the area. About the time of the election, Lumberton mayor Furman Biggs and the head of Southern National Bank, Joseph Sandlin, secretly flew to Detroit to visit Bob Whrite-

nour's boss, Harold Marko, the president of Core Industries, which owns Mueller Steam. The two men suggested that workers were turning to a union because Whritenour and his supervisors projected a Northern, impersonal management style that ignored employees' individual problems. "If they were going to be inflexible, then they might just as well pack their bags and go home," intones Sandlin. The union fight became such "an emotional thing," he explains, that Whritenour took everything personally and lost control of the plant. Now that the union had won, a shrewder approach was necessary.

Whritenour's landslide defeat and the advice from county business leaders apparently led him to design a more deliberate offensive against the union. The idea of accepting the two-to-one vote as an expression of the workers' true desires — and sitting down to bargain with them after NLRB certification of the election — seems never to have entered any management mind. The day after the election, Mueller ran a quarter-page ad in the *Robesonian*, the county's daily newspaper, announcing that it was "accepting applications for first and second shifts" — a move which union supporters interpreted as a threat to replace them. They say supervisors harangued them that week with threats to shift them to more strenuous jobs, withhold their pay raises, close the plant and give their future employers poor job references. The next week, Whritenour fired another union activist and had his attorney (unsuccessfully) ask the NLRB to invalidate the election for various alleged abuses.

The controversial point system continued in full force. Supervisors began "riding us, watching everything we did for something to give us points on," complains Wanda Campbell, who is still on the job. "They'd follow me to the bathroom, or just stand there watching you do your job. You couldn't get upset, you had to out-think them."

The union began filing what became a long series of "unfair labor practice" charges against Mueller for the alleged threats and the targeted use of the point system against pro-union work-

ers. Meanwhile, Mueller's attorneys filed "exceptions" to the NLRB's certification of the election results, hoping to forestall the day they would face the Molders at the bargaining table. Then on July 29, 1980, the company fired Donny Beck, the softball whiz who had sparked much of the union agitation, for another hotly disputed "unexcused absence." "The fear definitely picked up in the plant," C.W. McDonald remembers. "A lot of those who had been with us stopped coming to union meetings." The weeks dragged on and despite new orders from the NLRB to stop, company

had fired. It also agreed to remove two warnings issued against Beck, but the status of his job remained in limbo. The deterrent value of the back-pay penalties seems minimal: in November, the company laid off 16 more pro-union workers.

In the late fall, three workers — with assistance from Chamber of Commerce personnel — drew up a petition to decertify the union and started collecting a growing list of signatures. "They were tired of waiting," says Beck. The point system, the lay-offs and firings, the endless delays in the NLRB hearing, the moving of workers from

"You can go in there now and the man say you're fired, and there's nothing you can do about it. With a union, you have something to back you up. When Mueller get through with a man now, they throw him away like they would a candy wrapper." — Carl "C.W." McDonald



personnel continued to peck away at selected workers.

When Beck made the rounds to find a new job, he ran into a wall of cold stares. Then he heard from a reporter for the *Robesonian* that his name was on a list being circulated by the Chamber of Commerce. The knowledge of what was happening only made him feel more helpless — and bitter. In September, 1980, in response to union charges, Mueller agreed to pay back wages to two workers it

shift to shift, job to job — frustration was obviously mounting. "They saw what the company was doing to me and the others," Beck says. "They were scared of what might happen to them and their families."

Frustration was apparently taking its toll on Beck as well. Under circumstances still disputed, he went to see Whritenour and the company attorney and offered information that would give them grounds to challenge the election results. Beck later said he

was trying to trick the company into offering him money to lie about the union; then that his claims against the union were true and that he expected and received nothing for his story. Mike Black, the Molders organizer, swears Beck privately apologized to him for betraying the union by giving the company false information. In any case, Beck signed an affidavit saying the union paid him to help organize the plant and also that he told workers if they didn't sign union cards they'd be fired after the union won the election. With that affidavit, the company filed more objections to void

“Mueller has done a great deal for its employees. A good number came to the company with no skills and no training of any kind. . . . The great majority of our employees are satisfied.”
— Core Industries officer



the union's victory.

“It's hard to imagine the judge will believe Beck's story,” a union official said shortly after the new testimony was finally heard in July, 1982. “It's filled with contradictions. He just didn't come across as credible.” At a recent meeting of union supporters, Beck's name brought uniform condemnation. “I never trusted his mouth anyway,” said one worker. “He sold us out,” another offered. “He just couldn't take the pressure.”

In the final months of 1980, more workers signed the anti-union petition, to the delight of Bob Whritenour, who sent out an “employee newsletter” saying the people in “the anti-union movement . . . adhere to management's wishes.” The petition carried no legal authority since so many charges and countercharges were already pending before the NLRB. But workers say supervisors, and in some instances Whritenour himself, pressured them to get the total list of names above 90 percent of the work force. Those who refused to sign, like John Cook, paid a heavy price (see box). Even those union supporters who eventually signed found they too were blacklisted from other jobs when Mueller laid them off.

While some Robesonians used the Chamber's list to snub union activists, others in the community offered their help. The area legal services office defended the fired and laid-off workers' right to receive unemployment compensation, despite company opposition. The staff of a local chapter of the Clergy and Laity Concerned (CALC), a national human-rights organization, interviewed workers and Whritenour, and then issued a report in June, 1981, concluding that “the court proceedings against the company have not stopped management personnel from intimidating employees who are openly pro-union and from creating an environment of fear in the workplace.”

“If you look at what Mueller is doing,” explains Reverend Mac Leger-ton, a staff member for Robeson County CALC, “you can see they are pursuing a slow and intentional plan to rid the plant of pro-union people.” What's at stake, he believes, is the moral principle of people's right to have their own organization. “Business leaders have the Chamber of Commerce, doctors have their medical associations, lawyers their legal guilds, students their clubs — but laborers are denied their right to form labor organizations. That's the moral hypocrisy that we must challenge and change.”

To boost spirits and capitalize on the blatant abuses of the company, the union assigned Bill Patterson to develop a strategy that could turn this moral issue into tangible help for the workers. Patterson discovered that the National Bank of Detroit was chief lender of capital to Core Indus-

“I'm going to have me a union.”

— John Cook

My daddy was a blacksmith, and my daddy's daddy was a chairmaker. He worked with tools all his life. So you could say I'm a full-blooded mechanic. I can repair anything. Farm machinery, bulldozers, automobiles, lawn mowers, sewing machines. That chair you're sitting in. I can repair anything.

Before I went with Mueller Steam, I was making good money where I was and getting along good. But I wanted to work with steel. I was working with cloth and I wanted to work with steel, and Mueller had the machines to work with steel. That's the reason I went. I was 35 years old, and I talked it over with my wife and I told her if I go, no matter what happens that I'd stay. I promised her I would stay. Not only her. I promised myself I would stay. I made the wrong decision, but I'm going to stick with it. It *could* be a good job.

It weren't the money, the reason that I got involved with the union. It was the management. You could say something to them and they'd say, “In New York, we didn't have this problem.” And I'd say, “Then why in the world did you come down here?” And they said, “Cheap labor.” I've told them a bunch of things they can do to save money, I showed them things to do. But they take it and show it to the big wheel, and he comes down and says, “We didn't do it that way in New York.”

I was working on maintenance and these boys were backfacing a body, and they'd take the feed handle wheel and pull it backwards *by hand*. I was working on maintenance then. I noticed that all machines that will go forward will go backwards. And I asked them, “Why don't you put it in gear?” And they told me it didn't have a reverse. I went to the foreman and said, “What's this lever here?” He said, “I don't know.” And I said, “Let's throw it over and see what happens.” So we threw it over, and she started feeding backwards! He runs and gets his boss man, and his boss

man gets his boss man, and he looks at it and says, "Oh, yes, yes, yes, that's the way we done it in New York!"

So we asked him why he didn't show us to do it down here. He said they was scared we'd tear up something if we run the machine in reverse.

I found out that they think we're ignorant. And I've decided that if we're ignorant, then they're just as ignorant as we are. They ain't no better than I am! I just come to the conclusion that if I come to somebody on the road, I'll give him half of it but I'm not giving him all of it. I'm standing up for what I think is right. I'm entitled to a union, by law, and I'm going to have me a union. Bob Whittour don't want a union, but he's got a union.

That's when I started having trouble. After the union was voted in. They came out with a petition. Bob met with us, and said the anti-union people had 97 percent of the employees signed on this petition. They was fixing to send it to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), one copy to them and one copy to the union. But he wanted to hold off a few more days because he wanted 100 percent to sign this petition. He said no matter how pro-union you was, if you signed this petition you would not be fired.

I didn't sign the petition. Three weeks later, I was put on second shift. Against my will. I didn't want second shift. I pulled one year and two days on second. I never got to see my family during the week. When I came home, they was in bed. When I got up in the morning, they was gone to school. And I laid here and worked here in the daytime by myself. For a year. And that was pure, miserable life.

I could have easily got a second shift anywhere I wanted to, just about. But I wanted a first shift and I was promised a first shift job by Mueller Steam.

I pulled that year and two days on second shift. They put me on first December 28, 1981. And they cut my pay \$2.05 an hour. And that's where I'm at right now. Running a machine. They claimed I couldn't handle the job as a maintenance mechanic on the second shift, but when I was put on second shift, they said I was the only one qualified for that job. I was denied overtime on second shift. One maintenance man that did get that over-

JOHN COOK WITH ANN COOK, WHO TEACHES SCHOOL, AND THE YOUNGEST OF THEIR THREE CHILDREN, DEANNA



photo by Judy Hand

"Some man on TV the other day was talking about how he would bring jobs down here — he's running for some kind of office. But we don't need any more jobs, not like the ones we got. You can't make it with a family on \$5 an hour."

time, he made \$24,000 last year. I made \$15,000. And I was making more money an hour than he was. Yet I made \$9,000 less than he did. But the other boy is anti-union. They do anything they want to and they get by with it.

They found out that I didn't like to run the air hammer. So when they had air hammer work to be done, they'd start about 3:00 and I'd come in at 3:30 and they'd just be starting it. They'd be two and three people on it. They'd show me what had to be done and leave. I had to run the air hammer by myself. One man cannot continuously operate an air hammer. It's too strenuous a job. An air hammer weighs 85 pounds, with 125 pounds of air pressure hooked to it. You can imagine what kind of jumping and jerking an 85-pound air hammer with 125 pounds of air pressure running to it can do.

I missed a lot of work on account of every time I ran the air hammer I'd have to be out of work. The last time they give me the air hammer job to do, I refused to do it. I worked at Mueller Steam seven years prior to this and never had to run the air hammer. They'd say I was a first-class mechanic

and should not be running the air hammer. And I agreed with them. But that wasn't the reason I refused to run the air hammer. The reason I refused was that my back would not let me run the air hammer. I can pick up heavy objects, but I have to be particular about how I pick it up. I can pull and I can push. But I cannot run a machine that vibrates.

("I really get mad when I think about his back injury, and how they're doing him so dirty," interjects Ann. "He hurt his back working there in 1977 and had to leave work then. When he went back, I thought things would get better. But after he went with the union, they started giving him work that would further harm his back. They're trying to get rid of him. I feel like they ought to have to keep him. He gave his back for them, he did that for them. I feel like they ought to find something for him to do where he won't hurt his back anymore. It's not human how they're treating people.")

So now I'm back on first shift, \$2.05 cut in pay. I'm in financial trouble, and I'm getting in deeper financial trouble every day I work. If it weren't for the union, I'd a been quit long ago. □

tries (Mueller's parent company), and that a number of unions in that well-organized city held pension funds in the bank. Soon union officials were firing off letters to the bank, inquiring if their funds were being "used to subsidize Core Industries' illegal union-busting efforts in the South."

CALC and the union contacted national religious leaders previously active in the J.P. Stevens boycott, and soon more letters inundated Core Industries and its friendly banker. All the letter writers received in return a form letter from Core's vice president for finance declaring that "the allegations you refer to in your letter are being made by the union organizing group, not by our employees" and that Mueller "has done a great deal for its employees," especially since "a good number . . . came to the company with no skills and no training of any kind." Workers who saw copies of the form letter were outraged and insulted; the church leaders, unsatisfied and also insulted, began purchasing shares of Core's stock in preparation for its January, 1982, annual meeting.

Recharged and meeting regularly, union activists launched their own newsletter, called the *Mueller-sonian*, in the fall of 1981. "It was terrific," beams Ernest McDougald. "They just went wild when they saw our names in there. We'd write about a particular supervisor or the condition of the lunchroom, and a bunch of us would sign the article. That just freaked Bob [Whritenour] out."

The paper was part of an upbeat, shop-floor agitation strategy, assisted by union staff, that included wearing stickers with various slogans, circulating petitions and holding rump meetings with supervisors; it successfully raised, and won, specific demands, ranging from replacing a broken microwave oven in the lunchroom to reinstating a fired worker.

The *Muellersonian* didn't last long, however. On November 26, two uniformed sheriff's deputies entered the plant and served papers on McDougald and several others notifying them that they were being sued for libel by two supervisors. "I have to give them credit," says McDougald. "They were smart to do that. It put fear in people's hearts. That was the beginning of tearing down the second shift. Up to that point, we were 80 percent strong union."

A few months later, Whritenour fired McDougald, supposedly for exceeding his quota of points. Several others from the shift went in rapid succession. And others, like Terry McEachern, were moved from machine to machine. "They wanted me to mess up so they could fire me," he says, "but I wouldn't." Eventually, Mueller laid off the entire shift, claiming that the recession had ruined the flow of new orders. "That wasn't it," McEachern sighs. "The ones they was firing were filing charges against the company, so instead of having any more pile up, they just decided to lay off the whole shift."

By January 12, 1982 — the day of

"It's a risk, going for the union, but it's worth it to get them off our backs."

— Terry McEachern



Core's stockholders meeting — president Harold Marko had refused a request from Detroit Catholic Bishop Thomas Gumbleton for a meeting with a curt letter saying it would not "serve any good purpose." An order of nuns received similar treatment. The Detroit AFL-CIO listed 12 sizable funds its member unions had on deposit with the National Bank of Detroit — apparently enough clout to get them a meeting with the bankers. That meeting led to another between Marko, Detroit AFL-CIO president Tom Turner and Molders president Carl Studenroth. Marko had finally been personally drawn into the controversy, but the company's anti-union position held firm.

So when 75 stockholders gathered in an elegant room at the bank for Core's annual meeting, the bishop, the nuns and the AFL-CIO were all there, along with a squad of reporters. The church and union officials invoked the memory of what had happened to J.P. Stevens when it stubbornly refused to heed the wishes of its workers and the mandates of the courts. They nominated an assistant to the Lutheran bishop of Michigan to the board of directors and read a letter from John Cook's wife Ann, who recounted "the mental and emotional hardship our family has suffered at the hands of Mueller Steam."

When Core president Marko finally spoke, it was in a high, strained voice. "You know," he said, "these [employees] are our people, and I genuinely feel for these people. These are my people. We employ them." Despite the audible groans at his paternalistic statements, Marko continued, describing how the company had contracts with unions at some of its other plants and how the "relatively unsophisticated people" in Lumberton had been tricked by the union, as one of their paid agents now had confessed. He contended that Mueller, in contrast, had been consistently open and reasonable. "We have a dispute and what do we do? We go to the courts. We have told the people there, if you want a union there, let's have an honest election and if you certify the union, I swear to you that within five minutes we'll be at the bargaining table bargaining in good faith."

The months drone on in Robeson County. More workers have been laid off, and the pressure on those that remain escalates. "A woman walked off the job this morning at 9:30," John Cook said during a late July interview. "A man sent word back that he's not coming back here from his vacation. They weren't union. They were on the fence. But they were good workers. They couldn't take it. You just can't do your job in there with the obsolete equipment they have and how they watch you. They don't believe in improving nothing. They don't care how hard it is on the operator. As long as they can get something out of it, they don't worry."

At this writing in mid-August, the

hourly workforce has dropped to about 85, and some speculate the plant will close before it signs a union contract. Publicly, the company says it won't close "unless it becomes impossible to do business here," and it reiterates Marko's claims about the bogus election and the union being outsiders unwelcome by "our people." Privately, Whritenour has told some pro-union workers and their community supporters that the Chamber of Commerce is pressuring *him* to take a hard line against signing with the union. He is willing, he says, to hire back those who were laid off, with a substantial portion of back pay, *if* they get the union to abandon its legal claim to representation.

Some union supporters say they should make no deals, that Whritenour knows he's on the losing end of a strong legal case, and that *more* pressure should be applied to get him to sign a contract. Whritenour is in a precarious position, adds Reverend Legerton of CALC, because even some business leaders are embarrassed about the mistreatment of Mueller workers. "I think if they see this case bringing negative national publicity to Robeson County or if they see it causing other kinds of organizing in the county, I believe they will do what they can to get Mueller Steam to settle somehow, to negotiate with the union. Already the union has brought together the three races more than any other institution in this county, including the church. They've helped people in this county overcome racism and shown how the three races have to come together from the same economic level and work for their common interest. All we need is a little more help."

The plea for help is a common theme expressed by workers interviewed. At a public hearing sponsored by CALC in June, they told their stories and asked others in the county to write the Chamber of Commerce and Whritenour's boss in Detroit. The local paper downplayed the event, but the Robeson County Black Caucus, embarrassed by complaints at the hearing that it hasn't spoken out on behalf of the Mueller workers, has stepped into the fray; its role rapidly escalated to fill the vacuum left by the absence over the past months of union staff on the scene. Composed of the established leadership in civic and religious affairs, business and politics,

the Black Caucus moves with considerable caution; or, as one of the black workers, who compose about half of the remaining two dozen strong union activists, put it, "They've sure taken their good time in doing something for us. I'm still wondering whose side they are on."

After meeting with management and workers, the caucus is now pushing Whritenour's deal of jobs and back pay in exchange for no union. A number of laid-off workers, who face being "blacklisted" from jobs in the area while the company delays union recognition for another two-to-three years, are ready to hear more details of a settlement.

"Mueller considers me as being one of the guys. And they ride me just as hard."

— Wanda Campbell



The Molders are reluctant to discuss their plans, but some observers feel if the company pledges in writing to sign a contract if the union wins a new election, everyone will be happy — for the moment at least. Mueller Steam would obviously pour more resources and better talent into fighting the union in a second election; whether the union can win an even rougher campaign is another question.

"If I go back in there, I'm going to go after it like I did before," vows C.W. McDonald, the soft-spoken leader who contacted the first organizer three years ago and who, like many others laid-off, can now only find seasonal work at the tobacco warehouses. "The company thinks they'll have people

believing they won't need a union. But I think we can do it again."

Regardless of the next steps, an enthusiastic and stubborn group of Robesonians is obviously putting its mark on this unique county. McDonald, for example, worked on the winning primary election campaign of Reverend Sidney Locks, the minister at the church where the union held several meetings and a leader of the progressive wing of the Black Caucus. Locks's nomination for the North Carolina House of Representatives represents a triumph for what one Indian calls "a populist-oriented" coalition of the black and Lumbee communities that holds significant promise.

And then there's Ernest McDougald, who is applying his organizing skills — in between earning what he can as a house painter — to get better attention for his neighborhood from the city. "Change is going to come because of people like us," he says. "Getting the union elected shows others that you *can* organize, that you don't have to walk around with your head down. You don't have to let the man tell you how it is."

The list goes on and on. Maybe it should end with John Cook. And Ann Cook. "John used to be the most prejudiced person I know," she says. "He'd treat blacks he worked with just rotten. But he's learned through this that they're as good as he is. We've learned a lot through this. We've been cheated and treated dirty. I don't think people around here really understand what's been going on. The rich man is up there, that's where he wants to stay and he wants to keep you down. He'll do it anyway he has to, to keep you obliged."

"They say we're poor and that's true," adds John. "They say we're uneducated and that's true, too. But we shouldn't be treated like dogs. I used to look up to other people, but then I came to the conclusion that they aren't any better than I am. And the ones I maybe looked down on, they're the ones who will stand up with me. I'm sticking with this union, I'm not giving in." □

Bob Hall is an editor of Southern Exposure. A few quotes in this article are from interviews conducted by Tony Schmitz of the Atlanta Weekly and are used with his permission. Photographs (except page 71) are by Mac Legerton.

History of Oppression

The Harder We Run: Black Workers Since the Civil War, by William H. Harris. Oxford University Press, 1982. 259 pp. \$15.95

William H. Harris, a historian and an academic, has written an honest-to-god history book that is, surprisingly, succinct, comprehensive and ardent. *The Harder We Run* is the history of Afro-American laborers, which is, Harris tells us in the introduction, "the history of discrimination, not to say downright oppression."

Harris draws his information from a wide variety of sources — chief among them, archival collections, government data and publications, censuses and scholarly texts. Tables and graphs, none formidable enough to put off any reader, are interspersed in the text. Most of the statistics are incorporated into the text. Rather nicely, too, for each series of statistics is usually succeeded by an anecdote that brings home its impact. Chapter Two, "The Nadir," which contains some of the book's finest prose, supplies an example that illustrates Harris's interweaving of real numbers and real people. Following a set of building trade statistics is this account:

A classic example of a white union using its influence to keep black craftsmen out of work occurred in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1903. Robert Rhodes, a black brickmason, went to work on a federal project in that city, and all the whites employed there walked off the job rather than work with him. The contractor, under pressure to finish the job on time, fired Rhodes, and the whites returned to work. Rhodes, a card-carrying member of his union, appealed to the local for relief. The union found no merit in Rhodes's claim that he had been fired because of discrimination; indeed, it fined him \$25 for scabbing



photo courtesy of Tuskegee Institute Archives

because he had taken a job on a nonunion project while his case was under review at the local. Under such circumstances, blacks could hardly expect to find work in the building trades.

The brief paragraph following this passage exemplifies both Harris's clear, sharp analysis and his keen, often pointed insights.

Eliminated from key construction occupations at this crucial time of technological innovation and refused by whites as apprentices, a generation of black construction workers were left with only the most basic skills. They were wholly unprepared to work on the skyscrapers that rose to blot out the sun in city after city. Also, white unionists could deny employment to blacks because they were "unqualified" to do the work they had been denied the right to learn.

Direct rather than subtle, he unabashedly destroys myths and reprimands mythmakers: "We have heard enough from welfare critics who argue that the poor are people who are too lazy to work or black families deserted by the male head."

Such honesty pervades the book. In the chapters dealing with the years

since 1924, Harris discusses the Communist Party in detail and intermittently. Focusing primarily, though not solely, on the American Negro Labor Congress (1925) and the National Negro Congress (1936), he points out the party's influence on and its intrusion into the black labor force. He observes that, though they provided some support and were instrumental in effecting a few changes, party members generally failed to appreciate the specific needs of black people and were unwilling to concede that racism was a greater and more prevalent evil than capitalism.

Moreover, Harris's discussion of A. Philip Randolph, obviously one of his heroes, is free of idolatry or bias; in fact, this black labor leader and civil-rights advocate and his white adversaries suffer equally critical treatment. Likewise, in recounting the activities of the Montgomery Improvement Association, Harris concurs with E.D. Nixon that perhaps it is less true that Martin Luther King, Jr., made the Montgomery Bus Boycott than that the boycott made King. This is not to suggest that Harris fails to give either Randolph or King his due; rather it is to emphasize Harris's

realistic handling of his subject.

Nowhere in the book is this clearer, however, than in his conscientious and essential inclusion of black women as laborers. In a perceptive statement in his introduction, Harris pinpoints that oft-neglected matter:

This book emphasizes one of the fundamental differences between black and white workers in the United States: the fact that large numbers of black women participated in the labor force for decades while white women entered the work force in large numbers only recently. Indeed, the discussion of black female workers emphasizes how "phenomena" become important only when they affect whites.

True to his word, he self-consciously compares black women workers with white women and with their black male counterparts. His comparison of black women with white implicitly reveals as much about the racism within the current Women's Movement as it does about white patriarchal notions of women and work. Moreover, he critically examines the differences between the kind, as well as the amount, of work available to black men and to black women at strategic points in history. Unfortunately, he draws the conclusion that present-day black women "profited at the expense of black men when corporations took steps to comply with federal mandates to end discrimination" without providing any statistical or even anecdotal evidence to support his contention.

Perhaps the most notable annoyance in a book containing few irritations is an admirable feature: in his effort to remain succinct, Harris gives only passing attention to persons and groups central to the history of black people, though not necessarily central to their history as laborers. Marcus Garvey, for example, receives a mere two paragraphs' worth of discussion, and the notoriously anti-union Ku Klux Klan, for all Harris's thorough treatment of unions and strikebreaking, appears only in a single footnote. However annoyed we readers are that our interests are thus occasionally piqued then gently abandoned, the whole is a wonderfully concise and readable historical narrative. □

— Joycelyn K. Moody

Language to Abandon

Eulogy for the ERA, by Susan Bright. Plain View Press (1509 Dexter, Austin, TX 78704), 1982. 12 pp. \$2.00.

Susan Bright is a strong, intelligent poet who cares deeply about language and a strong woman who shares the anger and bitterness so many of us felt on June 30, 1982, when our state legislators laid the Equal Rights Amendment to rest. Amid the angry, bitter reactions, Bright's is a bright spot. Producing almost overnight what she calls a "fastbook," she has offered up a *Eulogy for the ERA* that more people should see than will. In so doing, she has used the ERA as symbol of feminist goals that cannot be legislated but are fully as important as those that can.

It's a strange little book consisting mostly of photo-reproductions of passages from an unidentified diction-

ary interspersed with quotations from a variety of sources, extending Bright's long-standing interest in the sexism imbedded in our language. Her interest, of course, is widely shared. We've seen more than a decade of feminist alteration of the words in our mouths — nearly always with commendable intent, more often than not sticking in our throats as we struggled to make the revisionist language come easily to our tongues, and causing anguished searching for new words that wouldn't substitute gross inelegance for male chauvinism.

In *Eulogy*, Susan Bright does not tell us new things about our male-dominated culture and its words, definitions and remarks, so much as she paints us into a corner with them where we can't escape each other.

Her dictionary selections, including some predictable ones, are gems. She shows us "masculine" and "feminine" again: one means "strength, vigor, etc." and the other means "gentleness, weakness, delicacy." But she has also found the unusual, the buried usage notes that bare our assumptions.

RESURGENCE

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Shorts

Black Boss, by John Rozier.
University of Georgia Press,
1982. 220 pp. \$15.95.

In 1968 blacks took control of Hancock County, Georgia. About 74 percent of the approximately 9,000 residents of this rural county were black, and it was the first Georgia county since Reconstruction where blacks won a majority of the seats on the county commission. The key figure in the takeover was John McCown, a charismatic wheeler-dealer and controversial civil-rights leader who arrived in town in 1966 and quickly rose to power.

With the backing of the Georgia Council on Human Relations, he developed a number of economic self-help programs including a concrete block factory and a catfish farm. With his projects, once regarded as a national model for black self-help, McCown attracted millions of dollars in grants from the federal Office of Economic Opportunity and the Ford Foundation. He also surrounded himself with the trappings of wealth. He died suddenly in 1976, expecting to be indicted imminently by a federal grand jury that had already charged many of his associates with misuse of funds.

Black Boss tells the story of the rise and fall of McCown during his decade of influence in Hancock County. Author John Rozier presents apparently thorough research into McCown's activities, along with numerous quotes from black and white Hancock County leaders detailing their reactions to the various economic schemes and the political infighting that went on during the effort to develop and secure the power that blacks had won at the polls. However, he fails to offer sufficient analysis of the conditions that led to turmoil in this small rural county.

Rozier, a native of Hancock County and formerly the director of Public Information Services at Emory University, fights a battle with himself in the book. He paints a nostalgic picture of the county before the black takeover, and he stresses the "moderate" nature of race relations in this

"Man is defined as a human being and woman is defined as a female. Whenever she tries to behave as a human being, she is accused of trying to emulate the male."
Simone de Beauvoir

mas'cu-line, a. [ME. and OFr. *masculin*; L. *masculus*, masculine, from *masculus*, male, dim. form of *mas*, a male.]

→ 1. male; of men or boys.
2. having qualities regarded as characteristic of men and boys, as strength, vigor, etc.; manly; virile.
3. suitable for or characteristic of a man.
4. mannish; said of women.
5. in grammar, designating or of the gender of words denoting or referring to males or things originally regarded as male.

fem'i-nine, a. [L. *femininus*, from *femina*, a woman.]

→ 1. female; of women or girls.
2. having qualities regarded as characteristic of women and girls, as gentleness, weakness, delicacy, modesty, etc.; womanly.
3. suitable to or characteristic of a woman.
4. effeminate; lacking in manly qualities; womanish; said of men.
5. in grammar, designating or of the gender of words denoting or referring to females or things originally regarded as female.

"I became a feminist as an adolescent by becoming a masculinist"
Sally Kempton

mi-sog'y-ny (mi-soj'ə-nē, -mī-), n. hatred of women. [*<* Gr *misogynia* hatred of women. See *MISO-*, *GYN-*, *-y*.] —*mi-sog'y-nic*, *mi-sog'y-nous*, *mi-sog'y-nis'tic*, *adj.* —*mi-sog'y-nist*, *n.*

PAGES FROM SUSAN BRIGHT'S EULOGY FOR THE ERA

One definition of "throw" is "to project (the voice)," which we are instructed to use as follows: "He threw his voice so that all might hear." One definition of "blubber" is "to say, esp. incoherently, while weeping." As in "She seemed to be blubbing something" (her emphasis).

Bright has also scribbled some sharply apt remarks into her margins. She quotes Sally Kempton, for example: "It is hard to fight an enemy who has outposts in your head." And she throws in two poems of her own, including one in which a long litany of sexist clichés started to reawaken in me old anger at long-ago-discovered stupidities. For example: "The Common Man, the best Man for the job, when Man invented the wheel, . . . Man's basic needs. The history of black Man in America." Then it ended with "Man like other mammals breast feeds his young," and I couldn't help laughing out loud.

So Susan Bright has a sense of humor, though it's what I might have called "black humor" if some black writers I know hadn't recently begun to confront me with the even more deeply planted color-conscious assumptions that surface in our language. Bright is a white woman, but she has confronted me with them, too.

Her dictionary includes a slang usage meaning "marked by upright

fairness," as in "a white man if ever there was one." Other choices for "white" include: "free from moral impurity: INNOCENT . . . not intended to cause harm . . . FAVORABLE, FORTUNATE." "Black" is also a multi-talented word: "SOILED, DIRTY . . . thoroughly evil: WICKED . . . expressive of condemnation or discredit . . . invoking . . . the devil . . . GLOOMY, CALAMITOUS . . . marked by the occurrence of disaster . . . SULLEN, HOSTILE."

This is all deeply disturbing. What is to be done? As difficult as it has been to stop saying "mankind" when we mean the human race, I call that a cinch when I compare it to destroying a cultural assumption about good and evil being characterized by "white" and "black." This linguistic color bias, deeply resented by those among us whose skin color is equated with all that we find unpleasant, does not get the attention afforded our linguistic sex bias, though it deserves more. The two biases are clearly related, though; unsurprisingly, the black writers who have confronted me with this dilemma are also women.

In any case, the arrival of Susan Bright's book has occasioned some renewed thinking about things I thought were settled in my mind years ago. □

—Linda Rocawich

"lynch-proof" county. Rozier emphasizes the disruption of his grand old Southern community that McCown caused with his confrontational tactics. He chronicles the events from 1966 to '76 in terms of how McCown ran the show, received the big grants and set up the various programs so that they would be under his control. Rozier also details how McCown's mismanagement or inability to be an administrator, combined with a lust for personal power, caused the programs' downfall and eventually his own.

The problem with *Black Boss* lies not in the treatment of McCown as an example of a leader whose power went to his head. In that regard he has done his homework well, and he gives us a feel for the forces that drive a person to abuse power and for what he calls "the good and evil in us all." Rather, the failure of *Black Boss* is that there is no probing of the deep underlying racism which is woven into the fabric of Hancock County, and indeed of the entire South. He does not consider the need of blacks for self-determination, and he does not seem to understand that the centuries of indignation seething under the refined paternalism of "moderate" Hancock County may have created a necessity for a John McCown or some other strong expression on the part of blacks. Unable to escape his upbringing, he does not consider that McCown may have been the occasion rather than the cause of events in Hancock County.

— Joe Pfister

The Nuclear Barons, by Peter Pringle and James Spigelman. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981. 578 pp. \$16.95.

Everyone caught up in the new passion of the nuclear freeze movement, yet puzzled by just how we reached such an insane state of affairs, should read *The Nuclear Barons*. In a long but very readable book, authors Peter Pringle and James Spigelman admirably succeed at a complicated task: "to explain through the actions of the men and women who made the decisions, how and why they have left the world in such

a nuclear mess."

As a journalist and a lawyer, respectively, Pringle and Spigelman neither overwhelm the reader with scientific detail nor plod along in academic obscurantism. Rather they distill the essence of how nuclear weapons and the nuclear power industry have developed in each atomic power in the world and outline the horrendous consequences of this development.

Not surprisingly, one major conclusion stands out in the authors' minds: "One motivation, perhaps more important than any other, was pride — especially that form of pride known as patriotism: atomic bombs were built to demonstrate national manhood; nuclear power stations were built to prove a nation's technological expertise."

By the end of this saga, it's hard to disagree with one slogan commonly seen and heard in anti-nuclear demonstrations these days: "Take the Toys Away From the Boys." In country after country we find aggressive, super-confident males crushing opposition and laying the groundwork for the nuclear future they so unquestioningly expected. For instance, consider this description of the Canadian nuclear industry:

As far as Clarence Howe's public was concerned, this was a peaceful undertaking, a Canadian project. Above all, it was *his* project: he liked to live up to his name as Clarence "Dictator" Howe and the "Minister for Everything." . . .

Operating virtually without oversight or review, Howe established a series of quasi-independent nuclear corporations. . . . He staffed these corporations with his own personal contacts from industry. "Howe's Boys," as they were known, were given policy guidance from the "Czar of Czars," as the press dubbed him. For two decades, beginning with the Manhattan Project, Howe and his "Boys" would be intimately connected with the development of nuclear technology.

In case after case we find a bantam rooster proudly in charge of his own nuclear brood — General Leslie Groves, Lewis Strauss and others in America; Lord Cherwell in Britain; Vyacheslav Malyshev in Russia; and on and on and on. We all know the gruesome consequences these supreme egotists have

created: seven countries armed for nuclear war, many others at the brink of perfecting the technology and a flock of other countries operating dangerous and unstable nuclear reactors.

One might expect Pringle and Spigelman, after delving so deeply into the minutiae of nuclear madness, to be well-equipped to suggest some common-sense solutions to our woes. Their epilogue, though, is a puny two pages; this is perhaps the major shortcoming of the book.

However, they do emphasize one point that all activists against nuclear weapons would do well to remember:

Nations without nuclear weapons will always want them if others have them, and the easiest way to acquire them will continue to be through nuclear power programs. Thus, the core of the proliferation problem is the expansion of nuclear-generated electricity: more nuclear power plants mean more fissile material available for diversion into bomb projects.

Read it and weep; but also learn how we got into the mess we're in, and think about how we might escape it without self-destruction.

— Jim Overton

Books on the South

This list consists of books published since May, 1982. Book entries include works through July, 1982. All books are to be published in 1982. Dissertations appeared in the Dissertation Abstracts Index in January, February and March, 1982. All dissertations are dated 1981 unless otherwise indicated.

The entries are grouped under several broad categories for your convenience. Mention of a book here does not preclude its being reviewed in a future issue. Unsolicited reviews of publications of general interest to our readers are welcome. Recent works are preferred.

Copies of the dissertations are available from: Xerox University Microfilms, Dissertation Copies, P.O. Box 1764, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

ECONOMICS, HISTORY AND POLITICS

Anatomy of a Lynching: The Killing of Claude Neal, by James R. McGovern (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$17.95.

"The Appalachian Regional Commission: An Experiment in Creative Federalism," by Howard Haerberle. Duke Univ.

Black History and Achievement in Amer-

REVIEWS

ica: An Overview of the Black Struggle, Its Heroes and Heroines, by Karlton Stuart (Paradise Valley, AZ: Phoenix Books). \$24.95.

"The Black Struggle for Equality in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1947-1977," by Aingred Ghislayne Dunston. Duke Univ.

"Blacks in Reconstruction Texas, 1865-1877," by Jesse Dorsett. Texas Christian Univ.

"Colonial Virginia and the Atlantic Slave Trade," by Susan Alice Westbury. Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

"Control Mechanisms in South Carolina Slave Society, 1800-1865," by Norreece Thomas Jones, Jr. Northwestern Univ.

"A Critique of Waterway Benefit-Cost Analysis: The Tennessee-Tombigbee," by Joseph Louis Carroll. Indiana Univ. School of Business, 1962.

"The Development of Virginia's Republican Party," by George Leonard Vogt. Univ. of Virginia, 1978.

"The Family Labor System in the Southern Cotton Textile Industry, 1880-1915," by Cathy Louise McHugh. Stanford Univ.

"The Financial Structures and Banking Systems of the Antebellum South: 1811 to 1832," by Susan Fran Feiner. Univ. of Massachusetts.

"The Formative Years of Kentucky's Republican Party, 1864-1871," by Thomas Lewis Owen. Univ. of Kentucky.

"From Suburb to Defended Neighborhood: Change in Atlanta's Inman Park and Ansley Park, 1890-1980," by Richard Eric Beard. Emory Univ.

Good and Faithful Labor: From Slavery to Sharecropping in the Natchez District, 1860-1890, by Ronald L. Davis (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press). \$25.00.

"Good Roads for Texas: A History of the Texas Highway Department, 1917-1947," by John David Huddleston. Texas A&M Univ.

"Goods and Chattels: The Economy of Slaves on Sugar Plantations in Jamaica and Louisiana," by Roderick Alexander McDonald. Univ. of Kansas.

"Greater Richmond" and the 'Good City': Politics and Planning in a New South Metropolis, 1900-1976," by Christopher Silver. UNC-Chapel Hill.

"A History of Black Private Colleges in Texas, 1865-1954," by Michael Robert Heintze. Texas Tech Univ.

"The History of Louisville Municipal College: Events Leading to the Desegregation of the University of Louisville," by James Blaine Hudson, II. Univ. of Kentucky.

"Inter-Regional Migration Structures Within the Southeastern United States: 1955-1960 and 1965-1970," by James Frederick Fruman. UNC-Chapel Hill.

"Intra-Urban Travel Patterns of the North Nashville, Tennessee, Black Community - 1969 and 1975," by Philip Eugene Kithcart. Univ. of Cincinnati.

"Johnson's Crossing: An Institutional Analysis of A Rural Black Community," by William J. Simmons. Univ. of Florida.

Just Schools: The Idea of Racial Equality in American Education, by David Kirp (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press). \$19.95.

"Land Settlement in West Texas: Tom Green County, A Case Study, 1874-1903," by William Elton Green. Texas Tech Univ.

Legal Education in Virginia, 1779 to 1979, by William H. Bryson (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press). Price not set.

"Locational Change in Manufacturing: A Conceptual Model and Case Studies," by Sam Ock Park. Univ. of Georgia.

Lotus Among the Magnolias: The Mississippi Chinese, by Robert S. Quan (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi). \$15.00.

Miners, Millhands and Mountaineers: The Modernization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930, by Ronald Eller (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press). \$23.50.

"Old South or New? Georgia and the Constitution of 1877," by Ellen Barrier Garrison. Stanford Univ.

"Public Schooling and Social Change in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920," by William Allen Link. Univ. of Virginia.

"Regulation of Privately Owned Electric Utilities in Mississippi," by Betsy Jane Cleary. Univ. of Mississippi.

The Selling of the South: The Southern Crusade for Industrial Development, by James C. Cobb (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$16.95.

"Servants Into Planters, The Origin of an American Image: Land Acquisition and Status Mobility in Seventeenth-Century South Carolina," by Aaron Mark Shatzman. Stanford Univ.

"A Slaveholding Republic: Augusta's Hinterlands Before the Civil War," by John William Harris, Jr. Johns Hopkins Univ.

Southern Businessmen and Desegregation, ed. by Elizabeth Jacoway and David R. Colburn (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$27.50.

"The Southern-ness of Hoosierdom: The Nativity of Settlement Groups in Indiana by 1850," by Gregory Steven Rose. Michigan State Univ.

The Sunbelt-Snowbelt Controversy: The War Over Federal Funds, by Robert J. Dilger (New York: NYU Press). \$30.00.

"Textile Workers and Unionization: A Community Study," by Joseph A. McDonald. Univ. of Tennessee.

TVA and the Dispossessed: The Resettlement of the Population in the Norris Dam Area, by Michael J. McDonald and John Muldowney (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press). \$28.50.

BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Alabama Past Leaders, by Henry S. and Marsha K. Marks (Huntsville, AL: Strobe Pubs.). \$24.95.

Battleground: The Autobiography of Margaret Haley, ed. by Robert L. Reid (Champaign: Univ. of Illinois Press). \$22.95.

Black Leaders of the Twentieth Century, ed. by John Hope Franklin and August Meier (Champaign: Univ. of Illinois Press). \$19.95.

"The Carolina Chameleon: Charles N. Hunter and Race Relations in North Carolina, 1865-1931," by John Hamilton Haley, III. UNC-Chapel Hill.

"Earl K. Long: The Formative Years, 1895-1940," by James Paul Leslie, Jr. Univ. of Missouri-Columbia, 1974.

The Governors of Virginia, 1860-1978, ed. by Edward Younger and James T. Moore (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press). \$17.95.

"The Little Man's Big Friend": James E. Folsom in Alabama Politics, 1946-1958," by George Elwood Sims. Emory Univ.

"Look to the Past: Richard B. Russell and the Defense of Southern White Supremacy," by David Daniel Potenziani. Univ. of Georgia.

My Life in the Klan, by Jerry Thompson (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons). \$14.95.

"P.D. East: Southern Liberalism and the Civil Rights Movement, 1953-1971," by Gary Lynn Huey. Washington State Univ.

"The Political Career of John Brown Gordon, 1868 to 1897," by Grady Sylvester Culpepper. Emory Univ.

LITERATURE AND CULTURE

"Art and Life: The Novels of Black Women," by Sheila Ortego Schreiber. Univ. of New Mexico.

Eating, Drinking and Visiting in the South: An Informal History, by Joe G. Taylor (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$7.95.

"Emma Bell Miles: Appalachian Author, Artist and Interpreter of Folk Culture," by Grace Toney Edwards. Univ. of Virginia.

"Failed Manhood: Sexual Cowardice in Faulkner," by Henry Raymond Imbleau. SUNY-Binghamton, 1982.

Flannery O'Connor: The Imagination of Extremity, by Frederick Asals (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press). \$17.50.

"The Forest of the South: Caroline Gordon's Early Fiction," by Veronica A. Makowsky. Princeton Univ.

"A History of the Southern Literary Festival," by Emory Davis Jones. Univ. of Mississippi.

Memphis: A Folk History, by Linton Weeks (Little Rock, AR: Parkhurst). \$14.95.

"My Boys at LSU": Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren and the Baton Rouge Literary Community, 1934-1942," by Thomas William Cutrer. Univ. of Texas-Austin, 1980.

One South: An Ethnic Approach to Regional Culture, by John S. Reed (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$22.50.

"The Quest for Identity in Modern Southern Fiction: Faulkner, Wright, O'Connor, Warren," by Anthony Samuel Magistrale. Univ. of Pittsburgh.

"Redeemed Time: The Sacramental Vision and Implicit Covenant in the Major Fiction of Richard Wright," by William Joseph Barnette. Univ. of Tennessee.

"Southern Black Writers Look Into the South," by Mamie Marie Booth Foster. Florida State Univ.

"Symbolism in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor," by Sheila Renee Coghill. Ball State Univ.

"William Faulkner and the Adamic Myth," by Gary Smith. Stanford Univ.

"William Faulkner As A Moralist and Cultural Critic: A Comparison of His Views With Those of Historians and Social Scientists," by Jean Mullen Yorke. Univ. of Kansas.

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Toward the Prosperity of the People

by Evan Jones

After about 10 years of organizing among farmers and workers, the National Farmers Alliance and Co-operative Union of America and the National Agricultural Wheel consolidated themselves as the Farmers and Laborers Union and held their first annual meeting at St. Louis on December, 3-7, 1889. In a speech to the delegates, the president, Texas radical Evan Jones, described the causes and consequences of the crises then facing the ordinary people of America – crises that haven't changed much over the years. His speech is excerpted here from the proceedings.

This is certainly an auspicious occasion, it being the first meeting of our organization; an organization that to-day stands without a peer in its influence for good – not to the farmers and laborers only, but to every legitimate and necessary interest of a free and independent government. . . . An organization whose fundamental principles are founded upon equity and justice and whose cardinal doctrines inspire peace on earth, a love of liberty and good will to all mankind; an organization whose rise and progress is without a parallel and which is destined in no distant day to embrace the entire agriculture and laborers of the world, and whose power and influence shall protect their liberty and interest from the encroachment of rings, trusts and soulless combinations, which are absorbing all of the profits of labor, and thereby paralyzing the industries of our country. . . .

The most, if not every failure of all the various business efforts of our order, is due to a want of a proper understanding and a strict adherence to the business principles of co-operation. . . . I would recommend that you spare no effort in providing the necessary facilities for the better education of the membership in these great principles.

Finance. The monopolization of finance has been, and now is, the foundation from which all monopolies, rings, trusts and oppressive organizations draw their support, strength and power.

Money is shrinking and insufficient volume remits labor to idleness, reduces the price of products, plants mortgages on the homes of our people, bankrupts those who are forced to borrow, paralyzes our industries, and produces hard times and great privations among the masses. . . .

I would therefore recommend that you demand at the hands of the law-making functions of our nation a monetary system that shall conform to the interest of the producing and laboring classes.

Land. There is, perhaps, no question that demands more

serious attention at this time than the present condition of our land.

To-day we find in America millions of acres of her fertile lands, bought by the lives and efforts of our forefathers, which should have been held sacred for their posterity, squandered upon railroads and other corporations, and millions more are owned and controlled by domestic and foreign syndicates; while a large percent of our homes are hopelessly mortgaged, and about 50 percent of our sons are tenants.

This wholesale absorption of land by aggregated capital must be checked, or it will finally enslave the honest yeomanry of our country.

The hope of America depends upon the ownership of the land being vested in those who till the soil. . . .

Transportation. As a means of developing the many natural resources of our great and powerful nation and the distribution of our products for the use and comfort of our people, the railroads take the lead as a benefactor of the human family if properly used; but the avarice and greed manifested on the part of these great corporations have destroyed all competition, and [they have] become oppressors rather than servants of the people for which they were created. . . .

Politics. It is an evident fact that the origin and power to perpetuate the existence of the various rings, trusts and combines that now oppress our people and threaten the overthrow of our free institutions is due to unjust legislation, and the intimacy and influence that still exists between our representatives and these powerful corporations and combines are such as to give good reason for serious alarm.

We have reached a period in the history of our government when confidence in our political leaders and great political organizations is almost destroyed, and the estrangement between them and the people is becoming more manifest every day.

So long as our people neglect to inform themselves upon the great issues of the hour, and continue to follow blindly machine politicians to the neglect of their own interest, they will continue to lose their individuality, influence and power in our political institutions, and be wholly at the mercy of the soulless corporations that are now wielding such an influence over our Government.

The very existence of our free institutions and republican form of government, the very life and prosperity of the agricultural and laboring people depend largely if not wholly upon financial, land and transportation reformation. □

At Southern Exposure we listen to the voices of many people for guidance and inspiration. We want to recapture in Voices From the Past the indomitable spirit of those who have spoken for human dignity, for egalitarianism and for collective social action. We want to celebrate those ideals, for which many have lived and died. We invite you to listen, to join with these voices which harmonize with our own.

We welcome submissions from our readers for this feature. Send ideas to: Voices From the Past, Southern Exposure, P.O. Box 531, Durham, N.C. 27702.

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Monthly Review*

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2ND DECADE

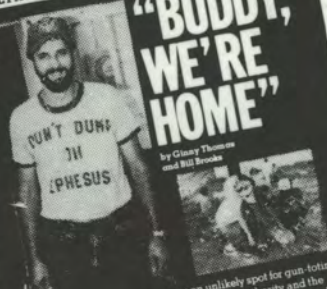
Southern Exposure

Cotton Dust Kills, And It's Killing Me
By Mimi Conway. Photographs by Earl Dotter

When a hand truck filled with yarn smashed Jesse Hawkins' rib last year, his employer, J.P. Stevens & Co., did not even send him to the doctor. The fifty-five-year-old black man had to go on his own. Hawkins' personal physician, Dr. R. L. Frazer, was also designated by J.P. Stevens to examine any of its Roanoke Rapids workers (part 1) *the a*

Raising Cane
by Carolyn Porter
Louisiana farmworkers are working together to break the shackles of a modern plantation system.

HALTING THE HEARD COUNTY LANDFILL



"BUDDY, WE'RE HOME"
by Ginny Thomas and Bill Brown

Heard County, Georgia, seems an unlikely spot for gun-toting concentrations between the forces of state authority and the general population. It's a rural county of about 18,000 people lying midway along the state's border with Alabama, far from any major traffic arteries. Most of its land is owned by private timber companies; there is little large-scale agriculture and no major industry.

Stayed On Freedom



We invite all of our subscribers, readers, supporters and friends to share in the creation of our Tenth Anniversary issue of *Southern Exposure*, to be released in May/June, 1983.

We'll publish lots of letters — reflective, critical, humorous — along with your essays, poetry, artwork and photography. Together we'll explore the South of yesterday, today and tomorrow. We'll look at the good and the bad, and we'll take a good hard look at ourselves and our work for progressive change.

Now's your chance to express your thoughts and feelings about *Southern Exposure*, about the region we call home,

in your own words and images.

Send your contribution to *Southern Exposure*
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THE CELEBRATION BEGINS

INSTITUTE SPECIAL REPORT:

THE THIRD OF NOVEMBER

On November 3, 1979, television cameras from four stations recorded in awesome detail the killing of five communist demonstrators by members of the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi Party. Six men charged with first-degree murder were tried by an all-white jury. Their acquittal one year later did not erase the videotapes which show them calmly unloading their weapons from a car trunk, running after victims and bring, in some cases, at point-blank range. Some people choose to believe the jury learned things about that day which the rest of us don't know some evidence that established the innocence of those charged. Others would like to forget the incident altogether.

ENDLESS WAR

SPECIAL REPORT: FOOD, FUEL, &

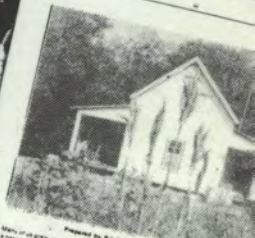


Photo by Bill Fagan. City Photo. Bill Chip Hughes

