

SCOPE in Virginia

SCLC moved into Virginia in the Spring of 1962 as part of a drive to recruit a “Freedom Corps” of volunteers for a “non-violent army.” In anticipation of money from the SRC’s VEP program, SCLC hired Herbert V. Coulton to be its state field secretary with voter registration as his primary task. In its 1961 Report on *Voting*, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission had found that there was no race discrimination in registration. But there was discouragement. Each county decided its hours and could limit them at will. If the registrars didn’t want to register more voters, they closed up early, or didn’t open when they said they would. Coulton had to persuade people to take off work to register, and then wait or come back as necessary. He trained a lot of volunteers, mostly teenagers, to help him do this. SCLC particularly wanted to focus on voter registration in the 4th Congressional District, comprised of Virginia’s southeastern counties, because its Representative was a leader in the Byrd Organization, a statewide political machine. Senator Harry F. Byrd was the prime author of the massive resistance strategy to thwart school desegregation. SCLC thought the heavily Negro population in the Southside counties should replace his minion in the House with one of their own. (*NYT* 3-31-62, 9; *WP* 9-26-63, E24; Coulton, 2010, 17-18, 26-27; 1:6 *SCLC Newsletter*, April 1962, 1; USCCR, *Voting*, 1961, 102; *BAA* 3-24-62, 7)

On March 27, 1962 Dr. King plus five staff members arrived in Petersburg, Virginia to begin a voter registration drive. For two days they spoke to crowds and knocked on doors. Petersburg was an independent city. Unlike most states, Virginia had some cities which were not part of counties. Wyatt Tee Walker, SCLC’s executive director since 1960, had come from Petersburg, where he had pastored the Gillfield Baptist Church. He was also head of the local branch of the NAACP, state director of CORE, and leader of the Petersburg Improvement Association. In 1959 he petitioned the city council to open up the public library to Negroes. Of course it said no, but slowly Rev. Walker and local activists wore it down. When the lunch-counter sit-ins began in 1960 and spread throughout the South, they were ready. (Cotton, 2012, 73, 75, 79-81)

Tuesday night SCLC speakers energized an audience of 2,500 in Lynchburg, 120 miles west of Petersburg. Wednesday morning Dr. King went to Prince Edward County, whose public schools had been closed since May 1, 1959 to avoid complying with court ordered desegregation. The students at the black high school had gone on strike in 1951 to protest the poor quality of their school. The school board became a defendant in one of the five cases in *Brown*. When Virginia withdrew state support from the public schools, the county refused to appropriate funds, effectively closing the schools. Dr. King wanted to give moral support to Negro parents and children who were no longer attending school. Later that day he spoke at Virginia State College (VSC), the state school for Negroes, and visited several more counties in Southside, as Virginia’s blackbelt was called. The evening of March 28, he spoke to 1,500 people at the First Baptist Church in Petersburg. (*WP* 3-29-62, D8; Coulton, 2010, 18, 104-6; Kluger, 1975, 478-507; *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, 1952, 1955; https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Moton_School_Strike_and_Prince_Edward_County_School_Closings#start_entry)

Dr. King told the Prince Edward children “When I come back I will see you sitting in integrated schools.” Those children weren’t in integrated schools for Dr. King’s next visit, but they did get some help. The Society of Friends and the Prince Edward Free School Association set up informal schools. In 1963 students from NYC’s Queens College came to their county to tutor them. Roughly 70 Queens students had set up the Jamaica Student Help Project in the Spring both to tutor local students and to prepare to go to Prince Edward County that summer. They raised funds in NYC, mostly with a show featuring Dick Gregory, and contacted local ministers in Virginia to find housing for roughly two dozen tutors. Indeed, by 1965 P.E. county was “overrun with volunteers” helping black students catch up. In 1964 the Supreme Court ordered that the public schools be opened and funded. (*NYAN* 6-15-62, 26; 6-8-63, 3; *NYT* 5-17-63, 17; 10-20-63, 85; <http://archives.qc.cuny.edu/civilrights/items/browse?tag=Student+Help+Project>; *Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, 1964; quote in Poole, 2018)

As elsewhere, the 1963 Birmingham demonstrations inspired activists to make demands on their local businesses and governments. In Virginia the biggest of these took place in Danville, an independent city across the North Carolina border. Its non-white population in 1960 was 24.8 percent of a total of 46,577 people. In 1963 about 1,450 Negroes were registered to vote, compared to 10,000 registered white voters. In 1960 Danville activists organized the Danville Christian Progressive Association (DCPA), an affiliate of the SCLC. It desegregated the city’s lunch counters in 1961. After Birmingham, its leaders drew up a list of demands for immediate desegregation on the city government, which were ignored. Protests began on May 31 and lasted through August, including marches, sit-ins, blocking traffic and boycotts. SCLC, SNCC and CORE all sent help. Nothing worked. Arrests were numerous. Police used fire hoses and clubs on demonstrators on June 10, injuring 47, but didn’t get the national publicity of Birmingham. By the end of August arrests, high bail, restrictive injunctions and ordinances attenuated the movement. However, they did stimulate voter registration. Coulton estimated that about 50 Negroes registered every day the office was open. (*WP* 6-11-63, A1; 6-16-63, A9; 6-21-63, 7; *Sun* 6-12-63, 9; *NYAN* 7-27-63, 6; https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Danville_Civil_Rights_Demonstrations_of_1963#start_entry

On June 20, 1965, SCOPE volunteers were greeted by Herbert Coulton, now the state director, at an informal reception in Petersburg. They would later be joined by a few more. An FBI agent counted 2 Negro females among 27 volunteers but mistakenly said they all came from California. (Memo of June 21, 1965, Richmond, FBI File # 157-2925) The AP stringer said there were 50. (*WP* 6-20-65, B3) In fact, the actual number of SCOPERS coming to Virginia was closer to 35 and only 40 percent came from California. They were dispersed to the counties of Amelia, Lunenburg, Prince George, Southampton, Surry and Sussex, all in Southside. They also worked in Hopewell, an independent city surrounded by Prince George County. (*WP* 6-22-65, C2)

SCOPE found other civil rights volunteers working in some of those counties. Volunteers with the Virginia Students Civil Rights Committee (VSCRC) were working in six counties: Amelia, Nottoway, Lunenburg, Brunswick, Dinwiddie and Powhatan. Composed mostly of Virginia college students, VSCRC came out of a Conference on the Upper South held at the

Hampton Institute on December 3-4 1964 that was organized by SNCC. While the VSCRC modeled itself on SNCC, it worked with the other civil rights organizations while keeping its independence from all of them. VSCRC decided to run its own summer project, focusing on the Fourth Congressional District for the same reason as SCLC. SNCC staff ran its June orientation, where they chose VSC student Duke Edwards to chair the project. The VSCRC set up their headquarters in the town of Blackstone, in Nottoway County. (Michel, 2004, 102-3; Hall, 2007)

VSC was the location for SCLC's state convention on July 2. That night Dr. King told a rally of 2,500 that the war in Viet Nam must end. He called on civil rights workers to hold teach-ins and peace rallies to end that war. Telling the crowd that "segregation is on its deathbed" he said the movement must now concentrate "on the economic plight of Negroes." (NYT 7-3-65, 6; quotes in *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 7-3-65)

Six SCOPERS from California's Fresno County went to Amelia County, about 40 miles SW of Richmond. Amelia County was an agricultural county with very little industry – just two saw mills and a paper plant. The 1960 Census counted 7,815 people living in Amelia County, of whom 51.3 percent were non-white. As of the fall of 1964, 46.2 percent of the non-white population was registered to vote, compared to 108 percent of the white population. (USCCR in *Hearings* 1965, 242, based on Oct. 1964 figures from the VA State Board of Elections) Two-thirds of those voted for President in November; of whom 60 percent choose Barry Goldwater over President Lyndon Johnson.

Cenhy Lee Yarbrough, 21, and Tim Kellogg were students at Fresno State College. Mary Ann Lumsden, 18, Patricia Wynne, 18 and Betty J. Johnson, 20, went to Fresno Community College. Joan Peterson, 24 was a Fresno teacher. They were met by Lester Randall, head of the Amelia County branch of the NAACP. Randall lived on a small farm out in the country which was tended by his wife and mother. He commuted to Richmond to work in construction. He found places for the SCOPERS to stay and gave them direction. As Randall was also the local contact for VSCRC, the SCOPERS found themselves often working with Richard Muller and Bruce Smith. Muller studied at the University of Virginia. Smith attended Lynchburg College, run by the Disciples of Christ, in Virginia. Influenced by his racially progressive Republican mother, he had founded the College's Young Republican Club as a way to oppose the Byrd Organization. (Smith, 2015; on Smith see Michel, 2004, 55)

Also working in Amelia that summer were volunteers from the Medical Committee for Human Rights. For several weeks physicians and volunteers canvassed to determine existing medical care and needs. There were only two elderly physicians and no dentists practicing in the county. MCHR invited people to come to a health fair in late July for physical examinations and health counseling. Denied the use of the public health building, they set up shop on the lawn of Zion Presbyterian Church. (WP 8-1-65, B3) Its pastor, Rev. Robert C. Craighead, had run in the Democratic primary for Delegate to the state's lower house in the 7th District. SCOPE was working to register voters in two of its three counties. VSCRC was working in all three.

There were a few minor incidents. At the house where the girls were living, a car repeatedly drove up, put on its lights, honked and then backed out. They called the sheriff, but by

the time he got there, the harassers were gone. After a series of such incidents, someone called the FBI. Resident Agent Carl Reasonover drove out from Richmond, but only to ask the workers when they were going to leave. Another time, a black/white pair tried to eat at a restaurant called the Rock Shop. As they sat there, the owner closed the store. When they still didn't leave, he called the cops. The police said that if the store was closed they had to leave or be arrested for trespassing. NAACP Inc. Fund lawyers later filed suit in federal court. (Smith, 2015, 38-42; *WP* 10-3-65, B5)

In Virginia the county courthouse was not always in the largest town or any town at all. They were often built in the middle of a rural county and a small village grew up around them. These weren't incorporated and not large enough to be a census district. However, because of their administrative importance, Census counted them separately as census-designated places. Thus when the movement brought people to the courthouse to demonstrate, or just to register, they could outnumber the people who lived there.

On Saturday, Aug. 14 between one and three hundred people rallied in front of the Amelia Courthouse to celebrate passage of the VRA. Herbert Coulton told them that one day a month was just not enough registration days. People could register the day of the rally, and 133 chose to do so. While the loud speaker beamed this message and others, whites hanging around the courthouse generally ignored it. Three young white men who said they were nazis passed out leaflets urging people to vote for Rockwell for Governor. The national headquarters of the American Nazi Party was in Arlington, VA. The police watched from a courthouse window. (*WP* 8-15-65, B4; "Freedom Rally in Virginia" in 1:2 *The New Virginian*, Sept. 1965, 2, http://www.crmvet.org/docs/va_newsletter_65.pdf)

Five SCOPERS were sent to Lunenburg County, south of Amelia. With a population of 12,522 that was 42 percent nonwhite, there was a lot of work to do in Lunenburg. Only 26.1 percent of NVAP was registered to vote, compared to 61.2 percent of WVAP in 1964. (USCCR in *Hearings* 1965, 248) Over 85 percent voted in November, 62 percent for Goldwater. The two largest towns were tiny. The 1960 Census counted only 1,737 people in Victoria and 1,188 in Kenbridge. The courthouse wasn't in either. It was on Route 49 four miles from Victoria.

The SCOPERS came from all over. Greg Kafoury went to school in Washington State. Al Compaan was from Michigan. Bill Monnie came from Pennsylvania via a Methodist college in West Virginia. Joan Connolly and Cathy Guertin came from different Boston schools. They occasionally worked with two VSCRC women from Virginia colleges: Nan Grogan and Betty Cummings. They had their own car, as did Bill Monnie. They hoped to get more cars so they could work the rurals. After a few days, homes were found for each of the SCOPERS in different parts of the county and an office was secured in Kenbridge. (Monnie SCOPE report in Monnie, 2014, 126)

They worked closely with Nathaniel Lee Hawthorne, 42, who had owned a radio-TV repair shop in Kenbridge after serving in WWII. He turned to full time race work when he became president of the Lunenburg NAACP in 1965. Although his wife worked full-time, by the time SCOPE arrived he was very short on money. Monnie wrote Atlanta to see if Hawthorne

could be paid \$25 a week subsistence for all the work he was doing, especially since the project was using his car. (*Evening Star*, 12-12-66, B2; Monnie, 2014, 126, 131; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 7-18-15) However, the other local leaders were not working with them. In his second report to Atlanta, Monnie wrote that “There is a tremendous amount of competition and maneuvering for power and leadership mostly among many of the ministers.” (Monnie SCOPE report in Monnie, 2014, 127)

The SCOPERS went to small meetings in different parts of the county, including those of 4-H clubs and farmers. They organized other meetings in churches, homes and the Masonic Lodge. They talked up registration and recruited youth to help them. They took 30 people to hear Dr. King speak on July 2 at the Virginia SCLC convention. Some of the groups met regularly to hear talks about local government. Farmers were interested in getting money from the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS). SCOPE asked the locals for contributions to the project and over time collected several hundred dollars to cover their expenses. (Monnie SCOPE report in Monnie, 2014, 128, 130-1, 136, 138, 152-5)

In Lunenburg, the registrar’s office was open on the first and third Thursdays, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. SCOPERS canvassed in preparation for a big registration day on July 15 only to be told at the last minute that the day had been shifted to the following Thursday. When that day came, the registrar didn’t stall or give the applicants a hard time. He registered 61 and only turned down one man who couldn’t sign his name. The next registration day was Aug. 12. Only 30 registered that day. However, on Saturday, Aug. 21 all their work finally paid off when 176 persons registered to vote. (Monnie SCOPE report in Monnie, 2014, 134, 155-6)

There were a few incidents, but they were minor compared to other Southern states. Greg Kafoury was put in jail for a traffic violation. When an integrated group of six tried to eat in a local restaurant the Negroes were served but not the white SCOPERS. They were often followed by young white men. There were verbal threats. Sometimes, one of them would phone the FBI about these incidents. Carl Reasonover, the resident agent in Richmond, drove down to take statements, but did nothing more. (Monnie SCOPE report in Monnie, 2014, 127-8, 132, 135-6; Smith, 2015, 42, 42)

The UCSB group left Santa Barbara expecting to go to Prince Edward County. In Atlanta Hosea told them that they were going to Prince George County instead. Herbert Coulton thought they were needed more in Sussex County, so that’s where they went. In 1960, 12,411 people lived in this southeastern county of whom 66.3 were non-white. In 1964 only 36.5 percent of NVAP was registered to vote, compared to 95.3 percent of WVAP. Over 71 percent voted in November, 55.4% for Goldwater. Herbert Coulton personally took the SCOPERS from Petersburg to Waverly, the largest town in Sussex County, with a 1960 population of 1,601. Lanny Kaufer and Peggy Poole stayed in Waverly, while the others went to stay with families in the villages of Stony Creek and Wakefield. They didn’t stay in the same homes, or even the same towns, the entire summer. (USCCR in *Hearings* 1965, 251; Poole, 2018; Kaufer, 2013)

The dominant figure in Sussex County was St. Sen. Garland Gray, a Byrd Organization loyalist. After *Brown* Sen. Gray called a meeting of Virginia political leaders to strategize on

how to defeat the Court's decision. What became known as the Gray Commission proposed repeal of the compulsory school attendance law, guidelines on pupil placement, and state tuition grants to students leaving desegregated schools to attend private segregated academies. Those proposals were deemed too moderate and rejected in favor of closing schools. Between his logging mill, his farms and his bank, Sen. Gray controlled a lot of jobs in Sussex County; many local Negroes were afraid to defy him. Indeed, many didn't want to even be seen in the company of the white SCOPERS. The ones who did help SCOPE generally had jobs outside the County and owned their own homes, making them relatively immune to financial retaliation. (*Richmond News Leader*, 9-13-54, 1; Poole, 2018)

That summer the registrar was only open between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. on the first Monday of the month – a time when the mostly agricultural workers were hard at work. In July the first Monday was July 5, the federal holiday for July 4, so the registration office did not open. Instead SCOPE organized a countywide mass meeting where the Sussex County Improvement Association was formed and elected local leaders. On July 26, it held a rally at the courthouse to demand more registration hours. By then the teenagers were enthusiastic at being part of the freedom movement. They brought their parents. The registrar said there was no need for more days because only 11 had registered in the past year. SCOPE responded to this rejection with a week of picketing and a Saturday rally of roughly 150 people. At the July 31 rally, Rev. Milton A. Reid read a telegram to President Johnson asking that he come to Sussex County to sign the Voting Rights Act, whose final language was being worked out in conference. On August 2, the regular registration day, 183 people registered to vote and another 300 paid their poll taxes. The registrar still ignored their request for more days. It took a call to the DoJ, and from the DoJ threatening to send federal examiners, to get more registration hours in Sussex County. (*WP* 7-27-65, C5; 8-1-65, A5; 8-3-65, C3; *NYT* 8-1-65, 66; 8-3-65, 16; Kaufer, 2013; Poole, 2018)

As was true elsewhere, attempts at integrating public facilities met angry opposition. While canvassing in Stony Creek, a few white SCOPERS and black teenagers tried to eat in a local restaurant. On seeing them, the proprietor closed the restaurant, and later put up a sign that said "Closed on Account of Niggers!" On another occasion Lanny Kaufer and Phil McKenna tried to use the laundromat in Waverly, which was informally known to be for whites only even though there were no signs specifying race. Lanny and Phil were white, but also known civil rights workers. While their clothes were washing the owner burst through the door cursing, pulled out their clothes, threw them on the floor, and poured disinfectant into the machines they had been using. He grabbed each of them by the collar, cocked his fist as though to throw a punch and screamed obscenities as spittle flew from his lips into their faces. On another occasion Gary Imsland and Elke Wiedenroth were driving at night when a car with white men pulled up beside them and stuck a gun out the window. The car then raced ahead and blocked the lane. Gary did a U-turn over the divider and flew down the other lane. When they later recognized the men in town, they filed a complaint with the police. An actual trial was held, but when Gary and Elke couldn't remember the make and model of the perpetrators' car, the charges were dismissed for lack of evidence. (*NYT* 7-23-65, 11; Kaufer, 2013; Kaufer 3-mail, 3-22-19; Poole, 2018; McKenna letter to parents, 8-10-65; <http://www.crmvet.org/lets/lmckenna.htm>)

The four SCOPERS who went to Southampton weren't from California. Michael Ross and

Don Arnold came from Michigan, Katherine Lass from Missouri, and Jennifer Sather from Oregon. They stayed with Negro families in Boykins, VA. Canvassing was a problem because most adults were working in the fields during the day. They were able to hold evening meetings in Negro churches to talk about the importance of voting and what government programs were available. Although it was difficult to get people to register during the working day, the registrars didn't give them a hard time. SCOPE also organized selective buying campaigns against four merchants who would not hire Negroes. When Hosea called for demonstrations to demand that the Voting Rights bill be passed, SCOPE held a rally, but didn't march. About 200 people came to hear Herbert Coulton and others talk about voting and boycotting – without using that forbidden word. SCOPE continued to organize rallies throughout the summer; the last one was on August 24. (Memos of 7-29-65, 8-4-65, 8-25-65, Norfolk, FBI File # 157-2925)

All but a couple SCOPERS left at the end of the summer. However, Herbert Coulton announced that more were coming to continue the voter registration drive. He said he had asked SCLC to send thirty workers. He only got a few. Charles Freese, who came to SCOPE from the University of Missouri, was already working in Hopewell, organizing store pickets to demand that more Negroes be hired. Boyd Faust was sent from Atlanta in late August. He had initially worked in Savannah, but was sent to Americus when it exploded. He spent two weeks in an Atlanta hospital recovering from injuries received there. Hosea put him to work in the mail room until he recovered. Then he was put on staff and sent to Virginia. Herbert Coulton sent Faust, Mimi Boling and Jimmy Wells to Greensville Co. They stayed a couple months then returned home. (*WP* 8-28-65, B3; Memo of 9-8-65, Richmond, FBI File # 157-2925; SCLC IV 168:15p432; Faust e-mails of 3-22-15 and 3-25-15)

Five of the VSCRC volunteers stayed. They shifted their main HQ from Blackstone to Victoria in Lunenburg Co., focusing their work on it and two other counties. Bill Monnie would return to Lunenburg in January to work with them for several more months. During the spring and early summer of 1965 several Negroes had filed to run for the Virginia General Assembly, which was elected in odd-numbered years. Two were on the November ballot, both running in Richmond in a multimember district. Clarence L. Towns, Jr. was running as a Republican and Dr. W. Ferguson Reid was one of the Democratic nominees. Reid was endorsed by the Democratic candidate for Governor, Lt. Governor Mills E. Godwin. Both lost. (*WP* 11-1-65, B2)

Godwin was the last Governor to be elected as part of the Byrd Organization. One benefit of the BO was that it suppressed the Klan. The two had fought for power in the 1920s and the BO won. During the summer of 1965 the KKK found new life. The United Klans of America (UKA), whose Imperial Wizard was Robert Shelton of Alabama, sent a paid organizer from North Carolina to Virginia. Marshall R. Kornegay set up headquarters in Mecklenburg Co. right on the N.C. border. During the fall he held rallies around Southside in order to recruit members. By the end of 1966, there were 32 klaverns in Virginia with approximately 1,250 members. (HUAC, 1967, 29, 37)

The Klan became active soon after SCOPE left. M. R. Kornegay named himself as the Grand Dragon of Virginia, even though he lived in Raleigh, N.C. He set up klaverns in several Southside counties, including two SCOPE counties and three VSCRC counties, while holding

rallies in cow pastures all over Southside. In Amelia County a Klan women's club formed in addition to the Klan men's club. The Lunenberg Klan was known as the Victoria Hunt Club – a common designation for klaverns. (HUAC, 1967, 162)

The Klan's first large rally was held on Sept. 4 in a field near Victoria. Press estimated that a thousand whites stood in the weeds to hear North Carolina Grand Dragon Robert Jones attack the NAACP and the civil rights movement in general, while claiming both favored Communism. Police said a few thousand more watched from cars. Half a dozen local Negroes and a few white civil rights workers observed from across the road. Four of the latter tried to enter the cow pasture, but were ejected by helmeted Klan security guards. VSCRC's David Nolan was met with punches and kicks. When David fell under the blows, another Klansman kicked him with heavy boots. Still another picked up Richard Muller and tossed him into the street. Gayle Ray of Prince Edward County was also kicked. Several law enforcement officers, including the local police, the county sheriff, the state police and the FBI, observed the melee without interfering. Nan Grogan yelled at the Klan to stop hitting her friends as they limped back across the street. Complaints later filed with the police were ignored. (*Danville Register*, 9-6-65, 1; *WP* 9-6-65, C1; *Sun* 9-6-65 3; Petersburg *Progress-Index* 9-6-65, 10; "KKK Rally in Victoria" in 1:2 *The New Virginian*, Sept. 1965, 1, at http://www.crmvet.org/docs/va_newsletter_65.pdf; Nolan e-mails of 7-29-18, 7-31-18, 8-15-18)

A few days later Lt. Governor Mills E. Godwin denounced the Klan as "repugnant." The Klan continued to hold rallies in heavily black counties, plus one near Richmond on Saturday, October 23 where they burned a 60 foot cross. By the end of 1966 the Klan had held around 175 rallies in Virginia. (*WP* 9-11-65, B2; 9-20-65, A3; 9-21-65, A4; 9-24-65, B8; 9-28-65, B4; 10-4-65, B6; 10-22-65, B3; 10-25-65, B5; *Sun* 9-6-65 3; 10-5-65, C7; *NYT* 12-11-66, 49)

SCOPE in North Carolina

The Province of Carolina was split in 1729, giving birth to two states which developed different economies and different cultures. South Carolina became a Deep South state, with entrenched white supremacy. Apostates were punished. North Carolina became a moderate Southern state, in which some dissent on race was allowed even if institutional practices were slow to change. The initial reaction to *Brown* was grudging acceptance rather than massive resistance. The state soon retreated to circumvention, as the legislature passed a Pupil Assignment Act in April of 1955 to keep blacks out of white schools without mentioning race. However, a few blacks entered previously all-white schools as early as 1957, in what could best be described as planned tokenism. (Chafe, 1980, 65-8) A few whites openly supported desegregation, which they could not have done in South Carolina without serious retribution. School desegregation and the response to it prepared the ground for major protests in the 1960s.

North Carolina made civil rights history on Monday, February 1, 1960 when four students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College walked into the local Woolworth's in Greensboro and sat down at the white-only lunch counter. Denied service, they refused to leave. The next day, more came with them. Within a week students were occupying lunch counters in other N.C. towns. As the numbers grew, press coverage inaugurated the sit-in movement. Within two months there were sit-ins in 54 cities in nine states. Six months later the Greensboro stores desegregated their lunch counters as the students' polite determination inspired others around the country. (Chafe, 1980, 90, 136)

These were not the first sit-ins. There had been at least 16 in the previous three years. CORE was running sit-ins in Miami in 1959. In Nashville, Rev. Jim Lawson was training students in non-violence in preparation for sit-ins. But something about Greensboro was different. Like Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus on December 1, 1955, Greensboro lit a match which flamed a surge of civil rights activity. CORE quickly moved in and started training the NC students in non-violence. SCLC also saw their potential. Rev. Shuttlesworth was preaching in North Carolina that week. He phoned Ella Baker in the SCLC office and she relayed the word to the SCLC Executive Committee that something big was happening. In April she brought students from all over the South to Shaw University in Raleigh, where they formed a committee to co-ordinate the sit-ins. SCLC gave the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee space in its office toward that goal. (Branch, 1988, 272, 291-2; Morris, 1984, 188-194; Garrow, 1988, 127; Meier and Rudwick, 1973, 91; Manis, 1999, 230; Ransby, 2003, 240-47)

North Carolina discourages blacks from registering to vote, but not as seriously as South Carolina. For example, the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled in 1961 that the Board of Registrars did not have complete discretion to impose a difficult literacy test because standards had to be consistent and reasonable. In 1960 there were three times as many whites as blacks in the state population. Blacks were a majority in only ten of the state's 100 counties, sometimes barely a majority. Most of these counties were in the northeastern portion of the state, right below Virginia's Southside counties, where plantations were common in the 19th Century. While

92.8 percent of state WVAP was registered in 1960, 38.2 percent of NVAP was registered. By 1964, this had increased to 96.8 percent of WVAP and 46.8 percent of NVAP. (*Bazemore*, 1961; USCCR, *Voting*, 1961, 347; House Judiciary Com., *Hearings* 1965, 195) Some of this increase was because SCLC used VEP money to hire Golden Frinks to be its field secretary in 1962. Frinks was already well known as an activist in eastern NC. After serving in the Army during WWII, he worked in Washington, D.C. where he joined in picketing stores that wouldn't serve blacks. He brought his experience home to Edenton, NC, joining the NAACP and working with its Youth Council to challenge segregation. He was successful in getting blacks into the public library and the local schools. Publicity about these and other protests brought him to SCLC's attention. It promoted him to state director early in 1963. Dr. King thought Frinks was the right man to organize a major voter registration drive. (Wells, 2009)

The government of North Carolina was paying attention to the demonstrations and the registration efforts. On January 18, 1963, Gov. Terry Sanford announced the creation of the North Carolina Good Neighbor Council "to encourage the employment of qualified people without regard to race," and "to encourage youth to become better trained and qualified for employment." Cities and counties were urged to form their own bi-racial councils, which many did under different names. While these were not universally embraced, their existence acknowledged the plight of North Carolina Negroes, which the Deep South governments preferred to rationalize or ignore. (Waynick, 1964, quote on 255)

Because North Carolina only opened the registration rolls for four Saturdays before an election, it was hard to talk up registration during the rest of the year. Williamston, the county seat of Martin County, had a city council election on April 15, 1963. A white candidate favored by the black community needed more votes. The registration effort before the election added 116 voters, of whom 103 were black. Simultaneously, SCLC's Birmingham project was hitting the headlines, leading to demonstrations all over the South. Williamston wanted to rumble. SCLC sent Frinks to help it along. (Carter, 1999, 9-10)

Demonstrations had already erupted in other NC cities – Greensboro, Raleigh, Durham, High Point, Lexington, Wilmington, Fayetteville. Most of these were college towns. In those with white colleges, some of the white students joined the demonstrations. The biggest protests were in Greensboro, led by the NCA&TSC student body president, Jesse Jackson. When he was arrested on June 6 on charges of inciting a riot, 800 marched to City Hall and then blocked the main intersection. Nearly 300 were taken to jail for obstructing traffic. In May and June alone about 3,000 were arrested. (*NYT* 5-24-63, 54, 6-7-63, 14; *WP* 6-7-63, A2; *Sun* 6-7-63, 6; *CD* 6-8-63, 9; *BAA* 8-24-63, 1; Chafe, 1980, 165, 200-01)

Williamston started a bit late, first hitting the streets on June 30. The precipitating event was an announcement the third week in June that the county would no longer distribute free food to 700 poor families. This made a lot of people angry. During that first march Frinks met Sarah Everett Small, 36, who played piano at many of the local churches around the county. She introduced him to their ministers and was soon leading the marches, even though she was pregnant with her fifth child. Small was a very spirited and spiritual woman. She became one of the few black women to be the public head of a local movement, as the elected chair of

Williamston's SCLC chapter. She was assisted by Mary Mobley, who was elected secretary. These two women provided direction, such as it was, for the Williamston Freedom Movement (WFM). Sometimes they were in agreement with Frinks on what to do, and sometimes they weren't. (Carter, 1999, 9, 17)

Roughly 150 to 200 people marched for 32 days, usually from the Greene Memorial Christian Church to town hall and back. The last marches were greeted by whites looking to beat up the protestors. Gov. Sanford sent his civil rights mediator to convince Mayor N.C. Green to form a bi-racial committee to discuss grievances. After a few meetings it was obvious that any concessions would be trivial. "White" and "Colored" signs were removed in public buildings, but the City Council passed an ordinance requiring a permit to parade. While permits were sometimes granted, arrests for parading without a permit soon followed. (Carter, 1999, 12-26; Smith, 2014, 43-47, list of Demands on p. 45)

Whites reacted at both extremes to the demonstrations in Williamston and other NC towns. On July 5, Gov. Sanford told a conference of 200 city mayors and leaders that "we must remove the indignities long suffered by Negroes." They formed a Mayor's Co-operating Committee to encourage local businesses and institutions to desegregate without resorting to law or coercion. In 1964 the Committee published a book describing the efforts and "adjustments" of different cities. (*NYT* 7-6-63, 5; Waynick, 1964) The Klan employed a different strategy. On July 29 it brought 250 white robed figures to hoist a 94 foot burning cross in a pasture outside Williamston. In 1963 the North Carolina Klan was pretty fractured, but that changed in 1964 when the United Klans of America chose a new grand dragon who began a recruiting drive. In North Carolina as elsewhere, civil rights actions boosted Klan activity. In January of 1965 three KKK members bombed cars at a civil rights rally in New Bern. In 1967, HUAC counted 7,500 KKKers operating in 192 klaverns; there were more active Klan members in North Carolina than any other state. Collecting money at public rallies brought in about \$40,000 in 1965. (HUAC *Report*, 1967, 27, 37, 43, list at 155-59; Carter, 1999, 29; *NYT* 1-30-65, 10)

Violence erupted in Williamston on August 29. When school opened on August 30, students at E.J. Hayes High School tried to march again, but were struck with cattle prods. They responded by throwing bottles and boycotting classes for two weeks. Hayes, built in 1929 as one of the last Rosenwald schools, was the primary black high school in Martin County and thus the meeting ground for the county's youth leaders. (*Sun* 8-30-63, 4; *ADW* 9-11-63, 3; *N.C. v. Leary*, 1965) Retaliation followed. The names of those arrested for demonstrating were published in the local newspaper. Those named, and others associated with the Williamston Freedom Movement (WFM) lost jobs, were evicted from rentals, and were charged with petty crimes. Frinks was convicted of passing a bad check and put on a road gang for three months. (Carter, 1999, 27-29, 35)

In the fall, as the WFM was running out of steam, a white Massachusetts minister wrote Dr. King that a group of white clergy wanted to get involved. The Rev. Paul Chapman had gone to the March on Washington in August and the SCLC national convention in Richmond, Virginia in September. He wanted to do more. Rev. C.T. Vivian phoned and told him to go to Williamston. Rev. Chapman drove from Boston in October to meet with Sarah Small and Golden

Frinks. Convinced that they were welcome and could do some good, he returned in November with 14 more white clergy. On November 14, they walked with about 80 locals down the sidewalk in pairs. Led by two ministers bearing crosses, the other white men held hands with black women as they walked. That interracial contact really infuriated local whites. The police arrested them all. Since jails were segregated by race and sex, the white men were placed into a cell by themselves. They promptly went on a hunger strike in protest. Slowly they were released after posting \$500 bonds. When President Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, most of them returned home. Demonstrations stopped. The boycott continued. (Chapman 2008 interview in Smith, 2014, 126-131; Carter, 1980, 30; *NYT* 11-15-63, 22; *BAA* 11-30-63, 20)

On March 24, 1964, about 40 Massachusetts whites arrived in Williamston, including some families. During Easter week, they fasted and preyed in front of two of the town's white churches. Most of them were arrested and charged with picketing, parading or trespassing. Klansmen damaged every car in town with a Massachusetts license plate. Northern reporters looking for stories were assaulted. In May, five white women drove from Martha's Vineyard to bring food supplies to Williamston. They had heard from the ministers that the county was no longer providing free surplus food to poor people. They stayed long enough to be arrested for picketing the local Sears store with two local black women. Two months later, after the 1964 Civil Rights Law prohibited segregated public accommodations, testing began. White harassment escalated. (Carter, 1980, 36-7; Chapman 2008 interview in Smith, 2014, 126-134; Smith, 2014, 83-89)

SCOPE only went to two counties in North Carolina. Martin and Bertie Counties were in the NE part of the state right next to each other. Almost exactly half of Martin County's 27,139 population in 1960 were non-white. Since many of these were children, the NVAP was only 41 percent of the total voting age population. Almost all of the WVAP were registered to vote. Only 22 percent of NVAP were registered to vote. In adjacent Bertie County 59.4 percent of the 1960 population of 24,350 were nonwhite. Only 11.4 percent of NVAP were registered to vote, compared to 101.4 percent of WVAP. (USCCR, *Voting*, 1961, 347)

Martin was a movement county; Bertie not so much. It was largely untouched by the movement until early in 1964. A group from SCEF started work in the NE counties focusing on Halifax County. On March 6, 1965 they held a Civil Rights and Anti-Poverty Conference in a rural church in Bertie County. Ella Baker was the keynote speaker. Impressed, the local ministerial alliance asked them to help organize sharecroppers in Bertie to demand that the county accept surplus federal commodities and food stamps for poor people. When that succeeded, Bertie blacks looked favorably on civil rights organizers. (*SP* June '64, 1; Salter, 2011)

This was the environment into which SCOPE arrived on June 20, 1965. The 12 boys and two girls who went to Martin County came from four central Massachusetts colleges who were part of the Four-College Christian Association. They were recruited by Prof. Lewis S. Mudge, Jr., a minister and professor at Amherst College. One of the hundreds who received letters from Dr. King about SCOPE during the winter, he had been in Williamston in 1964 and had marched in Selma in 1965. Ken Hardy, 19, just finishing his sophomore year at U. Mass. Amherst,

became the project director, but Sarah Small provided direction. Among those who joined the group was Hugh Hawkins, 35, a history professor at Amherst College. He drove down in his VW bug with David Walsh, 21, a U. Mass. student with some previous Southern civil rights experience. For a while, that was the only project car. It was branded by locals as the "Freedommobile." The Williamston police trailed Hawkins' car. He parked it on a different block every night so they wouldn't know where he was staying. (Hawkins e-mail of 7-25-15; Kucinski e-mail of 9-4-15; Hawkins Papers, 5:23p10, 5:25 p1)

The five boys and five girls who went to Bertie County all went to school in North Carolina. Nine came from Johnson C. Smith College in Charlotte, and one from Winston-Salem College. Both were HBCUs. This was SCOPE's only all black chapter. Occasionally some SCOPERS from each county worked with those in the other. (Long ltr to parents, 7-4-65; Nassberg ltr to Hawkins, 7-21-65 in Hawkins papers 5:22p40)

Like most SCOPE groups they did a lot of canvassing. The fact that the registration office was closed all summer due to no near-term elections made it impossible to actually bring people to be registered. Martin Co. SCOPERS asked those who were literate but unregistered to sign a petition to open up registration, but ran into the usual fear of signing anything. With only a hundred signatures, the election board held a hearing but denied the petition. Since they couldn't pursue SCOPE's primary objective, they concentrated on organizing mass meetings and running political education classes. SCOPE organized seven weekly classes in five towns on such topics as the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, anti-poverty programs and how to use the vote to secure power. These were heavily attended by women and young people. One class on the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) was given for farmers. On August 7 SCOPE sponsored a farmer's conference in conjunction with Floyd McKissick, an attorney in Durham who was the national chairman of CORE. Speakers were invited from different departments of the federal government. (Hawkins Papers, 5:23p14, SCOPE director's report, *Ibid.* p.19-22; *Massachusetts Summer Collegian* 7-15-65, 2; Long ltr to parents 6-25-65)

Even though a couple SCOPERS didn't arrive until July, Martin Co. SCOPE had too many people and too few cars. Most of the guys lived in Sarah Small's house, where they were seriously overcrowded. The two girls stayed at the home of Mary Mobley. They shared a double bed in a bedroom where two female members of this multi-generational household also shared a double bed. SCOPE ate at Mrs. Small's, where the SCOPE girls had the job of cooking for and cleaning up after all the boys. One of them, Sheila Long, started delegating the household chores to some of the boys so she would have more time for canvassing. On July 3, Sarah Small purchased a 1959 Ford station wagon with \$300 in Massachusetts money in order to carry more people to canvass in the rurals. There weren't enough local people with cars to take them out there. After Hugh Hawkins and his partner left on July 18 that Ford was the only project car. By August 1, SCOPE was down to seven workers. (Long ltrs to parents, 6-20-65, 6-22-65, 6-27-65, 7-7-65; Hawkins papers, 5:23 p50)

There were plenty of incidents, but they were small ones. After only a week in town, Hugh Hawkins' VW was cut off by a car full of yelling whites who tossed beer cans at his car. He filed a complaint at the police station the next day. Ken Hardy tried to file a complaint

against a young white boy who had hit him in the street on June 24. On July 1, he and two other SCOPERS were attacked by two white teenagers while walking back from a grocery store. The two boys were struck on their backs. When the three turned around and simply stared, the two teenagers yelled that they were “nigger-loving SOB’s.” Once they realized the SCOPERS weren’t going to respond physically, they left. All such complaints to the police mysteriously disappeared. Louis Pellissier told the student newspaper that “We have averaged about an incident a day since we’ve been here.” (*Massachusetts Summer Collegian* 7-6-65, 3; Long ltr to parents, 7-4-65) The Negro SCOPERS in Bertie had less harassment because they weren’t so visible. A white farmer seeing one of them talking to one of his tenants wouldn’t necessarily know they were talking about voter registration, though he probably would know they were outsiders. (*Massachusetts Summer Collegian* 8-12-65, 3)

Mike Farley drove up from Wilcox County AL, where it had become too dangerous for him to work. He had barely recovered from the beating he had received in jail in late June. On July 30 he took Joseph Ruggiero to Plymouth, the county seat of Washington County. There they got 20 kids to canvass potential voters asking for more registration days. Amazingly, they got 500 signatures on their petition in three days. This had been a quiet county, so there was less fear. Once their petition was refused by the county registrar, the kids started testing eateries. When they were refused service, Ruggiero sent complaints to the FBI. After a mass meeting to decide what to do next, the kids picketed the courthouse, some bringing their parents. In three days the number of pickets went from 25 to 275. On Saturday the courthouse closed. (Gitin, 2014, 113-4; https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6507_scope_rpts.pdf; Hawkins papers, 5:23p15-18; Ruggiero, 1965)

In August marches resumed. Frinks led 25 Negroes on a 5 mile march in Bertie County to protest segregated education. More picketed in Plymouth for two weeks. Subsequent events moved very quickly. The Klan staged a rally outside of town. Negroes and civil rights workers were attacked downtown. The city council immediately banned night marches and required a parade permit with 24 hour notice for those held during the day. Mike Farley was arrested for leading a group of school children without a permit. At the urging of Gov. Dan Moore’s race relations expert the town formed a biracial committee. On hearing that SCLC planned more marches and that the Klan was moving in Gov. Moore sent a hundred highway patrol to keep order. They blocked the roads into town, searched cars and arrested 12 whites and two blacks for “going heavily armed.” Whites and blacks traded pistol shots and stabbings, with several injuries. In a county that had 8,000 whites and 8,500 Negroes, 250 Negro children began classes at formerly white schools. Gov. Moore met with Robert Jones, the head of the NC Klan, who promised him that Klansmen other than residents would stay out of Plymouth. The Governor also named a confirmed segregationist to the NC Supreme Court. Frinks suspended planned marches when the bi-racial committee reached agreement on three of SCLC’s ten demands. These did not include more registration days, which was at the top of SCLC’s list. State law only required that the books be open a month before an election. The best Gov. Moore would offer was more days *in* October, not more *before* October. (FBI-LBJ 8-11-65; *NYT* 9-2-65, 20; 9-3-65, 33; quote in 9-5-65, 36; *Sun* 9-2-65, 6; 9-4-65, 5; 9-7-5, 8; *WP* 9-3-65, A8)

At the end of the summer the SCOPERS went home, at least temporarily. Two returned to

Martin County when the registration books opened on October 12. Sheila Long accepted an offer from Floyd McKissick to stay and work with CORE during the fall. She was finished with school and wanted to continue working in the South. She went to the SCLC convention hoping to be put on staff, but that opportunity didn't materialize. When McKissick asked for volunteers, she said yes. After a brief visit home, she went to his home in Durham where she lived as part of his family and worked with his daughter Jocelyn until Christmas. (Long ltr to parents, 8-14-65; Long e-mails of 2-5-15) In October, Hugh Hawkins wrote a two-page letter to Dr. King about the Martin Co. SCOPE project. He wrote that while concrete accomplishments were few, "I believe we helped morale.... we helped people revive a sense of what they had sought and suffered for." (Hawkins ltr of 10-26-65 in Hawkins papers 5:22p68-9)

On November 7 the Member of Congress whose district contained Martin County died. A special election was declared for December 18. Sarah Small filed to run for the seat, against five white men. The favorite was a veteran state legislator who had run before. The newspapers said she was the first Negro to run for Congress in North Carolina since 1901. McKissick and Frinks managed her campaign. They hoped to force a run-off, in which Negro votes might be decisive since 20 percent of the voters in the 15 county district were black. With a little over six thousand votes, Small came in second, but there was no run-off. In Bertie County she was only 25 votes behind the winner. (*NYT* 2-5-65, 171; 12-12-65, 85; 12-19-65, 45; 12-20-65, 26; *CD* 12-13-65, 18; *WP* 12-18-65, A2; *BAA* 12-18-65, 15; 1-1-66, 18; *Sun* 12-19-65, 5; 12-20-65, A5)

The WFM continued sporadically, but didn't leave any permanent organizations. The Free Bertie County Movement was still courting arrests late in 1966. The young people who formed the troops continued to leave the state in order to find work and opportunity elsewhere. By the end of the decade even Sarah Small relocated to Boston to run a community service center. (Public memo from Golden Frinks, 11-30-66 in Hawkins papers 5:22p15; Carter, 1980, 40) Golden Frinks stayed in North Carolina until his death in 2004, a consummate activist until the end. Floyd McKissick became a North Carolina state judge in 1990. His son, FM Jr. became a member of the North Carolina Senate in 2007.

SCOPE in Florida

More than the other Southern states, Florida had a split personality. Attitudes in the northern panhandle were similar to the Deep South states which bordered it – Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. Those in the Southern peninsula were more diverse, as it was full of retirees from the North along with Caribbean immigrants and their descendants. Consequently more Members of Congress and statewide elected officials could hold moderate views on race than in the Deep South states. That was not true of the legislature, which was dominated by rural interests like other Southern states. Even in the panhandle some whites – especially students at white colleges – could support Negro challenges to segregation without being economically ruined or physically threatened as they would be in the states just to their north. Nonetheless, in 1960 only 39 percent of NVAP were registered to vote, compared to 70 percent of WVAP. (USCCR, *Voting*, 1961, 262-3) Two counties had no Negroes registered to vote.

The civil rights movement started in Tallahassee, the state capital and home of both black and white public universities, with a bus boycott in 1956. Like the one then going on in Montgomery it started almost accidentally. Three students from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) were asked to change seats in a public bus and refused. Unlike Montgomery there was no readily available back-up organization; it had to be invented from scratch. The boycott ended after the US Supreme Court ruled that the Montgomery segregation statute was unconstitutional but the conflict continued. Jeering whites effectively kept Negroes from riding in the front seats. The City ordered the bus company to continue to enforce its segregation ordinance. When it failed to do so, police arrested the company manager and nine drivers, while the City canceled its franchise. Over many months charges were made and dropped, lawsuits were initiated and withdrawn, testers were arrested, convicted and released and many declarations were made. Unlike Montgomery, there was no clear victory. The Tallahassee segregation ordinance was never found unconstitutional or repealed, but it was slowly ignored. The bus company kept its franchise, but not its previous profitability. The movement paused, while it was investigated by the Florida Legislative Investigation Commission (FLIC). (Rabby, 2009, 9-64; *WP* 12-26-56.B8; 12-28-56, A13)

Like other Southern state governments Florida attacked the NAACP, but it did so through investigations rather than legislation. When FLIC, aka the Johns Committee, was formed by the legislature in 1956 the press dubbed it the “NAACP Investigation Committee.” Two of the students who started the bus boycott were subpoenaed and asked if the NAACP or another Communist organization had encouraged them to sit in white seats. Rev. C. K. Steele, who was president of the NAACP branch as well as a leader of the bus boycott, was repeatedly questioned about the NAACP despite his denials that it was behind the boycott. Over the next few years the Committee went after FAMU faculty and administrators and every civil rights organization that worked in Florida until it folded in the middle of 1965 – just as SCOPE arrived. (*NYT* 8-22-56, 27; *CD* 2-27-57, 1; *BAA* 6-16-56, 20; 2-16-57, 1; 6-8-57, 3; *ADW* 2-26-57, 1; Rabby, 1999, 34-5)

In 1959 CORE sent James McCain to organize chapters in Florida. He succeeded in Miami, which promptly held an unsuccessful sit-in. A few months later CORE hosted an interracial workshop in non-violence. Two of the participants were FAMU students Patricia and Priscilla Stephens, 20 and 22 respectively. As part of their training they tested a lunch counter. That fall they canvassed the dorms, explaining CORE and its philosophy of non-violent direct

action. They also reached out to Rev. Steele and other activists from the 1956 bus boycott. (Due, 2003, 39, 42-6) By the time the Greensboro NC sit-ins started, there was a core of committed activists ready to be arrested for challenging segregation, including several white students from Florida State University (FSU).

In February the students held sympathy sit-ins which resulted in arrests. In March they were teargassed as they tried to walk from FAMU to downtown. (Due, 2003, 47-54) On March 20, 1960, while those arrested were still in jail, Gov. Leroy Collins, addressed the state. He said that while business owners had a legal right to serve whomever they wished, he thought it was “unfair and morally wrong to ... say he does not want ... Negroes to patronize that one department.” He said he would appoint a biracial advisory committee on race relations. His speech was both praised and condemned. Florida voters were less ambivalent. In the May Democratic primary the most segregationist candidate for governor won the run-off, which was tantamount to election. Gov. Collins had endorsed his opponent. (Rabby1999, 84-108; quote in *WP* 3-20-60, A2; 6-26-60, A24; *NYT* 3-27-60, E8; 5-26-60, 1)

Sit-ins continued in Tallahassee and spread to towns in neighboring counties. While the sit-ins were non-violent, not all of the responses were. Eight Negro students leaving a St. Augustine sit-in were chased by white men with fists flying. In Jacksonville, Florida’s largest city, sit-ins by the NAACP Youth Council prompted five dozen white men to march downtown on August 27 wielding ax handles and baseball bats. They attacked Negro men at random, in a scene reminiscent of the Red Summer of 1919. Soon blacks and whites were fighting each other in the streets. Police arrested 48 Negroes and 14 whites. (*Sun* 3-18-60, 7; 8-28-60, 3; USCCR, *Justice*, 1961, 37-39; *WP* 8-28-60, A6; *CD* 8-30-60, 3)

Demonstrations waxed and waned. In 1963 several hundred FAMU students went to jail when they tried to integrate two movie theaters. FSU students picketed four restaurants which refused to serve the nine black students who had been admitted in 1962. The FSU administration threatened to discipline them if they continued picketing. (Rabby, 1999, 144-7, 152, 155-6; Due, 2003, 167-72; *NYT* 9-16-63, 67; *NYAN*, 11-9-63, 50) Even when there were no laws requiring segregation, the general assumption was that business owners had a right to serve, and sit, their customers as they wished. Customers did not have a right to equal access or equal treatment. This changed when the 1964 Civil Rights Act became law on July 2, at least for those businesses engaged in interstate commerce. As was true elsewhere, civil rights activists, especially students, tested businesses that served the public. (Rabby, 164)

While this law was still being debated in Congress, SCLC started a major project in St. Augustine, a small city just south of Jacksonville. Founded in 1565, it attracted tourists as the oldest European settlement on the continent. Known as the “Ancient City,” its 1960 population was 14,734 in a county of 30,034 that was only 20 percent non-white. In 1963 Dr. Robert Hayling started an NAACP Youth Council and led it in demonstrations, including wade-ins at the segregated swimming pools. A Tallahassee native, he had become involved in civil rights in 1960 when he was studying dentistry in Nashville. The NAACP thought he was too militant and removed him. In March 1964 he and others went to an SCLC conference in Orlando where they were encouraged by C.T. Vivian to form an SCLC affiliate. SCLC sent Hosea Williams in to revive the demonstrations while C.T. Vivian phoned his contacts in Massachusetts to ask them to come to Florida. Among them were Mrs. Mary Peabody 72, wife of an Episcopal Bishop and mother of the Massachusetts Governor. Her presence insured national publicity for the

demonstrations, as did visits by Jackie Robinson and the arrest of 15 Northern rabbis. Marches, sit-ins and wade-ins continued during the spring and summer, with many arrests, including Dr. King and other SCLC staff, but the city refused to even constitute a bi-racial committee. (Garrow, 1986, 316-18, 323-34; <http://www.crmvet.org/info/staugtim.pdf>; see also FLIC, 1965.)

The Klan saw this as a great opportunity. Florida did not have a single dominant Klan with a single Grand Dragon. The biggest cluster of self-identified klaverns was in Jacksonville, just south of Georgia. (HUAC, 1967, 146, 148, 150) In St. Augustine the reigning group was the Ancient City Hunting Club, headed by Halsted Manucy, known as "Hoss." He claimed his group was not a klavern because he was Catholic, as were many of the ACHC's members. The KKK did not admit Catholics. Many thought it was a klavern (specifically klavern 519 of the United Florida KKK). (Manucy interview, 1976, 19) It certainly acted like one. His members attacked civil rights demonstrators, bombed homes and damaged businesses which tried to serve Negroes after the 1964 Civil Rights Act made refusal illegal. It was the federal court which finally brought a halt to the harassment, in lawsuits handled by the Lawyers Constitutional Defense Committee (LCDC) of New York. On August 5, federal district judge Bryan Simpson ordered businesses to serve Negroes, and told Manucy and his cohorts to cease their intimidation or go to jail. A week later, with the feds present as observers, Negroes were served at several restaurants. Signs on the wall said all money spent by integrationists would be donated to Barry Goldwater's presidential campaign. (*Sun* 8-6-64, 2; *NYT* 6-21-64, 28; 7-29-64, 40; 8-12-64, 22; Temple, 2003; *Plummer v. Brock*, *Williams v. Connell*, *Bolden v. Allen*, 1964; *Lance v. Plummer*, 1965)

SCLC left town, but CORE became more active. After Pat Stephens (now married to John Due) was suspended from FAMU in the fall of 1963 for her arrests and general civil rights leadership, CORE, flush with VEP money, hired her to run a voter registration project in several north Florida counties. Due brought in Judy Benninger, a white activist from the University of Florida at Gainesville with whom she had worked previously, to be the other paid staffer. (Due, 2003, 202-3, 216-19) They focused on two counties, Leon (Tallahassee) and Gadsden, where Due was born and her family was well known. In Leon 73.6 percent of a WVAP of 28,241 were registered to vote in May of 1964, compared to 51.4 percent of a NVAP of 12,322. In Gadsden the percent registered was 68.4 of a WVAP population 11,711 and 11.6 percent of an NVAP of 12,261. Gadsden was one of only two Florida counties where blacks were a majority. (USCCR in *Hearings* 1965, 154, 156, based on official state figures as of May 1964)

When more funds became available in June of 1964 the project was expanded to the northern counties in the 9th Congressional District. Headquarters was in Quincy, the Gadsden county seat. (Meier and Rudwick, 1973, 261; Rabby, 1999, 166, 173; http://www.crmvet.org/lets/6405_core_fl_summer.pdf) Under the direction of Due and Benninger, volunteers from FAMU, FSU and local teenagers canvassed and spoke all over. There was only one registration day a week, but the lines were long on that day. The price of registering was often loss of a job. All the outside workers were arrested at some point on fabricated charges. Crosses were burned and threats were made. By the time the registration books closed on October 3, black registration had increased significantly in the counties where they worked. A CORE report said that in Gadsden, Negro registration went from 400 to 4,447. Nonetheless, Goldwater won in Gadsden and most north Florida counties, while barely losing the state to LBJ. (Rabby, 1999, 174-77; http://www.crmvet.org/docs/6505_core_summerprojs.pdf)

The project continued into 1965 with Spiver Gordon in charge. Since Gadsden was CORE

territory, it's not at all clear why SCOPE sent a group there. On the one hand, the 7-person chapter from Wittenberg College in Springfield, OH had worked with CORE at home. On the other, SCLC's main contact in Gadsden County was Rev. James T. Crutcher, who did not have a good relationship with CORE. The Wittenberg students found their experience "unpleasant" and did not last the summer. (Quote in Kinnison, 2011, 178)

One of the young men who worked with CORE in the summer of 1964, was David Dukes of Madison County. Madison County, whose county seat was also called Madison, was in the middle of the panhandle right below Georgia and resembled that state in many ways. In 1960 non-whites were 47.5 percent of a county population of 14,154, and 41 percent of the voting age population of 7,447. But, in May of 1964 they were only 25.7 percent of registered voters. Official figures showed that over 100 percent of WVAP were registered compared to 52.2 percent of NVAP. (reported in USCCR, *Hearings* 1965, 156)

Madison was virgin territory for CORE. Dukes was a high school student who had decided to conduct a personal sit-in in a Madison drugstore on August 6, 1963. He was arrested but got enough attention to form an NAACP Youth Council, which he headed. It repeatedly engaged in actions that older folk were afraid to do. When senior NAACP leaders thought it had become too confrontational, the youth changed their organization into the Madison County Student Movement (MCSM). Dukes worked with CORE, but was quite willing to accept seven SCOPERS in the summer of 1965. Six came from Kansas and one from California. Later that summer they were joined by two CORE volunteers from California and New York. (Dukes, 1978, 12-22, 33, 65)

SCOPERS Claudine Boldridge, Michael Edwards, Savannah Jones and Pat Lewis came from Kansas State Teachers College in Emporia, KS. Joe Keesecker, a student at the College of Emporia, had worked in Mississippi in 1964. They met in a religious study group which included civil rights as a discussion topic. This expanded into actions such as organizing a sympathy march during Selma. They were joined by John Hetlinger, 17, who had just graduated from high school and wanted to do something idealistic before going to college. They raised money to purchase a 1954 Ford, dubbed the Scopemobile, which three of them drove to Atlanta. After orientation they drove to Madison, where they were greeted by David Dukes, and met another SCOPER, Bill Bigelow, who was a student at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA. In addition to Dukes, three of the SCOPERS were Negro, making them one of the few integrated SCOPE groups. They all lived together in a three bedroom house on Moore St, known as the Madison Freedom House. Initially a few of them lived with a local black teacher, but after she was harassed by the police, they all moved into the Moore St. house. (Keesecker, 2015, 1; Hetlinger, 2015, 1; Dukes, 1978, 65-66)

Initially they focused on registration and turning out the vote for a black businessman who was running for city commissioner in July. They spoke in churches and knocked on doors, urging people to register and to vote. Joe Keesecker and John Hetinger "would go to pool halls at night, shoot pool and engage people in conversation about voting and the issues in the community, all while enjoying the sounds of the Motown music being played everywhere." One of the women they took to register was 104 years old. She had never voted. (Keesecker, 2015, 2; Hetlinger, 2015, 3)

While voter registration was SCOPE's focus, it wasn't always that of Dukes or the

MCSM. The latter had voted in May “to declare an all out war on All Discriminatory Signs, All Segregated Entrances, All Segregated Waiting Rooms and All Segregated Public Recreational Facilities.” After they began picketing the stores, most of the signs were removed, but not all. Many young people were arrested when they picketed a theater urging that blacks boycott all shows as long as they had to sit in the balcony. After SCOPE arrived, blacks and whites would go to the theater together, both sitting in the balcony and downstairs, violating the rules of separation. (Dukes, 1978, quote on 59, 63-65; Keesecker, 2015, 2)

One day when they were integrating the theater, Bill Bigelow was driving the Scopemobile outside while observing. When he stopped at a stop-sign, a group of young white men opened the car door, dragged him out, beat and kicked him and left him lying in the street. Black folk who witnessed the beating took him to the hospital while others went into the theater to tell the protestors what had happened. They all went to the hospital. Bill wasn't seriously injured, but he was sore for days. While at the hospital they “learned that a daughter of one of the sheriff's deputies was in the hospital and needing a blood transfusion.” Black and white together, they lined up to be blood-typed so the right ones could donate blood. “One of us overheard someone ask the father if he would accept blood from one of these ‘niggers’ or ‘nigger lovers’ for his daughter. He responded that he believed blood is red and if it matched, it would be great.” (Keesecker, 2015, 2)

There were other incidents. Pick-up trucks sometimes tried to run them off the road. One evening Dukes, Keesecker and Hetlinger were returning from a meeting when they were met by “three pickup trucks, full of men standing in the back of them, waving baseball bats, metal crow bars and axe handles, parked on the street pointing and hollering at us.” The pick-ups chased the SCOPE car for miles. Keesecker was a good driver and managed to get ahead of them. Their tormentors didn't follow them into the Negro neighborhood. At least not that night. On other nights, cars would go by the Freedom House all night with young white men yelling epithets. Once, shots were fired at the house. The SCOPERS shivered all night. The next day they called the police, the sheriff and the FBI. Only the latter came to take their statements. (Keesecker, 2015, 3; Hetlinger, 2015, 3, quote on 4)

On August 4, several dozen students marched on the school board demanding accreditation of black schools and integration of all schools. When nothing happened, they organized a boycott of the black schools when they opened on August 19. With a few exceptions, they were opposed by black parents and teachers. The boycott lasted ten days. The Governor's office sent a representative who negotiated a settlement. While it didn't meet all of the demands, the school board did agree to improve black schools so they could be accredited. (Dukes, 1978, 67, 91-93)

Madison had a large body of fresh water called Cherry Lake, owned by the county and leased to a private Civic Club for \$50 since 1960. It was off-limits to Negroes. One day the MCSM decided to take a dip. Before going in Dukes phoned the sheriff's office and told a deputy what they were going to do, asking for protection. Five whites and 15 Negroes drove to the lake on July 18. When they got to the lake cars and trucks blocked the entrance, along with a large crowd of whites. They were told that it was a private beach. A new sign saying “Private Club - Members Only” was put out front.

Two days later John Hetlinger and one other white went to the lake, pretending to be

tourists from Tennessee. The Members Only signs were still up. Hetlinger asked the gate attendant if there was any way to go for a swim. The attendant told him that they could swim for 55 cents each; the only purpose of the signs was “ to keep ‘niggers and nigger lovers’ out of the lake and park.” As he left, Hetlinger told the attendant that he might see him again. He did just that a month later, when he testified at a hearing in federal court in Jacksonville. Lawyers representing Dukes and others filed for an injunction. Judge Simpson granted it on September 15. (Dukes, 1978, 94-104; Hetlinger, 2015, 5; *Dukes v. Madison Co.* 1965)

On August 22, after the hearing but before the injunction was issued, the MCSM went back to Cherry Lake. This time they got into the water. However, when they left cars blocked their way and a crowd of whites threatened them with bottles and bricks. Finally, one white man talked the crowd into letting them leave. They went back a week later. This time the sheriff was present and the whites confined themselves to yelling insults. (Dukes, 1978, 103-4)

By the time SCOPE left at the end of August, they had not only registered voters, but had had learned more about politics and government than was taught in their political science classes.

The VRA Demonstrations

Officially, SCLC was not looking for another “Selma,” but unofficially, Hosea was. On July 23, he told the press that if the Voting Rights Act was not passed by August 1, there would be demonstrations in 70 counties in six Southern states. He named the six states with SCOPE projects, saying that he would leave Mississippi to the MFDP. He didn’t even mention Louisiana, where Bogalusa had been in turmoil for months. SCOPE didn’t have projects in 70 counties, and some of the projects that had started in June had closed down. (*WP* 7-24-65, E16; *SC* 7-30-65, 1; *AC* 7-23-65, 1; 7-24-65, 3) Nor were demonstrations likely to have any effect on the House or Senate, which were already meeting in conference to iron out the differences in their respective bills. The Representatives in the CDs where SCOPE would demonstrate were going to vote against any voting bill; demonstrations certainly wouldn’t change their minds.

Hosea had repeatedly threatened demonstrations throughout the South in an effort to pressure Congress to pass the VRA quickly. Now that Congress was ready to act, so was Hosea. On July 28, Hosea made phone calls or sent telegrams or special delivery letters to the SCOPE projects telling them to mobilize for a march on their county courthouses on Tuesday, August 3. (*SC* 8-6-65, 1) That was the day that the House passed the Voting Rights Act; the Senate passed it the next day.

July 28, 1965

URGENT MEMORANDUM TO ALL SCOPE CHAPTERS:

FROM: HOSEA L. WILLIAMS, DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: MOBILIZATION FOR THE VOTING BILL

! URGENT!

THE DEADLINE DATE -- TUESDAY. AUGUST 3. 1965.

ON TUESDAY MORNING ALL SCOPE CHAPTERS WILL MARCH

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE TO THE COURT HOUSE ... IF THE VOTING BILL IS PASSED BY MONDAY, THE THOUSANDS WILL MARCH TO REGISTER TO VOTE. . . IF THE VOTING BILL IS NOT PASSED BY MONDAY NIGHT, THE THOUSANDS WILL MARCH TO THE COURTHOUSE TO DEMONSTRATE FOR ITS PASSAGE.

START MOBILIZING YOUR PEOPLE NOW --- RIGHT NOW

GET THEM READY FOR A 9:00 A.M. TUESDAY MARCH -- TO REGISTER OR TO DEMONSTRATE AT THE COURT HOUSE -- BY THE THOUSANDS, ALL OVER THE SOUTHLAND, IN EVERY SCOPE COUNTY.

IF THE BILL IS NOT PASSED, LET'S LET THE WORLD KNOW WE ARE NOT GOING TO STAND FOR ANY MORE INTIMIDATION AT THE REGISTRAR'S OFFICE ... ANY MORE CLOSED BOOKS. IF THE BILL IS PASSED, LET'S LET THE WORLD KNOW THAT WE ARE READY TO REGISTER BY THE THOUSANDS.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 1965.

IN GOD WE TRUST,

• HOSEA L. WILLIAMS

http://www.crmvet.org/docs/650728_scope_memo_vra.pdf

Until then, demonstrations had been off limits for SCOPE projects. Hosea explained to the press that “the kids were getting frustrated.” They had been told not to engage in demonstrations at orientation, but they had waited too long for “that bill to be passed.” Now, he

told them, “start mobilizing your people... right now.” (SC 8-6-65, 1)

Only a few SCOPE projects were able to get anything going on such short notice, and not all on Tuesday. A couple larger demonstrations were held in places which had already been marching, such as Allendale Co. SC, Butler Co. AL, and Americus, GA. However, in Greensboro (Hale County) Alabama, marches were halted because so many people were already in jail. A few counties held their first demonstrations of the summer. These included Bullock, Crenshaw, Geneva, Clarke, and Barbour in Alabama, Lunenburg and Southampton in Virginia, Laurens and Ben Hill counties in Georgia. But in places like Henry, Pike and Choctaw Counties in Alabama, the local leadership didn't think demonstrations were feasible or desirable. SCOPERs stuck to bringing people to the courthouse on Monday – the regular registration day for Alabama. (SC 7-30-65, 2; 8-6-65, 1, 6; NYT 8-1-65, 58; 8-4-65, 19; 8-5-65, 14; http://www.crmvet.org/docs/6508_scope_rpts.pdf)

There were a few incidents. A hundred people marched in Linden (Marengo Co.) AL carrying signs demanding that the voting bill be passed. They joined 128 Negroes waiting at the courthouse to register. They returned to the church to sing and hear speakers, then marched again. When two girls became ill, the police wouldn't let anyone leave the march line to take them to a car to go for medical attention. The cops also refused to let the line stop so the girls could rest. Only when a SCOPER threatened to sue were the girls removed. (Wells' report SCLC IV 146:3-269; SC 8-13-65, 6)

In Geneva Co. AL, project director Tom McGrath obtained a permit to lead a march demanding passage of the voting right bill on August 3. It stipulated 9:00 a.m. as the starting time; there was no ending time on the permit. That morning 42 Negroes and two white SCOPERs walked in pairs on the sidewalk six blocks to the courthouse, where they prayed and sang. Then they walked in a circle carrying placards. For almost two hours different people, walked or just stood. Some left the square to test various restaurants in town. They were served without incident. They also integrated the poolroom. At 11:30 they were told to be gone by noon. Apparently the Mayor was worried that employees of a nearby factory would flood the streets when they left for lunch, possibly creating conflict. At noon, the police chief told McGrath it was time to leave. When he didn't go he was arrested. (FBI File #157-2925-124)

In Allendale, S.C. they marched all week. The first day 28 people, including nine SCOPERs, were arrested as they sat in at the local courthouse. About 150 people were still waiting to register when the office closed at 5:00. Only 35 had been allowed to complete the process that day. The next day 175 marched to protest the arrests of the previous day. The third day there were three marches. Those in jail were released. (http://www.crmvet.org/docs/6508_scope_rpts.pdf; NYT 8-3-65, 16)

Lunenburg VA didn't get Hosea's missive until July 30, though state director Herbert Coulton knew about it. Coulton had told a farmer's meeting the night before that there would be demonstrations on August 3. The county NAACP branch was upset to learn this as they had been told that there would be none that summer, at least none organized by SCOPE. They decided that individuals could go, but the branch would not officially condone any marching. SCOPE began making phone calls and passing out flyers in the churches on Sunday. In the meantime, the Election Board decided to add two Saturdays to the days that people could

register. That created a minor problem, since more hours for registration was going to be one of the demands. Instead locals made a sign that said thank you for the extra hours. Tuesday morning everyone met at the First Baptist Church in Victoria. From there 300 people walked four miles to the courthouse carrying signs in the hot sun. They walked on the shoulder of Route 49 accompanied by six patrol cars. The administrative offices of the county had its own Census District, but not much else. Once there they held a short rally, and then went to a local church where they could sit while listening to speakers. (Monnie, 2014, 138-152 with photos)

On Wednesday, August 4, several more marches were held. In Gadsden, AL (Etowah Co.) marchers protested that the county registrars had eliminated three days of extra registration that they had been promised. After several hours of picketing, those days were restored. (http://www.crmvet.org/docs/6508_scope_rpts.pdf; SC 8-6-65, 1, 6)

In the meantime, the Voting Rights Bill completed the last steps to become a law. On August 2, the Congressional conferees concluded their negotiations and agreed on final language. The House approved the conference report on August 3, and the Senate passed it on August 4. President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law on August 6.

The Voting Rights Act

On Friday, August 6, 1965, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act (VRA) into law in the Capitol, surrounded by Congressional and civil rights leaders who had worked for its passage. Those present hoped that *this* law would finally fulfill the aspirations of the Fifteenth Amendment. The Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960 and 1964 all contained provisions to remedy systematic disfranchisement but they had been unable to overcome Southern resistance to putting Negroes on the voter rolls. All required litigation county by county. Experience with 70 voting rights suits had shown that proceedings dragged on for years and even when successful often resulted in few actual changes. (Landsberg, 2007, 160)

A new voting rights law to solve the problems revealed by this litigation had been on LBJ's agenda for some time but the Selma campaign early in 1965 moved it to the top. Proposals already under discussion at the Dept. of Justice were turned into a draft bill which the President sent to Congress a few days before the march from Selma to Montgomery began. The ideas were not new. Variations had appeared in earlier bills and supported with extensive testimony. Court decisions had clarified how far Congress could go. What remained was to get a majority of the members of both Houses to turn the bill into law. In an address before a joint session of Congress on March 15 the President promised to remove all barriers to Negro voting and asked for quick passage. Fearing what might happen if well over two million Negroes became voters in the eleven former Confederate states, Southerners delayed its passage as long as possible. (Landsberg, 2007, 155-160; *NYT*: 2-5-65, 17; 3-17-65, 1; 3-18-65, 1; 8-7-65, 1; 8-8-65, 59)

The VRA covered any political subdivision (e.g. a county or parish) in which less than 50 percent of the voting age population (VAP) was registered to vote on November 1, 1964, or in which less than 50 percent of the VAP actually did vote for President that year, *and* which employed a "test or device" to deny an application to become a voter. "Device" was generally understood to mean the literacy tests that Southern states still used to exclude Negroes from the electorate, though other "devices" could trigger the VRA. The Attorney General was empowered to suspend the use of tests and devices in designated subdivisions and to send federal examiners to those subdivisions where he thought it necessary to enforce the guarantees of the Fifteenth Amendment. Jurisdiction over the VRA was specifically given to the District Court of DC in order to prevent certain Southern federal judges from "interpreting" it out of existence, requiring appeals and delay. (P.L. 89-110, described in *NYT* 8-7-65, 8; 8-8-65, 59) The feds were called "examiners" rather than "registrars" because they couldn't actually register any voters. They would *examine* applicants to see if they were qualified to vote under state law as modified by the VRA and then send a list of those so certified to the appropriate state and local officials to be put on the voter rolls. Those who were qualified by the examiners were *listed* as eligible to be voters, but only the appropriate state and local officials could actually register them.

What became the VRA was introduced as Senate Bill 1564 and House Resolution 6400 on March 17 with bipartisan sponsorship. Both House and Senate committees finished their hearings in April. The Senate voted for cloture, preventing a filibuster by the Southern Senators, on May 25 and passed the bill on May 26. Only 16 Southern Senators voted against it. The House didn't pass its bill until July 9. Since the bills were somewhat different, agreement had to be worked out in a Conference Committee. That took a month. The House passed the final version on August 3 and the Senate on August 4. The President signed it into law on August 6.

The next day the official determinations it required were published in the *Federal*

Register. They said that the use of “tests and devices” was now suspended in every county of Alabama, Alaska, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Virginia, and in 25 counties in North Carolina plus one county in Arizona. That same day – a Saturday – Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach sent a copy of the law to 650 county registrars and election officials in the affected states along with a letter explaining its provisions. On Sunday John Doar, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division, sent a long memo to the U.S. Attorneys, even though they had no additional responsibilities under the law. For the next year resident FBI agents would check the registration records in every county in five Southern states every week. (30 *Federal Register* 9897, 8-7-65; Doar, 1978, 109-110; Belknap, 1991, 17:339-351; *NYT* 8-8-65, 1)

On Monday the A.G. announced that federal examiners would be sent to nine counties in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. Of the 548 political subdivisions covered by the Voting Rights Act (of roughly three thousand counties or their equivalent nationally) these were considered to be the worst counties in the worst states. In four of the nine, over 100 percent of the white voting age population was on the voter roles, while only a few Negroes were registered and those only in the previous year. In the counties that did not get examiners the AG was seeking “voluntary compliance.” Many of the Southern counties on the tentative list had been rapidly adding Negroes to the voter roles only the week before in hopes of forestalling the federal invasion. (*NYT* 1; 8-10-65, 1; *WP* 8-10-65, A4; 30 *Federal Register* 9970-71, 8-10-65)

The feds had long prepared to hit the ground running. In a July 22 memo to the AG on the “Status of Preparations for Implementation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965” AAG Doar identified 56 counties in the five Deep South states where federal examiners should be sent. The counties were chosen based on voter registration statistics obtained by the FBI which showed that very small percentages of NVAP were registered to vote compared to very large percentages of the WVAP. In the 23 Group A counties, examiners were to arrive within three days of the bill becoming law. In the 30 Group B counties, examiners would arrive in ten to 15 days; they would get to the three Group C counties later. (Doar Memo of July 22 in Belknap, 1991, 15:164-174) On August 9, Doar issued justification memos for ten counties on the tentative list. By the time Katzenbach released the names of the counties to the press, Jones County in Mississippi had been removed, leaving nine. They were: Alabama: Dallas, Hale, Marengo, Lowndes; Louisiana: East Feliciana, East Carroll, Plaquemines; Mississippi: LeFlore, Madison. (Doar Memo of August 9 in Belknap, 1991, 15: 196-231; *NYT* 8-10-65, 1; *WP* 8-10-65, A4)

The US Civil Service Commission was responsible for providing the examiners and designing the voter certification forms they would use. It had also planned for this day, choosing from career employees who volunteered to be the first federal examiners. They were both Negro and white, male and female, mostly from the Commission’s Dallas and Atlanta offices. In three days of training 65 examiners were given detailed instructions on the relevant state and federal law they would need to know to determine the eligibility of each applicant. On one side of the form were 11 questions to be answered by the applicant. On the other were clarifying questions to be asked by the examiner if necessary to determine eligibility under state law. If an applicant needed help with the form, the examiner would ask questions and fill it out. Those who could not sign their name could make their mark. The examiner then interviewed each applicant and if found to be eligible gave each a certificate stating that “The person whose name appears below has been listed as an eligible voter under the provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.” (USCCR, Nov. 1965, 15; copy of Alabama application form used by federal examiner in USCCR, Nov. 1965, 51-52; certificate wording in *BN* 8-11-65, 12)

On Tuesday, August 10, 33 examiners began work in the nine counties. They examined and certified 1,144 Negroes as eligible to be voters. Another 20 examiners were soon brought in because the lines to register were long, as civil rights groups organized car pools and sometimes chartered busses. Examiners were sent to Jones County, MS plus four more counties on August 18, bringing the total to 14. They were: Alabama: Perry, Wilcox; Louisiana: Ouachita; Mississippi: Jefferson Davis. Within two days the federal examiners had listed 2,877 new voters, more than doubling the number of Negro voters previously registered in those counties; at the end of the week the total was 6,998. The feds also listed 68 whites, though most whites who wanted to register on those days went to the regular county registration office. On August 21, the White House announced that the examiners had registered 19,178 people; on August 25, the head of the Civil Service said that fifty examiners working in 13 counties had registered 27,385 new voters. (Belknap, 1991, 15:232; Doar, 1978, 109; *NYT*: 8-11-65, 1; 8-12-65, 15; 8-13-65, 19; 8-15-65, 71; 8-19-65, 17; 8-22-65, 45; 8-26-65, 21)

The federal examiners faced many problems. They tried to set up shop in Post Offices because it was federal space, but the space was often rented from local landlords. Some owners canceled leases when the examiners tried to move in, claiming that they had received threats to their buildings. Local officials did not always provide current maps, or the boundaries of the different election districts (e.g. beats, precincts or wards) so examiners would know where to place an applicant. Rural applicants often could not provide an address sufficient to locate it on a map. Those who admitted that they had been in court couldn't always remember if it was civil or criminal. Those who knew they had been convicted of a crime couldn't always specify it sufficiently to determine if it was a disqualifying crime under each state's law. Alabama had 57 disqualifying crimes; Louisiana had 66. (USCCR, Nov. 1965, 19) It took longer to examine those who were illiterate, or almost illiterate. Estimates of these applicants ranged from 15 percent in urban areas to 65 percent in rural ones. (Belknap, 1991, 15:232-3; USCCR, Nov. 1965, 18-19)

The VRA spurred Negro registration in counties which did not have federal examiners; the South wanted feds in town even less than it wanted Negro voters. The White House claimed on August 14 that local officials had registered five thousand Negroes in an additional 51 counties in five states. At a press conference on August 25, John Doar said that local officials had added 32,000 Negro voters to the rolls in 251 counties in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Georgia. (*NYT* 8-15-65, 71; 8-26-65, 21) At that time federal examiners weren't even in Georgia. At the end of October, the Justice Department said that over 110,000 Negroes had been newly registered by *local* officials. (*NYT* 10-31-65, E4)

In the counties without examiners, local registrars didn't all shift gears easily. Some continued to use literacy tests, or require that applicants fill out the forms themselves even when they couldn't read, or tell them that *any* arrests were a disqualification, or limit the registration days to one or two a month, or close their doors early when demand was high. Local law enforcement could and did force those waiting in line to stand outside in the hot sun, or use other forms of intimidation. There were reports of plantation owners telling long standing tenants who had just registered to vote that they had to leave when their crop year ended. (Brandt, 1965, 2; *NYT* 12-22-65, 16; *SC* 9-18/19-65, 1; USCCR, Nov. 1965, 26-27, 34, 44)

Arguing that it was easier to bring Negroes before federal examiners than county officials, civil rights organizations asked for federal examiners in more counties. By the end of September, DoJ had sent examiners to six more counties; twelve were added in October and four

in December. By the end of 1965, federal examiners were registering voters in 36 counties: 19 in Mississippi, 10 in Alabama, 2 in South Carolina, and 5 in Louisiana parishes.¹ (*NYT* 8-19-65, 17; 10-30-65, 1; 12-21-65, 22)

Attempting a pre-emptive strike, Governor Paul B. Johnson of Mississippi called a special session of the state legislature in June to remove the laws which made it difficult for Negroes to vote – the very tests and devices which triggered the VRA. He said this would discourage the federal government from sending in examiners to impose unqualified voters upon the state. The Governor signed the changes into law on July 1. The legislature also voted 35 to 9 to amend the Mississippi constitution to remove provisions which made it hard to register. With few of those “unqualified” voters on the rolls, the other voters confirmed this change on August 17 by a vote of three to one. (*CD* 8-3-65, 6; *NYT* 6-24-65, 15; 7-2-65, 32; 8-18-65, 1; brief description of the changes in *U.S. v. Mississippi*, 1966, fn 1)

Many means were used to minimize the impact of the VRA. Politicians promoted county registration drives aimed at the white population. Leander Perez, an infamous political “boss,” in southeast Louisiana, announced that the White Citizens’ Councils would conduct a white registration drive. In Plaquemines Parish 174 whites became new voters in two weeks, while the feds only registered 33 Negroes. (*CD* 8-19-65, 3; *NYT* 8-22-65, 45). In Alabama, Gov. Wallace wrote numerous white civic organizations asking them to run voter registration drives. (Permaloff and Grafton, 1995, 222) In Dallas County, the Women for Constitutional Government answered his call by going door-to-door to find “unregistered white men and women” and get them registered. (Quote in *BN* 8-17-65, 18)

Wallace asked the Legislative Reference Service to find ways “of preventing mass changes in the status of county governing bodies.” Its February 1966 report recommended such legal changes as educational requirements for public officials, enlargement of voting districts and consolidation of counties to dilute the Negro vote, and replacing county elected officials with gubernatorial appointments. (Permaloff and Grafton, 1995, 222) As soon as it heard that federal examiners were coming, Hale County in Alabama switched from electing its county commission in separate districts to doing so at-large. Although Negroes were the majority of the county population, they weren’t among those who voted, keeping the county commission all white for another decade. (McCrary, et. al., 1994, 52).

After a month, the pace of Negro registration dropped off. This was partially because those most eager and available to register had completed the task. But a major reason was that the summer civil rights workers returned to home or school. A few counties had local organizations capable of continuing the job of locating potential new voters and bringing them to town. Most did not.² Even under the best of circumstances the VRA was not self-executing; it

¹ These were: Alabama: Dallas, Hale, Lowndes, Marengo, Perry, Wilcox, Montgomery, Autauga, Elmore, Greene; Louisiana: East Carroll, East Feliciana, Plaquemines, Ouachita, West Feliciana; Mississippi: LeFlore, Madison, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Benton, Bolivar, Clay, Coahoma, Humphreys, DeSoto, Hinds, Holmes, Jefferson, Neshoba, Walthall, Carroll, Newton, Simpson, Warren; South Carolina: Clarendon, Dorchester.

² Attorney General Katzenbach acknowledged that “the most important factor generating enrollment was local organization.” (Lawson, 1976, p. 332, citing a speech by Katzenbach to the

only opened the door. (*NYT* 9-12-65, 68; 3-1-66, 43; USCCR 1965, 35-36) Someone had to do the leg work of getting the word out and persuading local Negroes that the time had finally come to register to vote.

Although the CRD and the civil rights movement shared the goal of enfranchising as many Negroes as possible in as short a time as possible, they disagreed on the division of labor. The movement wanted the government to be pro-active – to go into the field and find unregistered Negroes and get them on the registration rolls. The DoJ did not think that was its job. Quite apart from available personnel, of which it never had enough, there was a philosophical difference. The DoJ believed that its job was to make it possible for Negroes to vote, not to mobilize them to register. *That* was the job of the civil rights movement. (Wolk, 76-77; *NYT* 10-31-65, E4)

In the first five weeks of the VRA, federal examiners listed 43,000 people as eligible to be voters, including 1,480 whites. The remaining 60,000 Negroes of voting age in those 14 counties were not rushing to register. As the lines disappeared the number of federal examiners dropped from 50 to 29, even though the number of counties in which they worked had increased to 14 and would soon expand even more. By October 23, examiners were working only on Saturday, except in Dallas County, and there was only one of them in 16 of the 18 counties. Montgomery County had seven examiners and Coahoma County in Mississippi had two. They had qualified 58,359 people, 97 percent of whom were Negro, since they began work on August 9. But less than a quarter of the Negroes of voting age in Alabama and Mississippi were registered to vote, and not much more than that in the other states with federal examiners. (*NYT* 10-31-65, E4; USCCR 1965, 16, 68-71)

As expected, the courts were kept busy with suits and counter suits. The VRA specifically authorized the AG to bring suits to nullify the poll tax in the four states which still had one. Six states had repealed their poll tax before the civil rights movement began and one did so in 1964, when the Twenty-fourth Amendment was ratified. Opponents of the poll tax had introduced a bill into Congress every session since 1939. The House passed it five times but Southerners filibustered it in the Senate. When the Twenty-fourth Amendment voided the poll tax as a requirement to vote in federal elections, some states kept it for state elections. The DoJ filed suit in federal district court to abolish Mississippi's poll tax the day after President Johnson signed the VRA, and those of Alabama, Texas and Virginia on Tuesday. On September 10 it filed an *amicus curiae* brief in a related case that had already reached the Supreme Court. Begun in Virginia by the ACLU, this case argued that the poll tax was an unreasonable burden on poor people. By the time the Supreme Court declared Virginia's poll tax to be unconstitutional on March 24, 1966 by 6 to 3, federal judges in Alabama and Texas had voided their states' poll taxes. (Ogden, 1968, 199, 243; *NYT* 8-11-65, 20; 9-12-65, 73; 1-30-66, E5; 2-10-66, 24; 3-25-66, 1; *Harper v. Virginia Board of Elections*)

State judges tried to halt operation of the VRA. On August 30, a Louisiana court issued a temporary restraining order telling the federal examiners in Plaquemines Parish to stop work. In September, state courts in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi issued injunctions prohibiting local officials from registering voters listed as qualified by federal examiners. On October 18 an Alabama judge ruled that the VRA was unconstitutional. Anticipating these maneuvers,

Southern Regional Council in February 1966.)

Congress had given the U. S. District Court for the District of Columbia sole jurisdiction over the VRA. In Alabama the federal court vacated the state court decision on the grounds that it lacked jurisdiction. In the other states the DoJ waited for the Supreme Court to rule on the constitutionality of the VRA. (*NYT* 9-1-65, 20; 9-4-65, 45; 9-8-65, 28; 10-19-65, 24; 10-24-65, E7; 11-24-65, 1; 12-8-65, 31; 1966 AAG Report 187-8; USCCR, Nov. 1965, 76-78; *Reynolds v. Katzenbach*, 1965)

The Justice Department asked the Supreme Court for speedy review of the VRA. The Court chose to do so via a case brought directly to the Court by South Carolina on September 29, even though federal examiners had not yet been sent to South Carolina. After oral argument on January 17 and 18, the Court ruled on March 7 that the VRA was constitutional. Its decision placed great emphasis on the long history of Southern suppression of the Negro vote and repeated state efforts to thwart federal attempts to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment. The Court announced its decision exactly one year after “Bloody Sunday,” the day marchers from Selma first attempted to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge and go to Montgomery. (*NYT*: 11-6-65, 1; 11-20-65, 27; excerpts of decision, 3-8-66, 26; 1966 AAG Report 189; *South Carolina v. Katzenbach*)