

## Winter Demonstrations in Alabama Counties

While we were working in Birmingham, actions were going on in other places, often led by local people. Havard Richburg, who had fostered the Crenshaw County SCOPE project, was fired from his teaching job in the Helicon school, which was the junior high school for Negroes. This led to a student protest, which soon expanded. In mid December, Negroes started marching daily to the county courthouse in Luverne demanding higher pay, better jobs and justice. Although they managed to reach the courthouse once, they were usually blocked before they could get there. The demonstrations were organized by James Kolb, a 67-year-old farmer who owned 41 acres. He was not as vulnerable to economic retaliation as a teacher on the county pay roll. SCLC sent Richard Boone to help out. City officials had asked the federal Community Relations Service for help after the summer SCOPE project stirred things up. Some progress was made. There was token integration in the white high school, some Negroes were put on the jury rolls, and there was an increase in Negro voters, but it was a long way from equal. (*BAA* 12-18-65, 11; *SC* 12-18/19-65 1; 7-30/31-66, 4,5)

After the Christmas break, school bus driver Collins Harris was fired. Also a farmer, he headed the SCLC affiliate in Crenshaw County. The parents took up the protest demanding that the principal (who had fired Richburg and Harris) be fired. The protest turned into a boycott which lasted throughout the spring semester. SCLC sent Roosevelt Barnett, who lived 50 miles away in Montgomery, to work with the local groups. On Monday, January 17, about 130 students marched into the school and disrupted classes, damaging a lot of property and assaulting the principal. The next day only 40 students showed up for school. That night, sheriff's deputies arrested ten of the adults at their homes, including Kolb. He had been asked to stop the demonstrations and refused to do so until all grievances had been heard. Even after a county judge issued an injunction to stay away from the schools, there were more demonstrations and more arrests. Nine protest leaders were arrested on February 2 after police used tear gas to break up the marches. SCLC sent lawyer Solomon Seay from Montgomery to defend the protestors. He tried to remove the case to federal court, which was in Judge Johnson's Middle District. After a hearing, Judge Johnson declined to take the case, writing that "demonstrations and protests in a disorderly and unpeaceful and unlawful manner are not sanctioned by the law." (*SC* 1-22/23-66, 5; 2-5/6-66, 1; *Crenshaw County Board of Education v. Barnett*)

People kept marching despite being tear-gassed and knocked around by the sheriff's deputies. On February 13, a stick of dynamite exploded outside Kolb's home. On February 21 65-year-old Collins Harris suffered a deep gash on his head from a blow by the cops after he was arrested, along with nine other adults. Four teachers were dismissed, but the demonstrations did not stop. Finally, the disliked principal was replaced, but not until September was an agreement reached. The teachers got their jobs back, and more Negro students transferred to the white county high school. (*SC* 2-26/27-66, 1; 4/30-5/1-66, 1; 7-30/31-66, 2; 9-3/4-66, 1-2)

In Barbour County, the Voters League started a "selective buying campaign" because the Eufaula city council refused to discuss their demands. The 18 items included a job training program, use of courtesy titles, a minimum wage for domestic workers and the end of racial discrimination. Meeting in December, the city council told them to come back in January. In January it told them that the meeting had been postponed. In fact, the city council had met on January 4 in order to pass an ordinance requiring the mayor's written permission eight days in

advance of any kind of march. The Voters League had started picketing the stores on December 30; the proprietors complained to the mayor about loss of business. To avoid being labeled as a boycott, which was illegal in Alabama, the League passed around a list of recommended stores, including two owned by whites. SCLC staff and Voters League members stood outside the stores that weren't on that list with signs to discourage Negroes from entering. They did not block the doors. The first eight were arrested on Saturday, January 15. Another 31 were arrested the next day when they protested the Saturday arrests. On Monday, 28 high school students were arrested; as were another 35 on Wednesday. Presence of the students prompted Judge Jack Wallace to hold SCLC staffer John Davis in contempt of court for encouraging students to leave school to participate in demonstrations. Bond was set at \$200 each, but only a few were allowed to bail out on property bonds; the rest were left in jail for several days. Attorney Solomon Seay asked Judge Johnson to remove their cases to federal court and also challenged the constitutionality of the city ordinance. Judge Johnson had found a similar Montgomery law to be unconstitutional. The hearing disclosed that the pickets and protests were orderly. Judge Johnson found the ordinance unconstitutional and the charges unfounded. (*SC* 1-15/16-66, 5; 1-22/23-66, 1; 2-26/27-66, 6)

A movement finally got started in Prattville, the county seat of Autauga County, which was 12 miles from Montgomery. Non-whites were 42.4 percent of the 18,739 people living in that county in 1960, but only 36.5 percent of the voting age population. Of the 6,616 people in Prattville, only 24.5 percent were non-white. Located right above Lowndes County, Autauga was carved out of Montgomery County in 1818. Named for the Autauga tribe of Native Americans, it was part of the land deeded by the Creeks after their surrender four years earlier. Prattville was named for Daniel Pratt, who built the largest cotton gin manufacturing plant in the world in the 1830s. Lady Bird Johnson still owned land in Autauga County, which she had inherited from her grandparents. Both her parents were born in the county but moved to Texas before she was born. (<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1073>; *WP* 10-14-60, B4)

Autauga county did not host a SCOPE project but it did have an active NAACP chapter which had run a voter registration campaign the previous summer. It was an uphill struggle for the Autauga County Voters Association, as the local officials did not want to give an inch. Autauga had been on John Doar's Group A list for Alabama. In the first three registration days after the VRA was passed only 73 Negroes became registered voters. On October 29 federal examiners arrived. (*USCCR*, 1965, 28, 53) As the number of Negro voters increased, the local government became more willing to listen to Negro demands. It had ignored the list presented in July with requests for traffic signs, street lights, and paved streets in the Negro neighborhoods. When these were brought up again at a Dec. 21 meeting with the Prattville city council, some things were done. By then the ACVA had added complaints about the police. The Mayor agreed to a bi-racial committee to discuss them. By year's end 1,316 Negroes were registered to vote, about 20 percent of the total in the county. The ACVA was soon running classes in how to use a voting machine. (*BN* 1-23-66, 33; *SC* 1-1/2-66, 5; 1-15/16-66, 6)

Sporadic violence had been directed at the Negro community since August 31, when a firebomb was tossed on the porch of the parents of an ACVA leader, whose younger sister was one of 13 Negro children scheduled to integrate the county public schools. Despite rumors and threats, when school opened on September 8 there were no incidents. In January, one of those students and a friend were on the receiving end of several shotgun pellets from two white youths. They were not shot at the school and no one was identified or charged. The next month a young activist was beaten by a group of whites as he repaired his car at a service station. In mid March

Negroes began marching, demanding more jobs and an end to segregation. A group of about 30 whites gathered to throw bricks, bottles and stones at the group. At least one Negro was hospitalized when a bottle crashed into his face; no whites were arrested. The next week four Negro youths jumped two white boys. One of them, Robert Sims Jr., worked for SCLC. The Negroes were arrested and charged with felony assault; bond was set at \$3,500 each.<sup>1</sup> Adult leaders agreed to halt demonstrations for ten days while the new bi-racial committee considered their complaints. After the committee heard them out, no one was satisfied. One white committeeman commented that "They want us to give them the moon" while one of the Negroes said that what they wanted wasn't street lights and paved streets but "freedom." (SC 9-11/12-66, 1; 1-8/9-66, 5; 2-19/20-66, 6; 3-19/20-66, 1; quotes in 3-26/27-66, 5)

Demonstrations resumed when the ten-day moratorium ended. The youth took over. On March 29, about 30 decided to test the local places of public accommodation for compliance with the 1964 Civil Rights act. One café closed but they were able to enter two drugstores and demand service. It was not forthcoming. What came were the cops. In the two stores 15 young people were arrested; all under 18 except for 21-year-old Charles Garrison, an SCLC field worker from Montgomery. On April 9, the DoJ filed suit against five Prattville stores and on June 26 Judge Johnson ordered them to serve Negroes and allow them to use all facilities on an equal basis with whites. (BN 3-30-66, 6; SC 4-2/3-66, 2; 6-25/26-66, 2)

As was true in most counties, high school students were the infantry of protest and sometimes the sergeants. On Sunday, April 3, 26 students were arrested for disturbing services at a Negro church by picketing across the street. The next day, about 40 of them blocked the entrance to a Negro high school. Asking those arriving at school to join them, they started to march downtown. Cops arrived shortly, shooting their pistols into the ground to get the students' attention. They arrested two for cursing at them, including one of the youths out on bond for the felony assault. On April 5, 275 students from Autauga County Training School cut classes to demonstrate inside and outside of their school, while others continued to picket downtown businesses. The school board got an injunction against SCLC and three local civil rights organizations prohibiting them from using students in demonstrations during school hours or interfering with the schools' operation. (BN 3-30-66, 6; 4-6-66, 2; SC 4-9/10-66, 1)

Sumter County was over 100 miles due west of Montgomery. Right on the Mississippi border, it resembled it in many ways. The land originally belonged to the Choctaw nation which occupied a big swath of Mississippi. Under an 1830 treaty, the natives traded 11 million acres to the US Government in exchange for 15 million acres in the Indian Territory during the voluntary phase of the government's indian removal program. The treaty provided that those who chose to stay could do so as US citizens, but only if they submitted to state and national laws. About 5,000 stayed as the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, though few remained in what became Sumter County. Named for a revolutionary war general from South Carolina, Sumter contained 11,557 people in 1960, 76.3 percent of whom were non-white. Only 450 of the 6,814 Negroes of voting age were registered to vote. Roughly one-third of the people in Livingston, the county seat, 1,544 people were Negro. York, about ten miles away, had twice the

---

<sup>1</sup> SCLC asked attorney Solomon Seay to represent the four youths. In March of 1967 he reached a settlement with the D.A. for them to plead guilty to simple assault rather than go on trial for a felony. One was fined \$25 and the other three fined \$100 each. (SC 3-18/19-67, 2)

population, of whom 65.3 percent were non-white.

SCLC didn't send a SCOPE project to Sumter; it was a SNCC county. But there was an NAACP chapter and a couple of local organizations. Indeed, Sumter had more *organizations* than organization. In August the NAACP chapter gave the Mayor of York a list of grievances. The Mayor turned them over to the county-wide Human Relations Committee, which had 17 whites and 23 Negro civic leaders on it. In December, Rev. Felix Nixon, the NAACP chapter president, gave the Mayor the names of 14 Negroes who wanted jobs. When none were hired he said that local Negroes would boycott the merchants and march three times a week. Mostly they marched in York; in late January about 50 people walked the ten miles to the Livingston courthouse, escorted by multiple police. When none of their demands were met, they tried to march again on February 12. Three days of rain had left pools of water and mud along the shoulder. When the cops met them at the city limits and said they could march along the side of the highway but not in it, they turned back. It was raining heavily. That week, the York City Council had hired its first Negro policeman, on recommendation of the Human Relations Committee. (*SC* 1-1/2-66, 5; 1-8/9-66, 1; 1-22/23-66, 6; 2-19/20-66, 1; *BN* 1-13-66, 2)

Macon County was the home of the Tuskegee Institute, only 40 miles southeast of Montgomery. One of the most important Negro colleges in the country, many of its students had been involved in the Selma demonstrations. Fired up by their own march *in* Montgomery two weeks before the national one, they tried to desegregate numerous businesses and institutions in Tuskegee, including the city pool in June. White onlookers reacted by throwing garbage and glass into the water. The city council closed the pool. The attempt which generated the most publicity and the most anger was the attempt to integrate three white Tuskegee churches. On June 27, 22 students were refused entry. When 30 students tried again on July 18 they were attacked by about two dozen white men armed with sticks and bottles. Several of the white men who attacked the students were arrested, but the Macon County grand jury refused to indict. On the fourth attempt to enter a white church the hundred or so demonstrators were accompanied by heavy police guard. They were still refused entry, but no one was hurt. (*SC* 7-23-65, 1; 7-30-65, 1; 9-11/12-65, 4; 11-6/7-65, 6)

On August 12, TIAL introduced to the Tuskegee City Council a civil rights bill calculated to eliminate all racial discrimination in employment and public facilities. Denounced as "Communitic," it was tabled. The proposed ordinance had been drafted for TIAL by a TI political science professor. The next day, the professor found himself being grilled by the Tuskegee police chief about TIAL. After the professor left the police station he was attacked and beaten by two white men and his car was damaged. He recognized the men as hecklers at TIAL demonstrations;. He returned to the police station to make a complaint but all the chief would do was have someone take a deposition. The professor spoke to one of the two Negroes on the City Council who was also his supervisor at TI. Eventually the two men were arrested. (Wardy to Smith, 8-16-65, SCLC IV 143:21; *SC* 8-20-65, 2)

On January 3, 1965, TIAL leader Samuel L. Younge Jr. was shot to death when he tried to use the white men's room at a service station. His death was like throwing gasoline on a fire. The next day over three thousand people marched on downtown Tuskegee to protest the shooting, despite a cold rain. TIAL organized daily demonstrations, which usually numbered about two hundred people. One day over a thousand students sat down in front of a block of stores for an hour, effectively keeping customers out. On other days, the police kept them from

reaching the downtown stores. The city council brought in the federal Community Relations Service to work out mutually acceptable ways to demonstrate and the DoJ filed suits against two Tuskegee restaurants which had become “private clubs” rather than serve Negroes. TIAL resurrected its demands from the previous summer for more job opportunities, desegregation of public facilities and of private clubs and schools. It continued to picket, adding a store owned by the mayor and a bank whose president was on the city council. By March it had persuaded 53 of Tuskegee’s 350 business to agree to hire Negroes. Picketing of the other stores continued. (*NYT* 1-5-66, 1; 1-7-66, 2; 1-9-66, 38; *CD* 1-5-66, 1; 1-6-66, 3; 1-8-66, 1; *WP* 1-5-66, A 2; 1-9-66, A34; *SC* 1-15/16-66, 1; 3-12/13-66, 2; *BN* 1-8-66, 2; 1-9-66, A-14; 1-10-66, 2; 1-11-66, 2; 1-12-66, 2; *Sun* 1-8-55, A5; 1-9-66, 3; Norrell, 1985; 179-183; Forman, 1986, 197-207)

On January 11, TIAL once again presented to the city council an ordinance which would make any form of segregation or discrimination of public facilities within the city limits a crime. When the city council met again four days later, several hundred students marched downtown. After one was arrested for an altercation with a drugstore owner, the students rioted, running through the town smashing store windows and bashing vehicles. A student leader later said “we lost our cool” but that didn’t stop them from marching again on Sunday to protest police brutality during the riot. On January 25, the city council passed a modified version of the proposed ordinance. It prohibited discrimination in any place of public accommodation (but not private clubs) within the city, with a maximum penalty of a \$100 fine and 90 days in jail. There wasn’t much debate, as the wording had been worked out in private meetings over time. There was heated debate over a petition signed by over 200 Tuskegee residents deploring the demonstrations and the “breakdown of law and order.” Things cooled down after that – literally. In May the city opened the formerly “white” pool for the summer on an integrated basis. (*NYT* 1-16-66, 61; 1-17-66, 23; 1-26-66, 17; *CD* 1-17-66, 4; *SC* 1-22/23-66, 1; 1-29/30-66, 1; 7-16/17-66, 1; *Sun* 1-16-66, 3; 1-17-66, A3; Norrell, 1985; 183-184)

## Leaving Birmingham

As February droned on, tempers shortened and tensions rose among the staff. Everyone was exhausted. When Hosea had announced a voter registration blitzkrieg the previous fall he said staff would do a concentrated voter drive for 45 days and then everyone would take a month off before going on to the next drive. That 45 days had come and gone in Birmingham and there was no leave in sight. I didn't mind the endless work since I didn't have anyplace else to go, but the Negro staff who had homes other than the Atlanta Freedom House and some of the white staff were feeling the pain. Staff meetings were wracked with argument. At least once, the meeting degenerated into physical conflict. Around 11:00 p.m., after two hours of endless discussion on why we weren't getting more people to the federal examiners, Ben accused everyone of being incompetent. That didn't go over too well. People started yelling at Ben and then at each other. There was some slapping and shoving. Another time Gibson, who was white, got into a fight with one of the Negro staff when he was accused of making a racist comment. I wasn't there and don't know what Gibson said, but it certainly ticked someone off. Then there was the time that Kathleen Rogan's boyfriend knocked her around, breaking the skin on the back of her head and one finger. She went to the hospital to get stitched up and they reported the assault to the Birmingham police. The cops came to the office looking to get her to make a statement. She wasn't going to turn in her boyfriend or say anything that could be used against the movement so she made up a story about a large white man coming into the office and beating her up. Fortunately none of this got into the papers.

Hosea's response was to relocate staff to other counties, partially to handle personnel problems and partially to get ready for the primary. He wanted staff in place to campaign for the COAPO candidates and to bring all those new Negro voters to the polls. Federal examiners had been in Autauga County since October 29 but we didn't send staff there until March.

The local movement finally found a unifying issue. In mid-February, the ACMHR began picketing Liberty Supermarket demanding that the store hire more Negroes. The market was in a Negro neighborhood and most of its customers were Negroes. The protest was sparked on February 12 when a white security guard roughed up a Negro customer he claimed had cursed at him. The market responded to the protest by filing a two million dollar libel suit against SCLC for its "false accusations" of race discrimination. SCLC and Hosea Williams were named as the defendants even though it really wasn't our action. However, the ACMHR was an SCLC affiliate and Hosea had made a few provocative statements to the press. Apart from the lawsuit, it was an ordinary action until late on Feb. 21. After the regular ACMHR Monday night meeting, Shuttlesworth led several hundred people from St. Paul's AME church to the market just as it was closing. As they marched outside the parking lot, a 23-year-old white man tried to drive his car from the lot through the line. Picketers who couldn't move out of the way fast enough started shouting and waving their arms. The driver pointed a gun out his window and fired a full clip from his automatic pistol into the crowd. Leaving five injured Negroes lying on the sidewalk, he drove off and turned himself into the police. He was charged with five counts of assault with intent to commit murder and released on payment of \$300 bail for each one. (*BN* 2-22-66, 1, quote on 8; *NYT* 2-22-66, 1; *BAA* 3-5-66, 13; *SC* 2-26/27-66, 1, 6)

No matter how divided the Negro community, shootings brought them together. The next day, Rev. Joseph Lowery led about 90 ministers to the market. They demanded police protection

and Negro police. While both he and Rev. Shuttlesworth were founders of SCLC, they were also rivals. Each headed his own organization and wanted to do things his own way. The picket became a boycott. (*NYT* 2-23-66, 26; 2-27-66, E2) Liberty Market fought back with another trip to federal court. This time it asked for a temporary restraining order to stop the demonstrations. Once again, SCLC was the named defendant. Citing the shooting, the plaintiff claimed that the picketing was a danger to life and property. The store said that a quarter of its employees were Negro and that if it complied with the demand that the percentage be increased to half it would be forced to violate the employment section in the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the seniority provisions of its agreement with the Retail Clerks Union. Judge Clarence Allgood, a Kennedy appointee, granted the TRO, limited the pickets to twelve and prohibited any kind of a boycott. He also ordered the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Community Relations Service, both created by the 1964 Civil Rights Act, to mediate the hiring dispute. (*BN* 2-23-66, 2; 2-26-66, 2; 3-1-66, 2; 3-3-66, 2; 3-8-66, 2; *CD* 2-28-66, 3; *SC* 3-12/13-66, 5; Navasky, 1971, 244)

After five weeks of picketing and negotiating, Liberty Supermarket agreed to hire more Negroes and Judge Allgood dismissed its lawsuits against the SCLC. Despite the judicial prohibition of a boycott, the store was losing a lot of money. The pickets left. (*SC* 3-26/27-66, 2; *BN* 3-16-66, 49; *CD* 3-17-66, 5) However, lawyers and doctors still had to pick up the pieces. The county prosecutors sent the case of the white man who had shot the five Negroes to a grand jury; it refused to indict him. There was a preliminary hearing but there was no trial. One of his shooting victims was paralyzed from the waste down and spent the rest of his life in a wheelchair. He could not pay his medical and rehabilitation bills. Two years later another shooting victim sued SCLC in federal court for \$150,000 to pay his medical bills. He said that the bullet had destroyed his spleen and left him permanently disabled. His white lawyers persuaded him that he stood a better chance of winning a judgment against SCLC than the supermarket or the white shooter. They argued that SCLC had caused a riot and this led to the man's injuries. This case also went before Judge Allgood, who was second only to Judge Thomas among the Alabama federal judges in his distaste for the civil rights movement. He refused to dismiss the case and a year later an all-white jury awarded the victim \$45,000. SCLC appealed and on September 2, 1969 a 3-judge appeals court reversed. Their opinion said that SCLC may have been a cause of the demonstration, but was not the *proximate* cause of the gunshot injuries. (*BN* 4-1-66, 3; *SC* 3-26/27-66, 2; 5-14/15-66, 2; 7-2/3-66, 1; 8-26/27-66, 1; 3-11/12-67, 2; 3-9/10-68, 1; *CD* 3-7-68, 3; *Maxwell v. SCLC*)

Hosea told me to take all the research I had done and write it up. My 33 page booklet, "The Birmingham Voter Registration Project: Registration Recommendations and Analysis," was full of numbers. Ben wrote a nice introduction and had the office secretaries type the whole thing onto stencils so multiple copies could be mimeographed. Although my booklet was dated March 14, I could only get federal registration statistics through February 19 and those weren't broken down by race. The examiners kept records by race and regularly gave them to the newspapers, but they wouldn't give them to us. I wrote "Of the 15,300 people registered during this time the official records do not specify how many were Negro and how many white but general observation indicated that less than 5% were white." Using racial data for census tracts and voting boxes, I tried to ascertain which Negro neighborhoods were most in need of federal examiners. Ben mailed my booklet along with a copy of the maps I had drawn to John Doar at the DoJ in Washington.

As soon as it was printed, I left Birmingham, headed for New York to meet my mother. She was ending her sabbatical trip around the world there and wanted me to meet her. She said we would see New York City together.

While the March 19 deadline to be listed by the federal examiners to vote in the May 3 primary was fast approaching, this didn't mean the federal examiners would leave Jefferson County. More elections were on the horizon. It did mean that SCLC's Birmingham voter registration project was pretty much over. The next job was to aid Negro candidates running for office. The remaining work of getting more Negroes registered to vote for future elections would have to be done by the ACMHR and other local groups. As soon as my booklet was printed, I left Birmingham.



## Dropping in on John Doar

First I went to Atlanta for a few days to make some arrangements. The day before I left, Hosea told me that since Washington was on my way, I should stop off and talk to John Doar, Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. Hosea said to tell him to put more federal examiners where Negroes actually lived, rather than in out-of-the-way places that they had to get to and to make them available when most Negroes were off work. Of course, I said yes, though I had absolutely no idea how I was going to do this. Ben had already mailed Doar a copy of my Birmingham report and all the maps, but told me to take another set with me just in case Doar didn't have them. I'm pretty sure no one called Doar's office to tell him I was coming, or even to find out when he would be in. I didn't know exactly when I would get there.

SCLC had been in a continual tussle with the DoJ over the placement of federal examiners. On November 30, 1965 Attorney General Katzenbach told the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights that the DoJ would be happy to act on specific requests for the assignment of federal examiners. SCLC's Washington director, Walter Fauntroy, followed up with a memo to John Doar on December 15 about where examiners were needed in Alabama. It asked him to send them to Jefferson, Sumter and Butler Counties, identified specific churches and towns where they should set up shop, and asked that they be there from 10:00 to 6:00 weekdays and Saturdays, with evening hours on three nights each week. He also asked that examiners be sent to specific small towns in Greene, Marengo and Dallas Counties, where they were already working, and that they be assigned to six new Alabama counties – Barbour, Clarke, Etowah, Houston, Mobile and Russell. (Fauntroy memo of 12-15-65, SCLC IV 143:27 and memo of 12-9-65 in 146:34) Of those counties named which did not have federal examiners in 1965 only Jefferson and Sumter would get them in 1966 and only two of the small towns.

The feds liked to work out of post offices whereas we wanted them in Negro churches. By March, the feds were working in 31 offices in eleven Alabama counties – including nine in Jefferson County, three each in Wilcox and Elmore Counties, and two places in each of the other eight counties. One purpose of my visit was to get them to spread out even more.

Washington was 700 miles from Atlanta and New York City another 200 miles from there. It was a long trip. After riding all night I arrived at the DC Greyhound Station at 1100 New York Ave. on Monday morning. I made sure the baggage handlers put my bags inside the storage area and asked how long I could leave them there. I was told to claim them within 24 hours. It was a ten minute walk to the Justice Department at 12<sup>th</sup> St. and Pennsylvania Ave. I walked inside, looked up John Doar's name on the directory, and took the elevator to his floor. Needless to say, his secretary was not expecting me and wasn't quite sure what to do with me. Who was this young white girl who said she represented the Southern Christian Leadership Conference? She told me to have a seat while she conferred with Mr. Doar, who was quite busy that day. I sat there patiently. I had all day.

At some point the phone rang on her desk. The secretary answered the phone and said the call was for me. When I picked up the extension phone at a nearby table, Ben Clarke was on the other end. HEY BABY, he said in his loud, booming voice. HEY LEADER, I roared back. How Ben could have known I'd be sitting there at that particular moment I do not know. He knew when I caught the bus, and he could certainly find out when it arrived in DC, but beyond that the

timing of his call was pure luck. DR. KING TOLD ME TO GIVE YOU A MESSAGE FOR MR. DOAR, Ben said. I knew damn well that Dr. King had done no such thing. If Dr. King had a message for Mr. Doar, he could call him directly. He certainly wouldn't go through me. Maybe Hosea had told Ben to call. More likely it was Ben's idea and most likely it was done on impulse. But I wasn't going to spoil a good opening. After Ben told me whatever it was that Dr. King wanted me to tell the AAG, I roared back that I would do just that. Just in case someone wasn't listening on another line, I held the phone away from my ear so Doar's secretary could hear our exchange.

Five minutes later I was sitting in John Doar's office talking about the placement of federal examiners in Jefferson County. He had my booklet and the maps Ben had sent from Birmingham on his desk; at least that had worked. All I remember about our conversation is that the AAG was pleasant and non-committal. The fact that he was getting this information from me, a low-level field worker who literally dropped in because I happened to be in the neighborhood, told me how little practical communication there was between the CRD and the movement. We might have the same goal, but we weren't working together. We were traveling down different roads.

## New York City and Viet Nam

When my bus got into New York, I followed the signs to the subway and got a map. One of my Berkeley friends lived on the lower east side with his girlfriend. He had told me that I was welcome to sleep in their spare room. I had phoned Allan from Atlanta to find out how to get to his place from the NYC bus station and what times he or Cynthia would be home so I could get in. I didn't want to spend time sitting with my suitcases on the sidewalks of New York.

Allan Solomonow lived at 68 Norfolk St. in the lower east side with his girlfriend, Cynthia Wilk. He had told me to take the subway to the stop at Essex and Delancey and walk two blocks from there. It wouldn't have been a bad trip if I hadn't had to carry those heavy suitcases up and down all those subway stairs. At least the fare was still fifteen cents – the same it had been when I visited the City in 1964 after going to the Democratic Convention in Atlantic City N.J.

The building Allan lived in was the oldest occupied building that I had ever seen. It was run-down but didn't look any different than the other lower east side tenements. A five story walk-up with tiny rooms, Allan's flat was relatively "modern." It had a kitchen, living room, and two bedrooms. The toilet and the tub were in a separate bathroom though the plumbing fixtures looked like they were made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although I didn't know it at the time, original tenements did not have a separate bathroom. The bathtub was in the kitchen. A toilet was located in the hallway where it could be used by everyone living on the floor. Allan's extra bedroom was barely large enough for a bed, much smaller than the bedrooms I had slept in in the South (when I had a bedroom). Allen and Cynthia used it for storage and occasional guests. I got comfortable. I came for two weeks; I stayed for eight.

I got to NYC in time to participate in an anti-war march down Fifth Avenue from 96<sup>th</sup> St. to 72<sup>nd</sup> St. With 21,800 people, New York's was the largest march of several that went on around the country on Saturday, March 26. This was only one of several days of protests against the war in Viet Nam held in New York and elsewhere. On Thursday, several hundred students protested at three NYC colleges while three young men burned their draft cards. On Friday, fifteen veterans burned their discharge papers in Union Square while similar actions took place elsewhere in the country. (*NYT* 3-25-66, 3; 3-27-66,1; 3-28-66, 3; 3-29-66, 4; *WP* 1-27-6, A1; *BN* 3-26-66, 1)

Protests against the war in Viet Nam had been going on for months. Earlier in March, 800 trade unionists had rallied against the war in NYC. Until then, most people thought organized labor was united in support of our military efforts in Viet Nam. (*NYT* 3-9-66, 4) In Amherst, MA, 60 college students began an eight day fast (*WP* 3-8-66, A10); 50 students fasted at Queens College. (*NYT* 3-24-66, 3) UC Berkeley held its annual Charter Day celebration on March 25, where U.N. Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg defended US policy in Viet Nam before 12,000 students and faculty. At the end, the moderator asked those supporting current policy to stand up. Only 200 did so. He then asked those who opposed it to stand. Almost the entire audience rose. (*NYT* 3-26-66, 2; *BN* 3-26-66, 1; *WP* 3-26-66, A8)

Protests continued day after day. In late March, several dozen priests, nuns, rabbis and ministers took a two-hour walk for peace to different religious institutions in New York. (*NYT*

3-30-66, 13) Two days later, four students burned their draft cards in Boston. They were surrounded by an angry crowd; some were beaten up. (*NYT* 4-1-66, 5; *Sun* 4-1-66, A3; *WP* 4-1-66, A18) There were worse forms of retaliation. In Berkeley a bomb tore apart the office of the Vietnam Day Committee. (*Sun* 4-10-66, 2; *WP* 4-10-66, A14) Six students who had protested in Baltimore on March 28 were sentenced to 60 days in jail two weeks later. They had passed out anti-war leaflets at an army recruiting office and, when ejected, sat down on the sidewalk and refused to leave. (*Sun* 3-29-66, C28; 4-20-66, C30; *NYT* 4-20-66, 13). In Mississippi, two rural churches were burned after the MFDP held a prayer meeting over US involvement in Viet Nam. (*NYT* 3-28-66, 26, 48)

Viet Nam had been in the Birmingham newspapers during my months in the Magic City, but not the protests against the war. They had printed AP stories on the big national march in November, but nothing on the many smaller protests. I had no idea how much anti-war activity was going on until I got to New York and read the New York papers. It seemed that the Southern attitude toward the anti-war movement was a little like its attitude toward the civil rights movement; if you don't like it, don't mention it, except to threaten retaliation. Gov. Wallace said he would expel students at state supported colleges who protested the war, even if it was just circulating petitions. (*BN* 11-30-65, 10; *SC* 12-4/5-65, 5)

How to deal with the war was a problem for the civil rights movement. There was a consensus that the war was wrong; there was no consensus on what to do about it. While Dr. King spoke out early, he did so as an individual. SNCC was the first organization to issue a statement against the war and the draft, which it did on January 6, 1966. SNCC had been discussing and revising a draft statement for six weeks, but the release date was in response to the murder of Samuel Younge, Jr. on January 3. A Tuskegee Institute student, he had worked with SNCC. The SNCC statement compared his murder to that of peasants in Viet Nam and held the United States government responsible for both. In a radio interview that same day, Julian Bond, SNCC's communication director, expressed his basic agreement with the SNCC statement even though he had not participated in drafting it. Bond had recently been elected to the Georgia House. When he arrived to take his oath of office on January 10, 75 House members challenged his right to be seated. Their "petitions charged that Bond's statements gave aid and comfort to the enemies of the United States and Georgia, violated the Selective Service laws, and tended to bring discredit and disrespect on the House." (*BN* 1-7-66, 1, 6; quote in *Bond v. Floyd*)

After a hearing, a House committee concluded that he should not be allowed to take the oath. The Governor called for a special election on February 23 to fill the vacancy. ACLU attorney Charles Morgan quickly brought an action on Bond's behalf in federal district court. Dr. King was one of the plaintiffs, as a representative of the residents of Bond's district. As a constitutional challenge, it was heard by a three-judge panel. Judges Griffin Bell of the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit and Lewis Morgan of the Northern District of Georgia ruled that the legislature was within its rights to pass on Bond's qualifications to be one of them. Judge Tuttle dissented. The Supreme Court declined to make an expedited ruling but it did take the appeal. As the only candidate for the empty seat, Bond won the special election with 682 votes out of 695 cast – the others were voided for marking mistakes. (*NYT* 2-24-66, 75) By the time the Supreme Court decided his case in December, all of the publicity had made Julian Bond a national figure. He was asked to give speeches against the war in Viet Nam all over the place.

In late March, I met my mother at her hotel at the end of her trip around the world. The

biggest trip of her life, it would be her last. We were going to see New York City together, but she was just too tired for any more tourism. She slept a lot. She had difficulty going up and down all those subway stairs. Her breathing was strained. She couldn't go back to California just yet. She had rented out her house to pay the mortgage and the lease wasn't up. After a few days, she told me that she was going to Washington, DC to stay with her sister Leslie until it was time to go home. Leslie was a civilian employee of the Navy Department who lived in a studio apartment at 1629 Columbia Road. Rather cozy, it had a pull-out couch in addition to a bed. I had stayed with her for the summer of 1962, when she arranged for me to get a summer job as a clerk-typist with the Navy Department. Her building had an elevator and there was a bus stop not far from the front door.

Before she left, my mother showed me the presents for her sisters that she had picked up during her travels and gave me the one she had bought for me. When asked what I wanted before she began her trip, initially I couldn't think of anything. Then I said "while you are in Japan, pick up a good camera." I had always liked taking pictures, but I knew nothing about cameras. I had heard that some really good cameras were made in Japan. Once there, my mother asked the hotel concierge what to buy, and he recommended the Nikon F Photomic. It was one of the best. With a 50mm lens and a camera case, it cost her \$150, which was about a third of what it cost in the US. I bought some film and wandered around the lower east side taking photos as I tried to learn how to use a camera much more complicated than my Brownie Bulls Eye. The Nikon became my most prized possession for many, many years.

Once my mother was gone, my next task was to raise some money. I had to contribute something to Allan and Cynthia's household account since I was eating and sleeping in their flat. I wanted some spending money for myself so I could do a few things. Hosea had said he'd mail my March subsistence check to me in New York but it wouldn't come until sometime in April. I figured that would cover my bus fare back to Atlanta; I'd return once it came. I also thought I might do a little work for SCLC while in New York and maybe earn a little more subsistence. That idea evaporated quickly when I couldn't find an SCLC office listed in the phone book. SNCC and CORE were listed, but not SCLC. I had called the Los Angeles SCLC office the previous June when I needed a ride to Atlanta. I knew that SCLC had a New York office, but I couldn't find it.

Fortunately I had brought a supply of civil rights buttons with me. I sold them at the peace marches and also on the streets. Allan told me that the Village was the best place to sell because it was loaded with political tourists. He was right, but there were a couple glitches. The first problem was the police. Cops had never stopped me from selling in Berkeley or on the marches but they did while standing on the streets of New York. They told me that I needed a peddler's license if I wanted to sell anything. I wasn't sure how to get one and knew I wasn't going to do it. I took the for-sale sign off my button board and stopped spending much time in one place. Instead I walked the streets verbally offering my wares. If a cop asked me what I was doing, I said I collected buttons and was looking to trade. The next glitch was that demand for my buttons was low. Civil rights was no longer the "in" issue; the war in Viet Nam had taken the prime spot. I had a lot of SCLC buttons, which I had never seen outside the South and thought that even casual collectors would want to have. I found that no one knew what the letters SCLC stood for. If it wasn't for the black and white clasped hands, they wouldn't even have recognized it as a civil rights button. Nor did anyone recognize the SCOPE buttons as being from the civil rights movement. Worse, when I explained that SCOPE was SCLC's summer project, they didn't

recognize it as a civil rights organization. I had to say it was Dr. King's organization to get a flicker of recognition. Everyone had heard of SNCC. I only had a few SNCC buttons on my board, but I didn't have to explain those. They sold for \$1. I made one foray to the SNCC office to see if I could buy some more. The woman in charge of the office told me that they had run out of their 3" button, and demand for them was so high that she would trade me a \$2 SNCC poster for one of mine! Oh the irony of the SNCC office trying to buy a SNCC button from an SCLC staff member!

SNCC and CORE appeared to dominate the civil rights movement in New York. SNCC had money-raising concerts frequently, every reform Democratic Club in the City was sponsoring a county in Mississippi and there was at least one Friends of SNCC group on every campus selling their buttons. I couldn't do any business on the NYC college campuses.

In the Village, there were two or three store fronts selling buttons and related items where I was able to do some bulk trading in order to diversify my stock. I knew that demand for my SCLC and SCOPE buttons was low, but they didn't. I also went to other movement offices to see if I could trade for some of their buttons. CORE's office was at 38 Park Row, across from City Hall Park. Most of the peace groups had office space around the corner at 5 Beekman St. They wouldn't do bulk trading, but some of the people I met were happy to trade individual buttons, to the benefit of my button collection but not my cash supply. I was able to buy some buttons at a bulk discount, as I had done when I first visited these offices in 1964. That used up my supply of cash, but I replenished it over time from selling. I visited many of the button manufacturers listed in the yellow pages. I'd had buttons made when I was in Berkeley in order to generate some selling stock and I thought maybe it was time to do another. But the economies of scale required buying no less than a thousand pins; if you wanted a design you had to pay for an artist and a plate. To minimize costs I'd have to come up with a button idea that only required a single color of ink on a single color of paper, with no artist and no plate. And I'd have to invest the equivalent of my bus fare back to Atlanta to get that thousand buttons. If they didn't sell, I'd be stuck with the buttons; I wouldn't be able to trade them in for a bus ticket. I never did have a button made, but I did pick up a lot of free samples while visiting the companies. Over the weeks I was in New York, I probably added about 250 buttons to my personal collection, and another 100 for the collection of my friend Jerry in the Bay Area who was taking care of my button collection while I was away.

Anti-war protest continued throughout the country in April. On April 10, a group of anti-war protestors lined the road to President Johnson's Texas ranch. On April 12, a dozen anti-war protestors threw leaflets into the New York Stock Exchange and unfurled a banner from the visitor's gallery. (*Sun* 4-11-66, 9; *NYT* 4-13-66, 7; *WP* 4-13-66, D7) Prominent people put ads in the newspapers saying they wouldn't pay their income tax because they didn't want their money used for war. (*NYT* 4-15-66, 12) Peace vigils were held near the South Vietnamese embassy in DC. (*NYT* 4-15-66, 9; *WP* 4-15-66, B7)

Perhaps this rising crescendo of protest, often led by clergy, is what persuaded the SCLC Board to finally pass a resolution supporting Dr. King's efforts to get the US to withdraw from Viet Nam. Dr. King had spoken out early on the war, and loudly at the SCLC convention the previous August. The Board was worried that this would undermine support for the civil rights movement. Their fear was supported by polls which showed that most people thought that the two issues should remain separate. (*WP* 4-11-66, A2) The day after the press reported the

Board's resolution and another statement by Dr. King that the war was "rapidly degenerating into a sordid military adventure," Rep. Emmanuel Celler (D NY), a major civil rights supporter in the House, publicly told him to back off. "Civil rights and Vietnam do not mix," he said. (*NYT* 4-14-66, 8; 4-15-66, 60; *WP* 4-16-66, A4) The next day the SRC called the SCLC Board resolution a "Mistake." (*Sun* 4-15-66, A12)

As one day stretched into another, I read the coverage of the Alabama primary in the newspapers, wishing I was there. My subsistence check never arrived. Bus fare or no bus fare, when I read the newspaper stories after the May 3 primary, I knew it was time to return.