

**FROM THE
MISSISSIPPI
DELTA
COMES A
CHALLENGE
TO ALL
AMERICANS...**



Dear sir;

National Sharecroppers Fund
I'm colored, also a sharecropper. We
live on a white employer plantation. We
have no food in the house at all and we have
been nearly starving all year mostly. We
need winter clothing. What can we do?
It isn't many jobs here in the south around
Mississippi where they hire colored peoples.
Last year we made 23 bales of cotton, clear
only \$300. This year 19 bales of cotton.
Don't care how much we made, we never
clear nothing much. We have to borrow
against the next year crop to buy food and
clothes. This is why we never have anything.
We have farmed all our lives and never got
our rights, can't even get on social security.
My family and I need help badly. I'll

...CAN WE MEET THIS CHALLENGE?



consider these facts

4,000,000 people left the rural South in the last ten years, forced out by changing agricultural methods.

- Farms of over 500 acres have more than doubled since 1930, while tenant and other small farms have been reduced by half.

Still, in the Deep South the population remains largely rural and very, very poor.

- 45% of Alabama's people, 59% of South Carolina's, and 62% of Mississippi's still remain on the land . . . over 4½ million people in these three states alone.
- Sharecroppers still make up 27% of Alabama's tenant farmers, 44% of South Carolina's, and 51% of Mississippi's. Over half of these sharecroppers are Negroes; in Mississippi over 90% are Negroes.
- Throughout the South the small farmer fares poorly but the Negro fares even worse. 40% of the rural Negro families earn less than \$1,000 a year; only 20% have incomes above \$3,000.

Federal programs are not meeting this need.

- These programs usually must be initiated locally, and the all-white power structure generally excludes the Negro from participation.
- Ironically, many counties qualify for Area Redevelopment assistance *solely* because of the low-paid Negroes in their midst; thus in Greene County, Alabama, rural white families are "helped" to qualify for aid by their Negro neighbors' miserable \$383 average yearly income.

This pattern must be broken. Rural families — Negro and white — need not be thrust off the land and into city slums and chronic industrial unemployment.

the facts are people

A recent survey of 1,000 Louisiana sugar cane workers found most of them poorly paid because they could not operate the machines that were displacing them. . . . In Mississippi last year, 1,200 underemployed farm workers, mostly Negro, were denied tractor driver training when local white officials killed a planned federal project. . . . Over 400 sharecropper and tenant families were evicted from their land in Fayette and Haywood Counties, Tennessee, in 1960 and 1961 for taking part in a voter registration drive. Welfare officials further "punished" them by refusing to distribute surplus food . . . 7,080 South Carolina Negro farmers, making up over half of the farm operators in nine counties, during a recent three-year period received less than 5% of the funds for land purchase and only one-third of the money for operations and improvements advanced as federal FHA loans . . . A white family — forced out of business after helping the Negro voter registration drive — was denied a farm operating loan in Fayette County, Tennessee.

meeting their needs

THROUGH NATIONAL SHARECROPPERS FUND EFFORTS, THESE PEOPLE ARE BEING HELPED. Through NSF cooperation with a private university and local labor leaders, the Louisiana sugar cane workers will have a farm machinery training program. NSF is working to restore the Mississippi tractor driver training project. After NSF intervention, federal surplus food was distributed to the western Tennessee sharecroppers and farm workers. NSF's field representative is following up loan applications of Negro farmers in South Carolina to ensure that they will get fair treatment. The white Tennessee family, after NSF representations, did receive its FHA farm operating loan.

NSF brings help

In the Southeastern United States, the National Sharecroppers Fund focuses on the one-third of the population which makes up the "hard-core" rural poor. *With help, many of these people can live satisfying and useful lives on the land.*

- *NSF's field staff* brings information about available government aid programs, helps prepare individual applications, overcomes processing delays, secures review of unjustified denials.
- It helps to build truly representative local groups to seek federal aid for new small rural industry and area improvement projects.
- It aids in organizing cooperative groups for farm tool ownership and produce marketing.
- *NSF's grass-roots conferences* bring rural people together with government and private agency representatives to exchange information, spread knowledge of successful techniques, and encourage local planning. At these conferences the people with problems confront the people with power.
- *NSF's representation to government agencies* assists understanding and review of individual applications and local projects, supplies liaison between officials and newly-developing local leadership, and stimulates new approaches to meeting the problems of the rural neediest.
- *NSF's cooperation with other organizations* brings the experience, strength, and goodwill of church, labor, and civic groups to bear on these problems.
- *NSF's public education service* publishes pamphlets and reports, furnishes background material for writers, editors, and commentators, and supplies speakers for church, student, and other groups.



we must do more

The quickening pace of rural displacement and the resulting urban disorganization of uprooted families make it urgent that NSF do much more before it is too late. *Your support will make this possible.*

let's face this fact

From Southern voter registration drives and student sit-ins, the Negro march for human freedom has surged on to Northern picket lines and demonstrations for equality in jobs and housing. Now the whole country must face up to the responsibility it has ignored. *But the starting point remains the rural South.*

Mechanization, land concentration, and improved food processing are bringing our bountiful farm product to market from fewer farms with ever fewer farm workers. It is not enough to say these people are no longer needed to grow the food and fiber to feed and clothe the nation. *A more creative alternative must be found to forcing them off the land and out of the South.*

Many of these low-income farm workers, sharecroppers, and tenant farmers—with their families—would remain in the South if they had job opportunities and the training to fill the jobs, if they were given credit assistance to own and improve their houses on their own few acres, and if they were treated with human dignity. *Their plight should be first on the agenda of the unfinished American Revolution.*

Is the only answer from this . . .



to this?





NATIONAL SHARECROPPERS FUND

The National Sharecroppers Fund is a non-profit, voluntary organization which has worked for over twenty-five years to bring economic and social justice to sharecroppers, tenant farmers, migrant workers, and other low-income farm families throughout America.

It has initiated or financially supported pioneering projects in the fields of farm labor organization, migrant education, and cooperative rural housing and farm machinery ownership. It has pressed to end the exclusion of migrant and other seasonal farm workers from minimum wage, unemployment insurance, child labor, and other social legislation which protects most other American workers. It has assisted rural persons who have suffered because of their participation in the civil rights struggle. Through the National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor, it cooperates with 32 other national groups on problems affecting low-income farm families.

NSF, through its educational program, seeks to create an informed public opinion on the social and economic problems of America's rural people.

Your contribution will help to carry on this work.

NATIONAL SHARECROPPERS FUND

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