

REPORT TO THE SCEF BOARD FROM THE DEEP SOUTH PROJECT

Since the last Board meeting, things have moved swiftly for us.

First of all, we obtained a building for our center (more on that in attached memorandum), and work is now going on to make it habitable for workshops and community meetings. When it is renovated and furnished, it will be able to accommodate up to 50 people for workshops, as well as have a large meeting hall.

In February, we had our first workshop with 30 people -- most of them white -- from the Mississippi Delta. Although we didn't have the center ready at the time, we felt it necessary to have the workshop because the people expected it. In spite of physical difficulties the workshop was quite successful, with poor whites and blacks talking about common problems. Several trips to see them have been made since then, and once resources are available we hope to begin an adult education program there.

Despite, or rather perhaps because of the Laurel strike being busted, we have maintained excellent contacts with both black and white workers in Laurel, Mississippi. These unionists not only lost their strike, but lost their union as well (which was taken under trusteeship by the international union), and are eager for help to salvage whatever they can from the situation. Since racism is one reason they lost everything, they are more than dimly aware of what they must do now just to keep together, much less to win anything back. Our relationship with them has been very honest, and through it we are able to raise such questions. Though we are not starry-eyed over what can come from this, it is still the first major breakthrough into the solid, white Deep Southern working class which has been achieved by anyone in recent years.

Through these experiences -- in the Delta and elsewhere in Mississippi -- we are convinced that our basic approach is correct: to find the situation where Deep South whites have begun to realize that their destiny depends on their equal relationship with blacks, and build from there.

Once the center is functioning, we will be able to build further on these relationships, and begin to have further contacts with other whites in the Deep South.

----Dottie Zellner