

DETROIT REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT RECORDS

BOX 7 OF 16

FOLDER 25

SOUTHERN RURAL RESEARCH
PROJECT 1969



SRRP Newsletter

No. 5

December, 1969

SRRP ATTACKS RACISM IN CENSUS BUREAU

Black people are even discriminated against by the U. S. Bureau of the Census! In the 1960 census, 1 million Southern black people were not included in the Census Bureau statistics—which determine the money allocated for poverty programs.

How could this happen? Easily. In Alabama (and probably the whole South) only whites were census takers, and when only whites are census takers—whites who won't walk a mile into the back woods to find black people, whites who go to the bossman for the count, whites who by their very presence are in intimidation to rural blacks who suspect all whites of snooping around to prove some welfare violation or other means of taking away the little

that poor black families have—then blacks just don't get counted.

PATRONAGE ATTACKED

SRRP is about to attack the Census Bureau's discrimination in **hiring** and **counting** black people. The job of census taker is a **patronage** job, and white Republicans (following Eisenhower's policy for the 1960 census) will choose only whites for these lucrative jobs. Without any merit system, the whites can exclude all blacks without giving them any opportunity to compete for the jobs in open examinations.

SRRP SUIT

SRRP will file a suit against the Census Bureau—if blacks are not hired according to their percentage of the population. If Nixon is sincere about wanting to stop the migration of the black population to the North and to give them jobs in their home states, then the census is a good place to start.

NEEDED MONEY

These jobs may not seem like much to those who have steady jobs and good ones, but \$16 a day for 10 days for about 10 people in each county is more money than is seen by most poor people in Alabama in a whole year. And while having an accurate count of black people in the South may seem relatively unimportant at first glance, when one realizes that in the coming years the major poverty programs will depend on the population as determined by the 1970 census, the significance of the count is obvious.

Even the Census Bureau admits that in 1960, 5.5 million people were not counted, 2 million were black—one tenth of the entire black population. The 1960 census figure of 1.5 million blacks in southern farm families was admitted as too low, instead they said that the figure of 2,450,000 for the nonwhite farm population in the South for 1960 was more accurate.

SRRP feels that by giving more black people jobs, by giving an accurate count to the number of black people in the South, perhaps there may be more of a chance for black people to get the funds they need—which other poor people get because they are **counted!** The great black writer, Ralph Ellison, million people were not counted, 2 million were black

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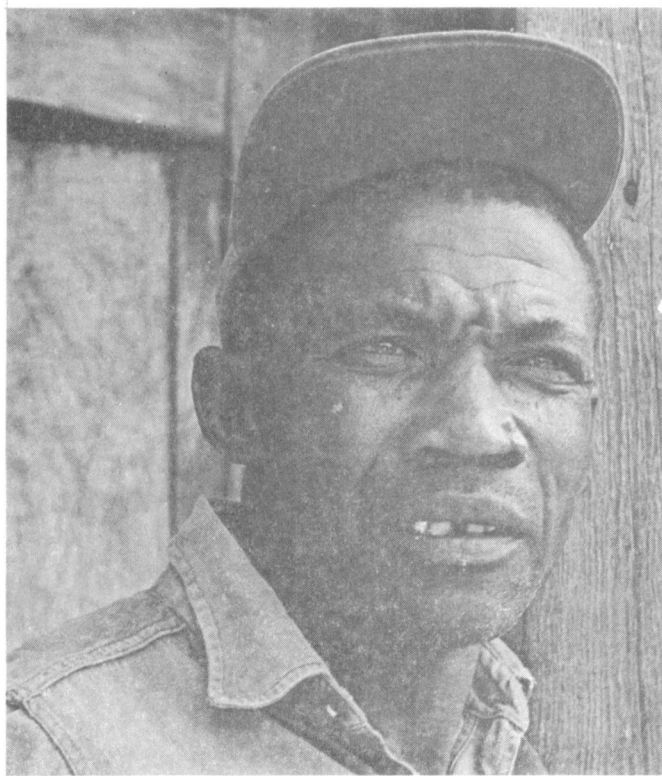


PHOTO BY JOFFRE CLARK

"The Invisible Man." Almost 1 million black people in Southern farm families were not counted in the 1960 Census.

SRRP to Aid**BLACK VOTERS REMOVED FROM GREENE COUNTY ROLLS**

As this newsletter goes to press, the all-white Greene County Board of Registrars is purging the registration rolls of black voters. **Why?** Because the County Commission of Greene County (the county governing body) is now controlled by blacks—thanks to the July, 1969 elections—and **the whites don't want any more blacks to get elected.** How are they doing the purging? By applying an Alabama law prohibiting anyone of most crimes as low as vagrancy from voting.

SRRP will file a class suit attacking the injustices of this law.

The victory in Greene County in July was the first time blacks have won political control of an Alabama county since Reconstruction, even though blacks outnumber whites by 10,000 to 3,000 in population and by 3,800 to 1,750 in registration. The Supreme Court had voided the November, 1968, election because black candidates had not been allowed on the ballot. The special election in July resulted in blacks winning control of both the powerful County Commission and the Board of Education.

CHARGES DROPPED

Shortly after this election 10 blacks were indicted by the Greene County Grand Jury for "illegally voting" because of alleged prior convictions—a felony. Eventually all but one of these charges were dropped; that one, a man over 65 (convicted of stealing a sheep 10 years ago) who voted for the first time in his life, was sentenced to **two years.** The other charges were dropped **after** the intimidation because **there was no evidence that any of the nine had ever been convicted of any crime.**

One couple that was indicted said they had never been arrested for anything in their lives. The wife said that their ex-landlord had brought the voting charges against them because of a long-standing grudge; she refused to let their son drive a tractor for him years ago for \$3 a day, 7 days a week, because she felt the wages were too low and Sunday was his church day. The landlord, she said, has been angry at her ever since.

Another indicted man had been charged with having a whiskey still several years ago. He denied that it was his and got a lawyer who requested a trial; the sheriff said a trial wasn't necessary and agreed to a \$65 fine. When the man requested a pardon so that he could vote, however, there was no record of the arrest or fine, but the county registrar still will not let him vote.

In Alabama, a person who has been convicted of a crime must make a special application to the Board of Pardons and Paroles for restoration of his civil and political rights before he is allowed to register to vote. Hundreds of black people in every county in the state fear to apply for a pardon because they know whites don't want them to vote. (In most cases these blacks have been illegally convicted by all-white juries—the systematic exclusion of blacks from grand juries was prohibited in *Bokulich v. Jury Commission of Greene County*, a suit brought by SRRP's former director, Donald A. Jelinek, in 1967).

SRRP SUIT

The new SRRP suit will be against the Board of Pardons and Paroles of Alabama charging that:

1. Those who were disqualified were illegally convicted by juries from which blacks had been excluded;

2. The crimes which disqualify a person from voting are themselves vague and are not related to the ability to vote. (Some 25 disqualifying crimes are listed, including crimes against nature, miscegenation, assault and battery against wife, living in adultery, etc.)

3. The law governing the Board of Pardons and Paroles is so vague that the Board has absolute and arbitrary discretion to grant or reject pardons, leading to wholesale and purposeful discrimination against black people; and

4. The Board is inherently discriminatory against blacks since it does not now and never has had a single black member.

Injunction

SRRP will also seek an injunction to stop harassment of Greene County's black residents, to force the Board of Registrars to reinstate all those voters purged from the rolls since the July, 1969 election, and to requalify all those disqualified because of illegal convictions by all-white juries (tens of thousands of blacks in the south).

SRRP hopes other suits will be filed on behalf of both Alabama and other state residents who are prevented from voting because of these unconstitutional laws. SRRP will be glad to help with evidence and files for such suits.

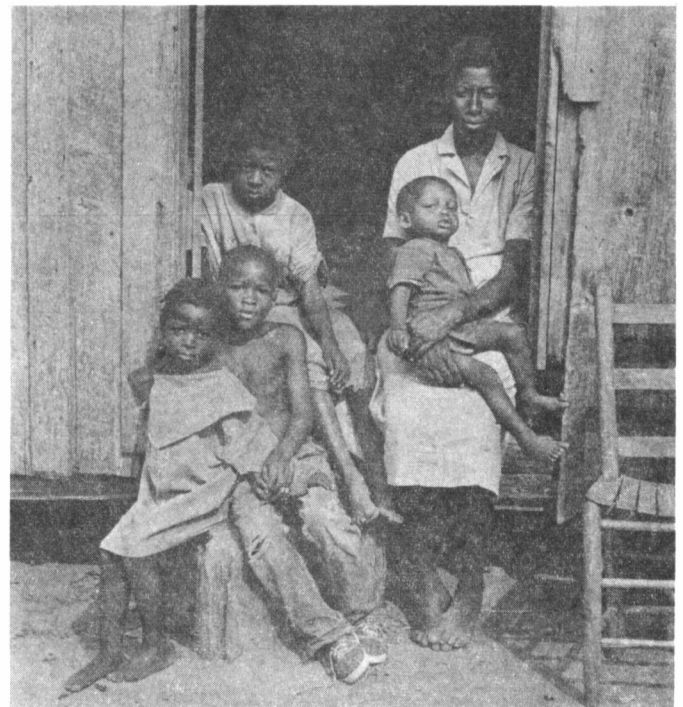
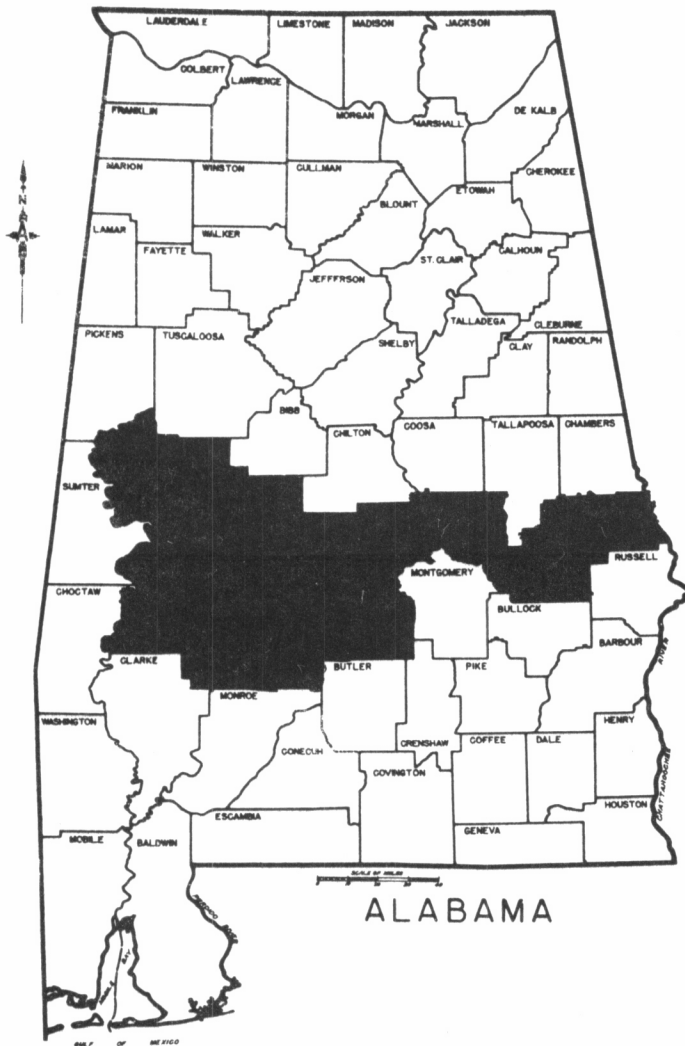


PHOTO BY JOFFRE CLARK

For Mrs. Burns and her family, Christmas will be no different than any other day.



The eleven counties represented on SRRP's new Board of Directors.

SRRP CONTROLLED BY LOCAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Southern Rural Research Project has a new Board of Directors—and **they are all local people**. The previous Board members were mostly from out of state because SRRP was a new organization in 1967; in 1969 it now has all its roots in 11 blackbelt counties (see map).

At its first meeting on October 3, 1969, in Selma, about 30 people met from the 11 counties and elected 60 members to the Board. This is particularly significant since SRRP is without funds, but the people have confidence in the past performance and future potential of SRRP and are working, nevertheless, to make it a viable action arm of their communities.

Most of the members represent their own local groups or county-wide organizations, such as the Southwest Alabama Farmers Co-operative Association (SWAFCA), Alabama Council on Human Relations, Tuskegee Institute, Freedom Quilting Bee,

Welfare Rights Organization, Lowndes County Freedom Party, and many others.
Executive Board

A new executive board was also elected. They are:

Mr. Clarence Williams, Jr., President
(Dallas County)

Mr. James Hogue, Jr., Vice-President
(Perry County)

Mrs. Valerie Watts, Secretary
(Wilcox County)

Mrs. Lizza Mae Bradley, Assistant-Secretary
(Hale County)

Rev. Percy McShan, Treasurer
(Greene County)

While the past Board was able to give excellent advice and some financial support, most of the members were located outside Alabama. SRRP's new Board has first-hand experience with local problems and will take an active part in the decision making. Many new problems will be handled by SRRP as a result of this greater local participation.

Joint Efforts

An important function of the new Board will be the bringing together at regular meetings representatives from 11 counties to share common problems and to organize means of dealing with those problems as a group. This, rather than 2 or 3 people in one county protesting some lack of service, etc., people from 11 counties can bring concerted action in all the counties simultaneously. SRRP is probably the only organization in Alabama that can muster such a large number of people representing local organizations.

Novel Democratic Process

At the first Board meeting the members decided on a unique way of guaranteeing complete democratic participation: **anyone** can attend the meetings, but each county will have only 2 votes in any decisions. Thus, all those from a particular county who attend the meetings may vote on the decision, but the two votes will go to the decision voted on by the majority of that county.

SRRP HAS NEW DIRECTOR

Kathy Veit is the new director of SRRP, taking over at the end of the summer of 1969, after a year (1968-69) of outstanding service by former co-directors U. Z. Nunnally and Dondra Simmons. Among their many achievements was their help in the organizing of the Elmore County Improvement Organization. Kathy Veit was an original founder of SRRP and was Assistant Director for 1½ years when Don Jelinek was director, 1967-68.



SRRP Executive Officers: L to R, Spencer Hogue, Jr., Mrs. Valerie Watts, Clarence Williams, Jr., and Mrs. Lizza Mae Bradley. Rev. Percy McShan not shown.

SRRP Findings:

In a survey conducted by SRRP in eight Alabama counties during the summer of 1967, we discovered that nearly a quarter of the black farm families interviewed eat no fresh meat of any kind. Another 25% eat meat only once a week. Of the meat that is eaten by the rural Negro family, most of it is pork—often neckbones or just chunks of fat called “fat back.” Rural negroes rarely eat beef. Fresh milk is not used at all by 30.0% of the households. Babies in these homes are sustained on their mother’s milk, which due to the poor health and low protein die of the mother—may be scanty or lacking. In the absence of both fresh milk and the mother’s milk, infants may be raised without any milk at all.

Letter from the President:

Dear Friends:

I am happy to accept the responsibilities of the President of SRRP’s new Board. I think the new Board will bring the organization home closer to the people, and also bring the problems of the people closer to the organization. It will give the people of the community a greater feeling of responsibility and of being a part of SRRP. It will also give us a clearer sense of direction and a chance to work together on our common problems. SRRP has played a significant role in trying to eliminate some of the many problems which face black people in Alabama, and I think that with all of us working together it will continue to be important in finding solutions to the problems that exist.

In Peace and Freedom
Clarence Williams, Jr.
President

SRRP ATTACKS RACISM IN CENSUS BUREAU (Continued from Page 1)

hopes to make the black man visible even to the U. S. Census Bureau.

HOW?

SRRP is conducting a campaign to get all eligible blacks to apply for the job of census enumerators. The names of all potential applicants will be sent to the Republican congressmen and committeemen of Alabama. SRRP will explain the importance of having black census takers and ask that these applicants be referred to the district office for hiring. If a significant number of qualified blacks are not hired within a reasonable time, SRRP will file suit against the Census Bureau charging that racial discrimination exists in the patronage meted out in the South and that blacks are being denied their constitutional rights (“The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years . . .” Article 1, Section 21).

Any lawyers or law groups interested in bringing similar suits in their areas should feel free to write SRRP for its evidence and files.



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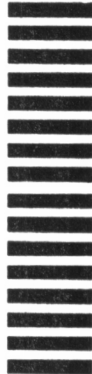
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1516 mabry street selma, alabama 36701

(205) 872-2530

December 1, 1969

Dear Friends:

Christmas will soon be here, but for many black families in rural Alabama, Christmas Day will be just like any other Winter's day: cold and hungry! The Southern Rural Research Project has been active in Alabama for almost three years now, trying to help improve the living conditions of rural black families so that they might remain in the South rather than being forced into Northern ghettos.

We need your help to continue our work. During the first week in December, I will be making a trip to New York with several of our Board members to approach foundations for financial support. However, it will be at least two months after that before we get an answer from any of them. With the bank balance now at \$193.16, we desperately need money to run the project until February. The following is a projected budget for the bare essentials for the two months of December and January.

Salaries	\$ 80.00
Rent & Utilities	290.00
Food & House Expense	120.00
Office supplies	40.00
Office equipment	14.00
Postage	60.00
Telephone	100.00
Car repair & Insurance	150.00
Car-gas	150.00
Car payments	173.16
Medical	20.00
TOTAL	<u>\$1,197.16</u>

If, after reading the newsletter, you feel that our work should continue, please share a little of your Christmas bounty with us. That is, after all, what Christmas is all about. You may enclose your check in the envelope we have provided (no postage necessary). We are now a tax-exempt organization, so checks made out to Southern Rural Research Project may be deducted for income tax purposes.

Thank you, and. . .

Peace,

Kathy Veit

Kathleen A. Veit



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PRESIDENT

SPENCER HOGUE, JR.
VICE-PRESIDENT

KATHLEEN A. VEIT
DIRECTOR

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