

labor donated

benton
county



"It's that Freedom Train a comin'; get on board, get on board."

VOLUME II, NUMBER 31

JUNE 13, 1965

WE ARE NOT AFRAID



"If you miss me from Old Salem sch
And you can't find me nowhere
Come on over to Ashland school,
I'll be studying over there."

NAOMI INTEGRATES ASHLAND

Naomi Reaves singlehandedly integrated the Ashland clinic kindergarten last Monday, June 7. Mrs. Reaves had signed up Naomi for the clinic center and she was taken there without any trouble. Her teacher was extremely nice to her, and Naomi didn't even seem to realize that she was making history. When asked what she liked about the kindergarten, Naomi said, "The other children."

Unfortunately, that was the only nice thing that happened during the first week of the county's kindergarten. On Tuesday six Negro parents went down to the clinic to enroll their children--they were turned away by Mr. Bennett and Mr. Tony Farese who said the deadline for enrollment was Monday.

Four of these same parents went to Old Salem after leaving Ashland and were told that they COULD register their children.

Meanwhile, an investigation of the county's kindergarten is now being undertaken by the federal government as a result of complaints of the Negro citizens of the county.

The main complaints are: the centers are segregated (with the exception of Naomi); people with good incomes are getting jobs; Marshall county teachers are being used; facilities are almost completely segregated.

Because of this, the Negro citizens of the 2nd and 3rd districts have decided to keep their children out of Old Salem because they do not want to see people making money off of their children. The 1st district did not make any decisions.

The hope is that the federal government will close down the

county's kindergarten and will set up one sponsored by the Citizens Club.

And as for Naomi---she has the mumps! But when she recovers, she plans to return to the clinic.

Flannery's coming!

Mr. J. H. Flannery, attorney for the Justice Department, will be in town this week to investigate complaints about voter registration made by Negro voter applicants. He wants to meet with all those who have failed the test. Unless notified differently, he will meet with us at the all-county meeting Tuesday night at Greenwood.

Last week, at least 66 people tried to register. 42 of these passed, which is 63% (Mr. Flannery feels that about 90% should pass).

NEWLY REGISTERED VOTERS

Peter White	Jeff Alexander
Claud Conley	Mattie Lou Smith
A.Z. Smith	L.B. Paige
Margaret Paige	Julius William
Leola White	Earl Price
Rachel Jackson	Eldora Johnson
Toaster Baird	Clay A. Crawford
Honry Bostick	Marie Hoyle
Sarah Washington	Roosevelt Harris,
Albirta Hoyle	Jr.
Cinderella Evorett	
Bobie Louise Harris	
Dorothy Jones	Calbirda Tipler
Jethers Lee Thompson	
Louise Tipler	Nola Shaw
Eddie B. Smith	Mabel Traylor
Clea Rutherford	Laveonia McAfee
Calbirda Strickland	
Francis Strickland	
Mary Lizzie Strickland	
Laura Frances Strickland	
Andrew Reaves	MaeFlower Price
Drucilla Farrow	Frank P. Wilson
Willie Poplar	Lillie B. Shaw
Willie Lee Batts	Rosie Batts

Job corps here

by Ellie B. Steward

Benton county plans to participate in another anti-poverty program, the Job Corps, under the sponsorship of Corinth. Mr. Douglas Autry will be head of this program in the county.

Mr. Autry spoke before the PTA on Friday night. He said the program will give jobs to young people between the ages of 16 and 21 who are still in high school or who have dropped out, and who are from families with low incomes.

These young people will be working with county supervisors doing roadwork and with the forestry agency. Other jobs will also be available.

The program will be integrated. People can apply at Mr. Autry's office which is the old forestry office at the courthouse. Salary will be \$1.25 an hour for a 30 hour week.

The only unpleasant thing so far about the program is the rumor that Lawrence James is working with Mr. Autry on the program. We hope this is not true. Mr. Autry is being invited to speak before the citizens at the Greenwood meeting on Tuesday night. At that time he will be asked to work with a bi-racial committee in giving information on this program.

NOTICE:

The dog show has been postponed a week from today--Sunday, June 13. The time and place will be announced.

MEANWHILE, THE MEETING FOR ALL PLAINTIFFS IN THE INTEGRATION SUIT WILL STILL MEET AT 5:30 P.M. AT THE CAFE. THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT MEETING! BE SURE TO COME!

Meeting with board

by Loyal W. Thompson

I attended the Board of Education meeting on Monday, June 7 with Mr. and Mrs. Reaves, Rev. Beard, Mrs. Dorse, and Mr. and Mrs. Washington. I wanted to know if they would reconsider the Benton county teachers who weren't rehired.

Mr. McKenzie said that the Board had already signed contracts for new teachers, but that if we all had come in earlier, something might have been done.

I asked why they had not rehired those teachers. Mr. McKenzie said they weren't from accredited schools. I asked if some of the teachers still at Old Salem weren't from unaccredited schools. I did not receive an answer.

I asked if Mr. Webber and Mrs. Crawford have a degree equal to those of Mrs. Holland, Mrs. Moody, and Miss Moss--answer yes. Then I asked why couldn't they begin by dismissing teachers from another county instead of from this county--answer: they weren't qualified. Then Mr. McKenzie said, well, what we did may have been a mistake, but it was a mistake from our heads--not our hearts.

Mr. McKenzie said, you all can argue all you want to--we have done what we had to do. I asked if we are wrong for wanting our people to teach here. Answer: no.

MRS. G.N. REAVES WAS SUPPOSED TO WRITE A REPORT ON THE MEETING WITH THE BOARD, BUT SHE FORGOT.

School news:

The white community has decided to end the split session at Ashland and Hickory Flat. The Board of Education (white) and their lawyers (white) have decided to KEEP the split session at Old Salem.

We want to thank the Board and their lawyers for making our decisions for us. Apparently there are still some people (white) who do not think that Negroes are capable of making decisions for themselves.

Anyway, our children don't really need a good education--to work in the cotton fields. And with the split session, they will continue to be able to pick cotton for the white man whose child has to go to school.

Farm news

Mr. Miskelly and Mr. Shields spoke before the Citizens Club meeting two weeks ago. Mr. Miskelly spoke on ways farmers can lower the costs of producing cotton, and Mr. Shields spoke on federal loans available to farmers.

Mr. Miskelly was asked about new crops that might replace cotton, but he didn't seem to know much about that. He suggested that farmers interested in new experiments with crops subscribe to Mississippi Farm Research, through his office.

Mr. Shields spoke about new loans available through the anti-poverty program. One especially interesting loan is a cooperative loan, whereby many farmers apply together for large farm machinery such as cotton pickers or combines. One such group, including William Beck, Effie Peterson, Clea Mathis, and others have already applied for such a loan to get a one-row cotton picker.

Mr. Shields also said that a loan for such things as a community center can be gotten through the FHA.

A produce market is being established in South Haven, as a convenient place for farmers to sell produce.

The time is now

BY Sarah Washington

We, the Negro race, have always been in slavery for the white man. Now one day has come for us to get the same opportunity that the white man has. Unless we cooperate, we won't get what is for us.

I am sure that every Negro wants a better opportunity than we have had in the past. I know that I don't want my children to be treated as I have been--which was unfair.

I don't think any Negro should be afraid of trying to win their rights, even if we have to suffer some. Just think about that we are in a bad rut anyway and a little more wouldn't hurt much because when the fight is won, we can live in peace and without fear. So make up your minds now! Don't wait until it's too late.

DEAR FREEDOM WORKERS:

I went to the courthouse to register and the first time I didn't pass. But I went back to register again on Monday. Thank God I passed this time.

Signed: Earl Price

announcements:

*Petitions about the firing of the six teachers will be presented to the citizens at the all-county meeting at Greenwood on Tuesday night.

*Some of our white friends who went to the Cotton Patch Cafe report the prices to be: hamburger 25¢, hot dog 25¢, cheeseburger 35¢.

*In three weeks, 600 Negroes went to the courthouse to register--in Sunflower county. What's wrong with us in Benton?

*3,000 cotton-shoppers are on strike in the Delta, demanding 1.25 per hour.

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NEGRO HISTORY SECTION:

When Negroes Served for Mississippi

Many thousands of Congressmen have served in the House and the Senate since we became a nation. Most of their names have been forgotten. We have never heard of Benjamin Sterling Turner, Hiram R. Revels, Blanche K. Bruce, or John R. Lynch

No one ever learns that these men were among fourteen representatives and two senators who served between 1869 and 1876, and who occupy a special place in our history. These men represented southern states in the United States Congress; they were ex-slaves and they were black.

We do not hear of these men because we are lied to. By teachers who teach nothing of the history of the Negro people in America. By our mass communications which omit all references to "controversial" matters, even when they are historical facts. By politicians and racists who say that Negroes are inferior, or at least uneducated and incapable of accepting public responsibility. History gives them the lie.

The newspapers show that the Freedom Movement is fighting for the establishment of democracy in the South. That is not exactly correct. The fight in the South is for the re-establishment of democracy. Democracy did exist in the South, once--during the Reconstruction period just after the close of the Civil War.

Selma, Alabama, February 1965: thousands of Negroes herded into jails simply because they demand their right to vote.

Selma, Alabama, 1870: thousands of Negroes were registered voters. The district convention of the Radical Republican Party met in September. That was Lincoln's party--the party that became Goldwater's. Back then it WAS a radical party in the South. The convention nominated Benjamin Turner, livery stable owner, tax collector, city councilman, and ex-slave. He sold a horse to pay his campaign expenses, and he won the election.

The Radical Republican Party was, during Reconstruction, what the Freedom Democratic Party is in the South today. It was a party of democracy and racial equality. Like the FDP it got its main support from Negroes, but it was integrated. In South Carolina and Louisiana the Radicals elected white governors and black lieutenant governors. Defeat in the Civil War had demoralized and disorganized the old plantation owners and white businessmen, and it took them a while to regain power and stop their ex-slaves from acting like Americans.

Today's CORE and SNCC had their organizational counterparts in the Union Leagues of Reconstruction. They were especially strong where Union armies had chased off "ole massa" and the freedmen had divided the land and declared themselves owners. The Union League meetings were held in barns, open fields and churches. There were speakers on all sorts of subjects, especially those relating to control of land and political rights for Negroes. Many a leader emerged out of League activities.

One of the biggest lies the white folks have used for a hundred years to exclude Negroes from public office is that black people are educationally "unqualified." (What this means is that if you are black, you need a Ph.D. to qualify for dog-catcher.) 5 of the Negro Congressmen were lawyers, 4 had excellent higher educations, one graduated from a school in England. The average Negro Congressman had more formal education than Abraham Lincoln or any of the white frontier Congressmen like Daniel Boone or Davy Crockett.

But the Radicals didn't buy the argument that you need a fancy degree to serve your people. Benjamin Turner could hardly read and write; Jefferson Long of Georgia was a tailor; John Lynch of Mississippi ran a photography business.

This brief period of democracy in the South came to an end because Negroes with votes were a threat to white power. Negroes in Congress were notable for their defence of civil liberties and democracy. In their speeches they often quoted statistics on the massacres of "loyal" Negro voters by "disloyal" rebel vigilantes.

Integrated Radical state legislatures created the first public education systems in the deep South; they built the first public hospitals and mental institutions; they abolished whipping-posts and other barbarous practices in prisons. The pay of public officials was raised so that representatives of the people would no longer have to live on bribes offered by rich planters. The Radicals abolished property qualifications for voting and reformed the tax base.

During Reconstruction all was not harmony by any means. Within the Negro community there began to develop a split between a well-to-do black power structure and the more militant poor farmers. The white farmers, ground down by poverty and demoralized by military defeat, were ready prey for the demagoguery of the white upper class and the old Confederate politicians.

Medgar Evers was not among the first American Negro leaders to be dropped by a barbaric enemy. B.F. Randolph was an Oberlin graduate and Methodist minister who served as a leader in the South Carolina State Senate. He was assassinated in 1868. The most dynamic of Louisiana's Negro leaders was Oscar J. Dunn; he was elected lieutenant governor and poisoned shortly afterwards. The Ku Klux Klan was born in Reconstruction times; but born also was a new spirit of democracy, of Negro organization, of Negro service to his country in City Hall, State House, and Congress.

The Ku Kluxers (some with white sheets, most with just white faces and "white" minds) destroyed the burgeoning democracy and forced the legend of Reconstruction to be suppressed. Knowledge of that legend is dangerous to white politicians and businessmen and to white racist preconceptions and propaganda. But that old legend will be relearned as a new legend is born in the South; the knowledge of that old history will help make new history. Knowledge is dangerous, and that's why frightened people lie to us.

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(The above story was taken from the March-April issue of Insurgent magazine.)