The White Political and Economic Domination of Selma's Negroes

SELMA, Alabama — The State Troopers and horse-back riding posse-men who broke up Sunday's (March7) March on Montgomery are a familiar sight to local Negroes and voter registration workers here and throughout Alabama. The use of posse-men and Ala. State Troopers to quell Negro protests here is the culmination of years of white political and economic domination of Selma's Negroes.

This Central Alabama town is Dallas County's seat, and a major population center in Alabama's Black Belt. Over 57% of the county's 57,000 is Negro; fewer than 2% of the eligible Negroes are registered to vote. "Alabama's first, largest and most active chapter of the White Citizens Council was born here," a white citizen boasted. The town also has a chapter of the racist National States Rights Party, despite denials by beefy County Sheriff Jim Clark. There is no Ku Klux Klan group active in Selma, "because people put their trust in law enforcement," Sheriff Clark explains.

A White Citizens Council rally a few weeks ago featuring former Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett drew 1,500 whites. Council leadership and the town's political and economic leadership are entwined. Former Selma Major Chris Heinz is the new president of the Citizens Council. Sheriff Clark said recently the council "does a good job."

Clark was first elected in 1955, and has won re-election since then. He faces three Justice Department suits charging him with interfering with and intimidating potential Negro voters and staff members from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Clark's proposal for solving Selma's racial troubles is for "outside agitators" to leave "and let Alabama handle its own problems." Clark said recent demonstrations "have done more to destroy the relations between the white man and the Negro in Selma and Dallas County than any other one thing that has happened in the last 100 years."

The Sheriff always carries an electric cattle prod, which he describes as a "most humane instrument!" He is usually accompanied by some members of his 300-man-strong civilian posse, organized in 1958 to break up union organizing attempts here. One SNCC worker explained. "There is not much private vigilante violence like there is in Mississippi. Instead, Jim Clark provides the whites with legal, tax-supported terror."

Clark has used his possee, his cattle prods and billy clubs against SNCC workers since they first began a voter registration drive here in February, 1963. His officers and posse-men attended every SNCC-sponsored voter mass meeting, and often used walkie-talkies to relay what was being discussed.

In July, 1963, the Sheriff arrested SNCC worker Alexander Brown on charges of "false identity." The arrest came two days before Brown was to testify about voter discrimination in federal court in Montgomery. Later that year he raided the SNCC office—which overlooks his jail—and the SNCC Freedom House and seized the group's records, after a federal judge had denied him permission to subpoena them.

In Ocother, 1963 he pulled workers from the steps of the federal courthouse in Selma and arrested them for "inciting to riot." They had been holding signs saying "Register To Vote."

Clark and Colonel Al Lingo, head of the Alabama State patrol, are good friends. Clark says he has been in daily contact with Lingo" and that "Col. Lingo and I have worked very close since (Martin Luther) King came to Selma" last January. The Dallas County Sheriff has supplied Lingo with the services of his armed militia. Clark and his posse have appeared to put down racial demonstrations in Birmingham, Tuskegee, Gadsden and at the University of Alabama. In Notasulga, the Sheriff himself pulled white photographer Vernon Merritt from a school bus, beat him and smashed his camera.

Selma's newly elected city administration, while maintaining a "hard line on segregation and Negro registration, differs with Clark on handling racial protests." Merchants here privately say their business is down since large scale arrests began. During Sunday's march, the city's public safety director, Wilson Baker, begged Clark "Let me handle it. Just wait a minute and they'll be all right." Clark snapped back "I've waited too long already and drove away. After Sunday's beatings, Baker told a SNCC worker "They've taken it out of my hands."

From Atlanta, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) has asked for Clark's arrest. "Section 242—Title 18 of the United States Code provides that law officers can be arrested for depriving people of their constitutional rights 'under color of law'" a SNCC worker said. Three white men were arrested in Mississip last summer under a similar statute after they attacked vote workers there.

"This is a sad business," Selma's whites say apologetically, but the chance of any group of them speaking out against the sheriff is slight. When 70 white people—all Alabamians—marched here March 6 to protest police brutality, there were no Selma natives among them.

As one white man put it, "The trouble is, too many of our people fear the white man more than they do the Negro."

Gov. Moore Commends Health Association for Doing Fine Job

RALEIGH—Gov. Dan K. Moore has commended the Virginia-North Carolina 65 Health Insurance Association for its approach to health insurance for persons 65 and older.

Officials of the Association which is composed of 52 companies operating in the two states, met with Gov. Moore this week. Those present included R. J. Jones of Greensboro, Association vice president; and Murray McCulloch of Richmond, Va., Association secretary.

Gov. Moore noted that the Virginia-North Carolina 65 Health Insurance Association was formed under enabling legislation adopted by lawmaking bodies of the two states. As an example of insurance industry cooperation to meet the needs of persons 65 and older for health insurance protection, he added, "I believe it demonstrates clearly that the free enterprise system has the ability, and the willingness, to provide solutions to problems as they arise."

The Association currently is conducting its second open enrollment period. Its basic and major medical health insurance protection is available, without medical examination, to residents of the two states who are 65 and older plus the spouses of those enrolled regardless of age. In its first eight months' operation, it has paid more than 4,000 claims totaling nearly $1 million.

I am advised that the Virginia-North Carolina 65 Health Insurance Association is holding its second open enrollment period, through March 22, as a special opportunity for persons 65 and older to consider the advantages of this health insurance protection offered by a cooperative association of insurance companies.

The General Assembly of North Carolina, at its 1963 session, adopted legislation to encourage insurance companies to act together in meeting health insurance needs of persons over 65. Following similar action by the Virginia General Assembly last year, the Virginia-North Carolina 65 Health Insurance Association was formed. Fifty-two companies voluntarily joined the association. In its first eight months' operation, more than 35,000 eligible residents of the two states have applied for coverage; and more than 4,000 claims totaling approximately $1,000,000 have been paid.

I am informed that persons who have reached their 65th birthday may enroll for this health insurance protection without medical examination and that the basic and major plans of coverage are designed to provide broad coverage at reasonable cost. Also, any licensed insurance agent in the two states may assist any eligible person in enrolling.

I commend the insurance industry for taking this approach to meet a social need of our day. I believe it demonstrates clearly that the free enterprise system has the ability, and the willingness, to provide solutions to problems as they arise.

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HAVING QUALIFIED as administratrix of the estate of Freeman M. Smith deceased, late of Durham County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons having claims against said estate to exhibit them to the undersigned at 418 S. Roxboro St., Durham, North Carolina, on or before the 20th day of September, 1965, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This 16th day of March, 1965.
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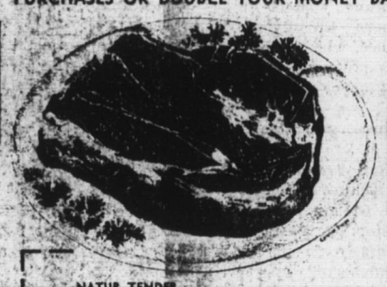
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