

Four Yale University Divinity  
School students describe...

# A Week in Mississippi

*Approximately sixty Yale University students spent a week in Mississippi prior to Election Day this year to aid in the mock election campaign for Aaron Henry, a Negro who was the write-in candidate for Governor. Four students wrote an article describing their experiences. We are not identifying the authors or any of the Mississippi communities they visited. Our decision to omit these particulars has been made reluctantly, but realistically, for the protection both of the authors and of the people with whom they talked and worked during their trip. The editors have ascertained to their satisfaction the factual accuracy of each word in the article. The reader is urged not to allow the omission of names and places to detract from the significance of the story these students have to tell.*

**A**LL OF US THOUGHT we understood the Mississippi racial situation from news accounts over the past few years, but our thoughts were unbelievably tame in comparison to what we actually saw and experienced.

We did not go to Mississippi on a freedom ride or to sit-in at lunch counters, to kneel-in at churches, or wade-in at beaches. We merely went to encourage Negroes to vote in a mock protest election.

This mock election was to dramatize the fact that most Negroes in Mississippi are not allowed to vote. And even if they could vote, they would have no choice of candidates. The two political parties try to 'outdo' each other in showing which candidate is the strongest segregationist.

According to Aaron Henry (president of the NAACP in Mississippi), there are 425,000 Negroes in the state who are of voting age. Of this number, only 23,000 are registered voters. Since 1960, of the 69,000 attempting to register, 63,000 have been refused, including a number of men holding doctoral degrees.

The registration forms are quite lengthy. One of the questions is to read and explain in your own words a section of the Mississippi Constitution. It is then up to the registrar to decide whether or not the answer is adequate.

We arrived at our first stop early Sunday morning. One of our first sights in this city was that of a police car driving by with an enormous police dog in the back. We asked one of the full-time campaign workers about this, and she matter-of-factly replied that they always bring the dogs out on Sunday because someone is always trying to integrate the churches. Indeed, two white ministers from another state are reported to have been arrested that morning for trying, together with a Negro student, to worship in a "white" church.

We then went to another city to help prepare for a mass meeting at which Aaron Henry, the write-in candidate for Governor, was to speak. We were greeted upon our arrival there by four other Yale students who had just been released by the police after being roused from sleep in the early morning and questioned

for three hours. The only reason given for this action was that the students were sleeping in a Negro section of town.

One of our foursome and two of the other group went to lunch at a Negro restaurant nearby. Before they were served, the police arrived. The owner of the restaurant suggested that the Yale students leave. A few minutes later the police stopped across from their car and came over asking for the driver. He was arrested for illegal parking. The officer later said in court that the car was three feet from the curb and obstructing heavy traffic. Yet the driver, whose shoe is fourteen inches long, estimated that the distance between the car and the curb was little more than half the length of his shoe.

The officers took the driver and the car to the police station and began searching the car. When the driver asked the officers whether they had a search warrant, he was given the added charge of interfering with an officer.

He was also booked on suspicion of car theft because he did not have his title with him, a form which his home state suggests should not be carried in the car. This charge was later dropped, but he was found guilty on the other two charges and fined \$20 by the judge.

An hour after the driver's arrest, a Negro full-time worker of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was arrested in the same town for reckless driving. He had noticed a police car half a block away when he left our headquarters and says he was doubly careful not to break any laws. Yet within a block he was arrested for squealing away from the curb, turning a corner at high speed without signaling, and cutting in front of oncoming traffic.

We spent several hours watching court proceedings. The highest fine for reckless driving by a white man in the cases that we heard was fifty dollars. The SNCC worker was fined five dollars for improper license tags and one hundred dollars for reckless driving.

After the court session we were cornered by several local civic leaders who took us out for coffee. We were told how they loved and took care of their "niggers." They also said that we would be arrested for breach of the peace if we returned to the Negro section of town. We were told that this would involve six months on the chain gang in the county prison. Frightened by this, we spent that night in a white hotel.

The next morning two of us headed for the coast while two of us stayed behind.

**A** BOUT AN HOUR BEFORE the mass meeting scheduled for that night, we suddenly heard sirens and then saw six fire trucks speeding up the street. They stopped in front of our office and said that someone had turned in a fire alarm. They then proceeded to charge into every house on the block in what seemed to us to be an attempt to scare the neighborhood.

At 8:30 we walked over to the site of the mass meeting with a local white woman. On the way we were stopped by the police, who told her that she could not go to the meeting. When she insisted on going, policemen took her by the arm and drove her away in a police car. She was released later that night into the custody of her husband. The local newspaper on the next day reported that the white community generally ignored the meeting.

The first hour and a half of the meeting was a nightmare. A continuous stream of fire trucks and police cars went up and down the street outside the meeting with red lights flashing and sirens blaring. A police dog was barking continually. At first everyone was scared. It is doubtful that any of us from the North had ever felt his knees shake so fast and hard.

Before the meeting had progressed very far, the feelings of the crowd of many Negroes and some Yale students had changed. This was a real religious experience. Under threats and general harassment, this group seemed to gain the strength and the courage to go out and face whatever was before them.

While two of us were attending the rally, two of us were participating in a meeting in another town where the threat took a different form.

The Mississippi NAACP had scheduled a dinner for ministers. Invitations had been sent to many white and Negro ministers.

When we arrived at the meeting place, there was a crowd of jeering whites across the street, and police were at the building. The meeting began shortly after we arrived.

The shouting from outside seemed to build up slowly until finally something smashed through one of the windows of the front hall, and a cry of approval went up from the crowd. From that point the violence of the crowd rapidly increased so that, within half an hour, all but five of the windows had been smashed.

Finally, two large pieces of lead pipe came through the windows and glided the full length of the building on the floor. The chairman decided that it was best to dismiss the gathering before the mob got completely out of hand. The mayor and the police were called

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and they assured additional personnel within five minutes in order to help get everyone safely to their cars and away from the area.

Our group got out of the building and began to drive away from the scene. But less than four blocks away we were stopped by police who had been trailing us. The driver of the car was arrested on a charge of having no license-tag light and was told to follow the officer to the police station.

The police car started out ahead of us and proceeded to lead us back toward the mob. As we reached the corner just half a block from the building that we had just left, the policeman stopped at the traffic light. The mob had increased so that it was gathered around this corner as well as in front of the meeting place.

The policeman stepped out of his car and called out, "Turn right here and follow me down to the station." This called the mob's attention to us. When the light turned green, the group of boys on the corner armed themselves and let fire.

We all covered our faces in case the glass should splinter and heard loud thuds and smashes as we turned the corner. When we looked up, the shatterproof windows on the right side of the car had all been smashed. Later we saw that the side of the car had been severely damaged; it was covered with large and small dents.

At the police headquarters, the driver was taken into the station. The four of us remaining, two Negroes and two whites, soon left the car also, because we felt it very unsafe to be seen there together. We left two-by-two and sought our own places of refuge.

One of us immediately went to make a phone call. He was so frightened that he could not lift a coin from one shaking hand with the other, and had to lay the coins on a shelf before he could grasp the one he wanted.

**T**HE DAY AFTER the rally, two of us went to a nearby community.

We had no trouble with the police in this place, because the Negro community does not pose any threat there. The fear in the Negro community and in much of the white community is unbelievable.

The Negroes believe that if they do anything toward gaining their rights, they will be fired from their jobs. Most

of the people who would normally be the leaders in this Negro community have already left for Chicago and other Northern cities. Of those remaining, the schoolteachers would be the most likely leaders. They are employed by white superintendents. A teacher's contract is renewed each year. No teacher is allowed tenure.

In this particularly segregated town, despite the Interstate Commerce Commission ruling, the waiting rooms and lunch counters in the Greyhound bus depot are still segregated. No Negro is allowed to use the public library. Of the four theaters, only one admits Negroes, and it segregates them into the last two rows.

We each saw various forms of the "segregated way of life." We became acquainted with segregation in schools, swimming pools, theaters (even drive-ins), bus stations, rest rooms, at drinking fountains, and even on a man-made beach which was built with Federal funds several years ago.

In one Mississippi county there are two weeks of the county fair, the first week for the whites and the second for the Negroes. All but a few of the concessions and two or three minor rides pack up and leave after the "white fair."

**I**N THE COURSE of our stay in Mississippi, we met two white ministers, one a Presbyterian and one a Methodist, who were definitely in favor of integration. Their only question was how fast they could push for this. The white Presbyterian minister said that he was glad we had come down. He felt that it would take some outsiders coming in to dramatize the problems—to prick the consciences of the white community. He felt that this would make it easier for him to talk to his congregation.

The Methodist minister questioned whether his cautious role was right. A Mississippi white minister who feels that the Gospel calls for integration is caught in a bind. He knows that if he expresses his views clearly, he will have to leave; and yet he also knows that if he does not speak up, he is compromising the Gospel. A minister has to take into consideration that his congregation is composed of men and therefore of sinners. However, he must state in unmistakable terms what he feels God is telling him. If he does not do this, he is in effect supporting the segregationist pattern of his community, and is in fact giving the

support of the Christian Gospel to a segregationist way of life. In Mississippi, if a white minister does speak up clearly for integration, he will almost certainly have to leave. However, he must do this and then hope that the minister who is called to follow him will do the same. After a while perhaps the congregation will start to wonder if it is not they who are wrong. Perhaps also they will discover the Christian gospel of reconciliation and find a source of strength which is necessary to withstand the suffering one must undergo in working for a reconciled community.

We discovered, upon our return to New Haven, that some of our hair-raising experiences had been mild in comparison to those of some of our fellow workers. One Yale student reported that while he was driving between two cities, he was followed by four men who beat him when he reached his destination. On the following day he was followed by two of those four men and was run off the road four different times as he attempted to reach a third town. The last time he was stopped, the two men stepped out of their car, one of them with a gun. The student turned his car around, and as he sped off in the opposite direction, a shot hit his right rear tire and two following shots lodged in his fender.

On another occasion a Yale student was on the ground being kicked by several white men. The student was arrested for assault and battery. Another student reports being attacked also by several white men.

Numerous observations were made while we were in Mississippi. We saw quite vividly that the Negro *can* improve himself if given a chance. We saw a higher level of life in coastal Mississippi, where some Negroes were given jobs that paid \$75 to \$125 a week. These people had nice homes and stable families.

We saw also that where the Negro has the vote, he is able to better himself. In one city the Negroes make up 17 percent of the population, but 20 percent of the registered voters. It is quite evident that the politicians cannot discount this "block vote." Thus there are improvements being made here, and there is less intimidation, although the latter is still not absent. In such areas, the NAACP has strong, responsible leadership and a beneficial effect. In another town the NAACP organized a selective

buying campaign in order to get a hearing with city officials. They also organized a committee on job discrimination grievances.

The organization also was successful at securing equal job opportunities for Negroes in companies with Federal contracts.

But still as we sit preparing this article in the comfort and safety of our homes, we cannot forget the terrible situation we left behind. We think of those Negroes who must continue to live without the traditional freedoms of speech, assembly, petition, or the protection of the law and the right to a fair trial.

We also think of the white moderate who cannot take a stand without economic or physical reprisal. We heard of a white lawyer who defended an outstanding Negro leader in a civil rights case, and was arrested three times before he could travel the ten miles home from the trial. We heard of a white merchant who retained his Negro helper after the helper joined the NAACP. An economic boycott by the community forced him to fire the man.

The Northern cry is that we must not push things too fast. The Southern white must be educated to accept integration. But the people are so immersed in the myths of their tradition that reasonable arguments cannot break through.

White Southerners complain that we Northerners do not understand the situation when many of them, who have lived with it all their lives, have never talked to a Negro as an equal.

No one is an "outsider." The guilt and responsibility is upon each of us that such situations are allowed to exist within our nation. Contrary to Mississippi segregationist opinion, the United States is not a federation of states. The Constitution of the United States was designed to merge a group of federated states into a *Union*. This makes everyone politically responsible for the civil rights of every citizen.

But aside from this political rationale, we are called by our Christian heritage to bear the responsibility for one another and to fight against the evils and injustices of the world. Surely *this* evil and injustice are among the most obvious and most urgent in our world today.

Prepared for PRESBYTERIAN LIFE and the Social Action Newsletter of the Disciples of Christ.

DECEMBER 15, 1963

## "Competent Christians" Donate Services To Taegu Hospital

A cured victim of leprosy who would have had a hard time making his way in the world because of the facial disfigurement caused by his disease now dares mingle with people again, thanks to the skill of plastic surgeon Clarence Monroe of Oak Park, Illinois.

During two months spent as a volunteer at Taegu Presbyterian Hospital in Korea, an expedition undertaken under the "Contributed Services" plan of the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, Dr. Monroe accomplished a number of similar rehabilitations. He was also able to give the regular members of the Taegu medical staff pointers on aseptic techniques and to advise Dr. Howard Moffett, who heads the United Presbyterian hospital, on the planning of a new surgical floor. Mrs. Monroe, who accompanied her husband to Korea, meanwhile made some seventy-five surgery caps and helped to reorganize other surgical linens for the hospital. She also contributed about twenty-five hours a week of English teaching, principally in the school of nursing.

The "Contributed Services" plan increasingly appeals to those who would like to donate some part of their lives to the worldwide mission of the Church. The October 15, 1963, issue of PRESBYTERIAN LIFE carried accounts of volunteers who have served in such places as Cameroun, Pakistan, Thailand, and the United States. All sorts of skills are



Plastic surgeon Clarence Monroe (left), assisted by Taegu staff doctors, helps repair face of Korean leprosy victim.

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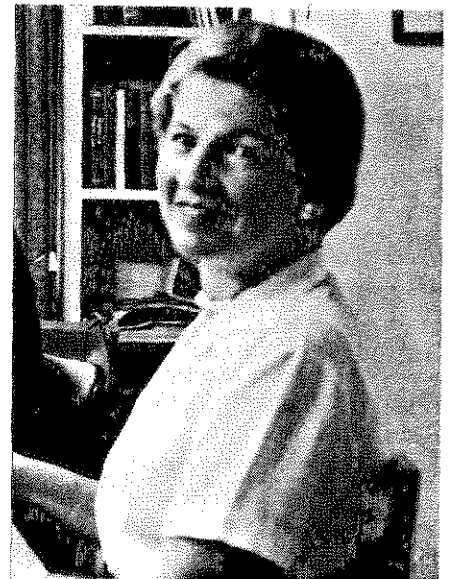
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Three volunteers who have contributed their services to the hospital at Taegu, Korea, are (left to right): Mrs. Clarence Monroe of Oak Park, Illinois; architect James Livingston of Detroit; Miss Elsie Anderson, retired secretary, of Chicago.

needed by the domestic and overseas enterprises of the Church. The chief requirement is that the volunteers be "competent Christians using their skills in a dedicated way," in the words of Mrs. Howard Moffett.

Miss Elsie Anderson, who had been a secretary for twenty years with the Mobiloil Company in Chicago, is donating a year's time, and carrying all her own expenses, while she acts as secretary to hospital superintendent Howard Moffett in Taegu. Funds available for secretarial help in many mission stations are inadequate, and Miss Anderson, a deacon in the Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago, is helping to lift the considerable load of correspondence from Dr. Moffett's shoulders. In addition, the enterprising secretary has succeeded in raising the money needed for laundry equipment for the new leprosarium unit of the hospital.

A retired Director of Nurses from a large hospital in Detroit, Miss Marie A. Wooders, is spending a volunteer year at Taegu helping to advise the Korean superintendent of nurses on all aspects of the nursing program. Author of a book on nursing care, and once voted one of the ten outstanding women of Detroit, Miss Wooders is a member of the First Presbyterian Church in that city.

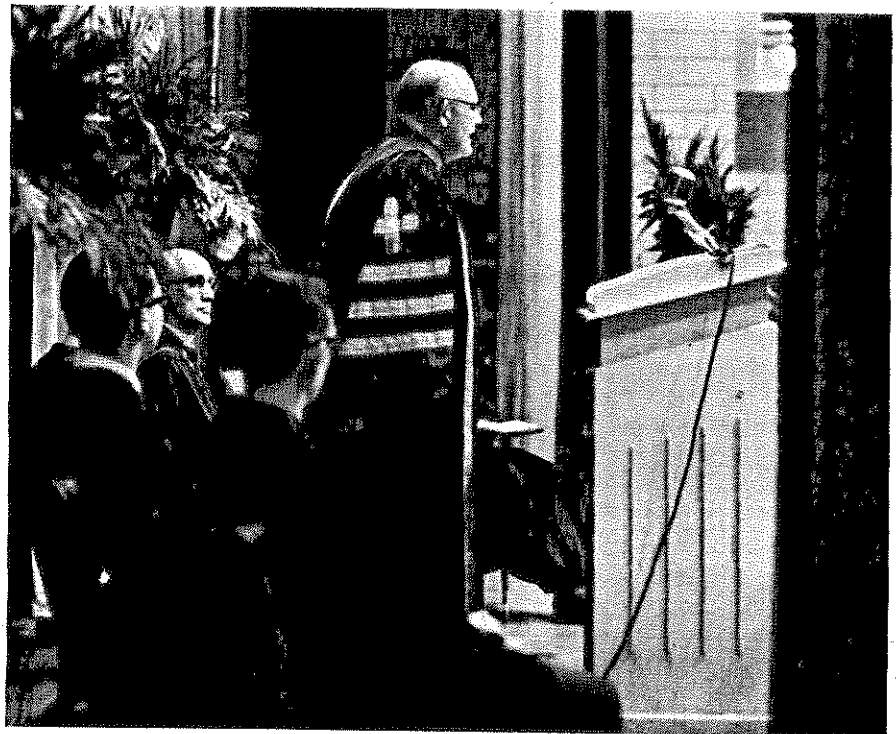
Another sort of contributed service has been given Taegu by Mr. James Livingston, an architect, also from Detroit. Livingston has made two trips to Korea to help with the planning of a projected 100-bed wing of the hospital. Working

"almost around the clock," according to hospital authorities, Livingston has not only worked out the detail of the new wing, but has laid out a long-term plan for the hospital which will be a guide for the future.

[People who may be interested in offering their services to some church-related institution should write the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, 475 Riverside Drive, New York City.]

### Dr. Blake Named Rector at Dubuque

Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, was installed last month as the tenth honorary rector of the University of Dubuque. During his three-day visit to the campus, Dr. Blake was interviewed by the press, spoke informally, met with students in lounges, and gave two major addresses.



Dr. Blake speaks at Dubuque. At left, rear, is Dr. Gaylord Couchman, president.