

**THE  
NEGRO  
VOTER**

**IN THE  
SOUTH**

By **MARGARET PRICE**

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**SOUTHERN REGIONAL COUNCIL**

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# Negro Registration: Present and Prospective

**D**URING THE PAST DECADE, Negro registration has climbed steadily, if gradually. Today, there are at least 1,238,000 Negroes on voting rolls in the Southern states.

This figure, based on the estimated number of registrants at the time of the 1956 general election, represents a gain of 229,400 over the 1,008,614 registered in 1952, which in turn was a 413,600 increase over the 595,000 registered in 1947.

Despite this growth, the current figure represents only about 25 per cent of the 4,980,000 Negroes of voting age in the region, as compared to a 60 per cent registration among eligible white Southerners.<sup>1</sup>

It should be observed at the outset that accurate registration figures are difficult to obtain. Voting lists often are out of date, bearing names of dead and non-resident citizens, and race frequently is recorded in a haphazard fashion. The figures used in this survey are based on information from voting officials, registration records, county-by-county reports, and interviews with informed observers.

The Negro registration figures used probably are more accurate than the white. Officials tend to keep a closer check on Negro registrants and they are more subject to periodic purges. Moreover, names of white registrants may have been on the books 50 years, whereas Negroes have been enfranchised only for 10 or 12; thus, it is far more likely that the white rolls are inflated and contain the names of those moved or deceased.

In Georgia, for example, 63 of the state's 159 counties reported to the Secretary of State in 1956 white registration totals which exceed the white population of voting age.<sup>2</sup> Calhoun County represented the extreme, reporting 187 per cent of its eligible white population on the voting rolls.

Based then on the best estimates available, Texas leads the region in the number of Negroes registered—214,000—followed by Georgia with 163,389 and Louisiana with 161,410. The latter shows the greatest gain—41,410—since 1952; also, Negroes make up 18 per cent of the total registration in Louisiana, the highest among Southern states.

Only in Mississippi did Negro registration level off, or perhaps decline,

<sup>1</sup>Population figures are based on the 1950 Census.

<sup>2</sup>In addition, 33 Georgia counties reported white registration representing 90 to 99 per cent of white population of voting age and 27 counties a white registration of from 80 to 89 per cent of the eligible. Only three counties reported Negro registration in excess of 100 per cent of the Negro eligibles, two from 90 to 99 per cent, and five 80 to 89 per cent.

in the past four years. The latest estimate of Negro registrants was made in 1955; 20,000 is the figure generally agreed upon for that year, about the same as two years earlier. Governor J. P. Coleman, however, estimated Negro registration in 1954 at 22,000. Some observers feel that the number has remained static at best, and others believe there has been a sharp drop.

On the other hand, the *State Times* of Jackson, Miss. surveyed a number of counties in the fall of 1956 and concluded, "Throughout the state, Negro registrations were expected to be up over 1952, even though total Negro population is down." That the increase is negligible is demonstrated by the following figures released in the *State Times* survey:

<i>County</i>	<i>Non-White Population Over 21</i>	<i>Negroes Registered, 1956</i>	<i>Negroes Registered, 1952</i>
Hinds . . . . .	35,021	4,305	2,500
Marion . . . . .	4,103	500	100
Clarke . . . . .	3,849	0	0
Smith . . . . .	1,400	13	1
Calhoun . . . . .	1,893	2	3
Tunica . . . . .	9,123	38	3
*Wilkinson . . . . .	4,558	55	50
Benton . . . . .	1,749	35	35
*Issaquena . . . . .	1,790	0	0
*Sharkey . . . . .	4,533	1	1
Choctaw . . . . .	1,412	13	18
Covington . . . . .	2,354	440	311
Itawamba . . . . .	470	36	12

\*Counties with over 50 per cent Negro population.

What are the prospects for Negro voting in the South generally? Survey consultants feel there will be a continuation of the steady progress of the past few years, particularly as economic and educational opportunities increase.

Of course, as the number of Negro registrants has been increasing numerically, so has the white. Unless the pace is accelerated, it still will be many years before the registration record of Negroes approaches that of the white South.

Many factors will determine the speed with which Negroes progress toward their goal of political equality. Not the least of these is the attitude of the white community, which is subject to increasing scrutiny. In this regard, John Herbers of the United Press wrote (Jackson, Miss., October 20, 1956):

"Bars against Negro voting, against his right to participate in the functions of government is the point outsiders always find the most shocking about the Southern way of life despite its sanction by white officials all the way to the top.

“Mississippi has been successful in selling racial segregation to some outsiders. A great many Northerners can understand why Southern whites fear things like intermarriage and social mixing. But they look at voting in a different light.”

Because of the spotlight of public opinion—both at home and abroad—on the South, and in the wake of federal court decisions on segregation, attitudes of white citizens in the region are changing. Many are hardening their lines of resistance and the resulting tension, conflict, and violence make daily headlines. But there is another South which is changing gradually and quietly. In the Spring of 1956, the Southern Regional Council, with the financial aid of the Fund for the Republic, surveyed progress toward integration in all fields during the two-year period following the Supreme Court school decision of May 17, 1954. It found nearly 1,100 instances of desegregation almost equally divided between five border states and 12 Southern states.

It is this “other South” which holds much promise for the political future of Negro citizens. It can create a favorable climate of opinion which will encourage more Negroes to exercise their basic right to vote. It can allow white candidates to seek Negro votes openly, which in turn will encourage others to qualify.

Leadership also will play an important role in the future of Negro voting. Its continued improvement promises a growing awareness of the value of the ballot. More and more Negroes are spreading the word that “A voteless people is a voiceless people.” As Negro spokesmen in one Georgia county said in substance:

“If we don’t register and vote, we can’t get benefits which are comparable to those received by whites—or comparable to our needs. We want to be full-fledged citizens with a voice in local, state and national government. We want to protect our rights as citizens and be respected when we go downtown.”

Finally, the influence of the federal government on the future of Negro voting cannot be ignored. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has made “routine” checks of some election procedures in parts of the South, presumably with an eye to possible civil rights violations. Prior to the 1956 presidential election, the U. S. Attorney General ordered the criminal division of the Justice Department and the FBI to maintain a watch at the polls on election day to deal with violations of federal laws. It can be assumed that such announcements make an impression on both white and Negro citizens.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Civil rights legislation concerning voting rights now has been passed by both houses of Congress.

The prospect for Negro voting in several of the states as summed up by the field consultants follows:

*North Carolina:* "Increasing registration by Negroes but not in tremendous numbers. . . . The counties that now restrict Negro registration increasingly will use more legal and sophisticated tactics to neutralize the political effectiveness of the Negro. . . . Regardless of what methods may be used, the Negro is becoming more important politically as direct restrictions on his franchise decline. Many of the registrars who emphasize these restrictive tactics are old and are dying out."

*Louisiana:* "Unless the Citizens Council enjoys unexpected success in its purgative efforts, it would seem that Negro registration and voting have become a permanent feature of the Louisiana political landscape. . . . In the parishes (counties) where subterfuge is necessary to discourage registration, there is likely to be a registration breakthrough in the not too distant future. In these parishes, where there is a history of suppression, the Negro is quite anxious to obtain the suffrage. . . . In the Mississippi Delta parishes where no Negroes are registered, the prospects are bleak for registration in the immediate future. . . . The urban parishes represent a great untapped reservoir of Negro votes which can be registered with a minimum of difficulty."

*South Carolina:* "Notwithstanding the obstacles that are standing in the way of the Negro's complete political freedom, there is evidence that he is on the move politically. This can be attributed to the new kind of leadership found among the Negroes today."

*Alabama:* While the State Consultant feels that "the future of Negro voting looks brighter," there still are forces at work in Alabama which make a major increase, particularly in the Black Belt, seem unlikely in the immediate future.

*Texas:* "The Negro is on the way toward becoming a strong political force . . . . The school integration question, although not actually a political issue, is looming large in Texas politics. This gives Negroes a greater sense of political responsibility and the change is beginning to show its effects."

*Virginia:* "The greatest threat to the increase of the suffrage at present time is the current attack on the NAACP by the state and local governments. . . . On the other hand, there are prospects of increasing Negro participation in politics as revealed by the following facts: . . . A number of counties have centralized registration in the past three or four years.

Where there is centralization, there has been a great reduction in the number of discriminatory complaints. . . . Older, often biased registrars . . . are dying out or being replaced by younger persons, better educated and less biased. . . . Political consciousness is growing among Negroes.”

*Georgia:* “The statistical and field studies support the idea that progress of Negro suffrage is made in urbanized and industrialized communities. This is one of the most encouraging factors in terms of the future of Negro suffrage. . . . Georgia is now reaching the break-through point in the distribution of its population toward the urban places of residence. Furthermore, agriculture as a source of income continues to give way to manufacturing and to other sources of income. Thus, the socio-economic trends in the state are in the direction of the kinds of situations in which Negroes are more likely to be registrants and voters.”

*Florida:* “Negro leaders are quite capable of increasing the Negro voting potential. They have been devoting much time and energy to the struggle against Jim-Crowism, especially as it relates to the public schools and public transportation and have not had much time or energy left to devote to political education and encouragement. . . . They are now launching a determined drive to educate the Negro to his suffrage responsibilities.”

TABLE 1—NEGRO REGISTRATION

<i>State</i>	<i>1947</i>	<i>1952</i>	<i>1956</i>
Alabama . . . . .	6,000	25,224	53,366
Arkansas . . . . .	47,000	61,413	69,677
Florida . . . . .	49,000	120,900	148,703
Georgia . . . . .	125,000	144,835	163,389
Louisiana . . . . .	10,000	120,000	161,410
Mississippi . . . . .	5,000	20,000	20,000*
North Carolina . . . . .	75,000	100,000	135,000
South Carolina . . . . .	50,000	80,000	99,890
Tennessee . . . . .	80,000	85,000	90,000
Texas . . . . .	100,000	181,916	214,000
Virginia . . . . .	48,000	69,326	82,603
<b>TOTALS . . . . .</b>	<b>595,000</b>	<b>1,008,614</b>	<b>1,238,038</b>

\*Mississippi total is for 1955.







## Legal Determinants

THE LEGAL WEAPON most widely used in the South to discourage Negro registration is some form of literacy or constitutional interpretation test.

This is the successor to the white primary, which was the most effective legal method for restricting voting for many years. Next in importance was the poll tax, which disfranchised Negroes and many low-income white citizens alike.

By the time Negroes won the right to vote in primaries in the mid-forties, the poll tax was less of an economic hardship, due to the declining value of the dollar and higher incomes. Today only five states have a poll tax—Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia.

While no longer the serious, regional problem it once was, the poll tax still can be used to limit registration. This is particularly evident in Virginia, where many citizens of both races find themselves disfranchised for non-payment of their "capitation" tax.

In Alabama, where the poll tax was most formidable, the terms have been modified. The tax had been cumulative from ages 21 to 45, making the prospective voter liable for a maximum bill of \$36, but an amendment to the state constitution ratified in 1951 made it cumulative for two years only and exempted persons 47 and over.

With the outlawing of the white primary and the effectiveness of the poll tax declining, the white supremacists turned to literacy tests as a means of limiting Negro registration. Alabama, Virginia, Louisiana, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, and North Carolina all have statutes providing for such tests.

An understanding of Alabama's present registration law, evolved out of a federal court decision, serves as background for similar measures in other states.

After the United States Supreme Court outlawed white primaries in 1944, the Alabama legislature passed the Boswell Amendment, which was designed to continue disfranchisement in another way. The amendment required any new registrant to be able to "read and write, understand and explain any article of the Constitution of the United States." In January, 1949, a three-judge federal district court said the phrase "understand and explain" was hopelessly vague and pointed out that registrars were neither lawyers nor in a position to know if an applicant's interpretation of the constitution was correct. In due time, the U. S. Supreme Court declined a review and let the lower court decision stand.

In 1951 the present Voters Qualification Amendment was ratified; the "understand and explain" clause was omitted, leaving a type of

literacy test. In addition to the usual basic qualifications of citizenship, age, length of residence, and lack of criminal record which the state required, the Amendment also provided:

"The following persons . . . shall be qualified to register . . . those who can read and write any Article of the Constitution of the United States in the English language which may be submitted to them by the Board of Registrars, provided, however, that no persons shall be entitled to register as electors except those who are of good character and who embrace the duties and obligations of citizenship under the Constitution of the United States and under the constitution of the State of Alabama, and provided, further, that . . . each applicant shall be furnished . . . a written questionnaire. . . . Such questionnaire shall be answered in writing by the applicant, in the presence of the Board without assistance . . ."

Shortly after ratification of the amendment, justices of the State Supreme Court prepared a questionnaire as required. It consists of four printed pages, the first two containing 21 questions and the last two space for various affidavits and signatures of Board members. Page four of the application form provides space for "examination of supporting witness." Under this section an applicant is to produce an acquaintance to identify him and certify that he has lived at his present address for a specified period. The voucher, who has to be a qualified voter, also has to provide certain information concerning his own occupation and business address.

Donald S. Strong, in *Registration of Voters in Alabama*, published in 1956 by the Bureau of Public Administration at the University of Alabama, wrote:

"To talk about the 'intent' of the Voters Qualification Amendment is a delicate matter since the intent of the Boswell Amendment was one of the grounds for its unconstitutionality. Yet there is a clear line of descent from the Boswell Amendment to the Voters Qualification Amendment. . . . Certainly part of the intent was to discourage as much Negro voting as possible without violating the Fifteenth Amendment. This is not to suggest that the newer amendment is unconstitutional. The intent to discriminate against Negroes is not so clear that it could be proved convincingly in court. The only possible line of constitutional attack would be to demonstrate that it discriminated against Negro applicants in effect."

Requirements in other states:

*Georgia:* A registrant must be able to read correctly in English "any paragraph" of the state or U. S. Constitution and "correctly write the same" when read to him. Only those unable to read or write because of "physical inability" may qualify if they can "understand" and give a "reasonable" interpretation of constitutional sections read to them. There

is a property alternative: 40 acres of land in the state on which an elector resides or property in the state assessed for taxation at \$500 or more.

*Mississippi:* In 1954, Mississippi voters approved a constitutional amendment tightening the state's registration law. It makes ability to read and write a prerequisite; before that, an applicant could register if able to read or understand the constitution when read to him. In addition to literacy, the amendment requires a new applicant to satisfy the county registrar as to his knowledge of citizenship under a constitutional form of government and to state why he feels he should be given the right to vote and what it means to him. Applicants are to write their own statements without aid.

*Virginia:* Unless physically unable, the prospective voter must apply to the registrar in his own handwriting, without aid, in the presence of the registrar, stating therein his name, age, date and place of birth, residence and occupation at the time and for the one year next preceding and whether he has voted previously and, if so, the state, county, and precinct in which he voted last. Also, he must answer on oath any questions affecting his qualifications as an elector, submitted to him by the registrar; questions and his answers must be reduced to writing, certified by the said officer and preserved as a part of his official records.

*South Carolina:* A registrant must be able to "read and write" any section of the state constitution. An alternative is ownership and payment of taxes for the previous year on property in the state assessed at \$300 or more.

*Arkansas:* Except for the usual requirements of age and residence, the one dollar, non-cumulative poll tax is the only requirement for voting. Members of the Armed Forces are exempt. Certain adults are required by law to possess a poll tax receipt: those receiving wages, salaries, or other compensation paid from public funds (this includes white and Negro teachers) and those who apply for a license or permit from the state.

*Louisiana:* A prospective voter must be able to read and write and understand the duties and obligations of citizenship "under a republican form of government." Also, he must be able to read any clause in the state or U. S. Constitution and give an interpretation satisfactory to the registrar. If he is unable to read or write, the applicant is entitled to register if he is a person of good character and reputation, attached to the "principles" of the Louisiana and U. S. constitutions and if he is able to interpret any section of either. If an applicant is unable to read or write due to a physical disability, then the foregoing requirements may be waived.

## FOREWORD

IT IS BASIC to the American philosophy that a citizen's right to vote is the sovereign remedy for all his civic grievances. Hence it was only natural that, sooner or later, the school segregation controversy should bring to the fore the question of the Southern Negro's access to the ballot.

For the Southern Regional Council, this question is not a new one. Since 1944, when the courts affirmed the right of Negro citizens to participate in the decisive Democratic primaries, the Council has studied and reported on the growth of Negro suffrage in the region.

By 1956, it was clear that the nature and timing of adjustment to the Supreme Court's school integration decisions would depend in considerable measure on the role of the Negro voter. Yet there had not been a comprehensive survey of Negro suffrage since 1947, when the late Dr. Luther P. Jackson carried out his study for the Southern Regional Council.

To remedy this lack of information, the Council undertook in mid-1956 the most ambitious survey of its kind to date. The aim was to collect, in ten Southern states, county-by-county data on the following:

- (1) The number of Negroes registered to vote.
- (2) Legal and administrative provisions affecting Negro registration.
- (3) The extent and nature of discrimination and intimidation directed at would-be Negro voters.
- (4) The prevalence of "apathy" or lack of political consciousness as a cause of Negro disfranchisement.
- (5) Actual voting performance by Negroes and its effect on their community status.
- (6) The relationship of Negro registration to such social and economic factors as median income, education, type of economy, degree of urbanization, and the like, by counties.

With the aid of a grant from the Fund for the Republic, this appraisal was carried out in each of the ten states during the summer and fall of 1956. In the ten states, chief consultants were selected to gather the data, with the assistance of additional part-time personnel. In most cases, they were social scientists experienced in this type of fact-finding.

Over the past year, the Southern Regional Council has issued several preliminary reports summarizing findings of the survey. As each of the preliminary reports pointed out, an exact enumeration of Negro registrants in the region is a practical impossibility. In many of the states surveyed, the race of the registrant is not recorded, and in others this information is not officially compiled. Even in the states which collect registration by race from the counties, the figures are fallible, since many counties do not maintain accurate, up-to-date voter lists.

In the face of these difficulties, the field consultants relied on official figures where they were available, and where they were not, on the most reliable estimates available from local officials or community leaders. In short,



the figures presented in this and the earlier reports must be regarded as estimates; but they have been assembled by scholarly researchers whose only aim was as much precision and accuracy as possible.

The present report was prepared for the Council by Mrs. Margaret Price as an overall summary of the material submitted by the state consultants. It should be emphasized that the way in which the material is presented and the conclusions that are drawn from it are not necessarily those of the state consultants. Responsibility for the report as written rests entirely with the Southern Regional Council.

For the factual data on which the report is based, the Council is grateful to the following persons who directed the voting surveys in their respective states:

ALABAMA—Dr. James E. Pierce, Dean, Graduate Division, The Alabama State College, Montgomery, Alabama.

ARKANSAS—Dr. Tilman C. Cothran, Chairman, Department of Sociology, Agricultural, Mechanical and Normal College, Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

FLORIDA—Dr. Lewis Killian, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Florida State University.

Dr. Elston E. Roady, Department of Political Science, Florida State University.

KENTUCKY—Dr. Louis C. Kesselman, Chairman, Department of Political Science, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky.

LOUISIANA—Dr. John H. Fenton, Department of Political Science, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, at time of survey.

Dr. Kenneth Vines, Department of Political Science, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

NORTH CAROLINA—Solomon Sutker, Associate Professor of Sociology, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, Stillwater, Oklahoma, conducted survey in home state of North Carolina.

SOUTH CAROLINA—James T. McCain, Associate Director, South Carolina Council on Human Relations, Columbia, South Carolina.

TENNESSEE—Dr. Manet Fowler, Director, Research House, Croton-on-Hudson, New York.

TEXAS—Dr. Henry A. Bullock, Chairman, Graduate School Research, Texas Southern University, Houston, Texas.

VIRGINIA—Dr. Harry W. Roberts, Head, Department of Sociology, Virginia State College, Petersburg, Virginia.

Finally, it is to be stressed that the findings underlying this report were gathered during the summer and fall of 1956. The report itself was drafted in large part early in 1957. Therefore, developments in the field of Negro suffrage since that time have not been included.

HAROLD C. FLEMING, *Executive Director*  
Southern Regional Council

September 1957

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However, such an applicant must be accompanied by two witnesses who are registered voters from the applicant's precinct. No person may be a witness for more than two applicants.

*North Carolina:* Prospective voters must be able to "read and write" any section of the Constitution to the satisfaction of the registrar, who may have the applicant copy indicated sections of the state constitution or may dictate any section he chooses.<sup>1</sup>

With such broad discretion left to registrars it is easy to see why Negroes may find it almost impossible to qualify in one county and comparatively easy in the next. Mere whim of one registrar can deprive hundreds of Negroes of the right to vote. Obviously, he can ask complicated questions of those he does not want to pass and little beyond name and address of others. In the last analysis, a Negro's ability to vote in a state with a "literacy" law still too often depends on an individual registrar's sense of justice—or prejudice.

<sup>1</sup>On April 12, 1957, the N. C. General Assembly amended the state's statutory qualifications for electors by providing for administrative appeals from rulings of registrars. Any person denied registration may appeal to the county board of election. If turned down by the board of election, the person may appeal to the Superior Court of the county involved and then, if necessary, to the N. C. Supreme Court.

## Discrimination and Intimidation

**J**UST AS the main segregationist movement has switched from the white sheet of the Ku Klux Klan to the white collar of the Citizens Council, so has the pattern of discrimination against the Negro Southerner changed in recent years.

In no field is this gradual shift to subtler methods seen more clearly than in a study of Negro registration and voting. Killings, beatings, the dragging of Negroes from their homes in the middle of the night—these are now relatively rare occurrences, compared to previous decades.

Overt violence is, in brief, the exception rather than the rule for racists dealing with assertive Negro citizens. The threat of violent tactics, however, is kept alive in some areas by anonymous telephone calls to Negro leaders. Crosses still are burned, jobs threatened. Occasionally, homes are shot into or bombed.

But, today, with less obvious means employed generally, Negroes interested in voting are far more likely to be barred by a question on the Constitution than by a rope or whip.

The Alabama Consultant directed a field survey in each of the counties in his state. According to these reports:

Negroes might be treated courteously, as in Bullock County, Ala., where the Board of Registrars has received Negro applicants pleasantly, let them fill out forms, then told them they didn't pass—with no reasons given. In this county, with 5,425 Negroes of voting age, only six were registered in the summer of 1956. In 1953, more than 100 attempted to register; in 1955, only 20 even tried and of these 19 were refused. One of the six registered succeeded only on his seventh trip to the board.

In other counties of central Alabama, like Bullock, Negroes encounter greater difficulty. This is the "Black Belt" section of the state, so called because of the dark rich soil, an area where 15 counties have populations over 50 per cent Negro.

Among these is Dallas, where only 275 of the 18,145 Negroes of voting age are registered.<sup>1</sup> In 1956 alone, at least 350 were turned down. Some reported that they filled out questionnaires three or four times but still were not sent registration certificates. Many reported they were given no help in filling out forms although white applicants were. One Negro teacher who registered was fired allegedly for being "too smart;" this frightened many other teachers.

Marengo, another county in the Alabama Black Belt, seems to have stopped registering Negroes at least at the time this was written. Of 10,226

<sup>1</sup>Registration figures used are those of 1956.

eligible, 170 were registered before the Supreme Court decision calling for an end to segregated schools. This, plus formation of a local Citizens Council, is reported to have hardened the lines of white resistance to Negro equality and to have put the brakes on Negro registration.

In Monroe County, Ala., where 140 of the 5,914 Negroes of voting age are registered, other hopeful applicants said more often than not they found the Board of Registrars had "misplaced the application forms" or told them to return later. Registrars in Hale County, where 130 of 7,041 eligible Negroes are on the voting roll, have turned down 300 in the past two years for "failure to fill out forms correctly."

One Negro teacher in Alabama said she was refused because she didn't know the address of her estranged husband. Many Alabama boards require two voters to vouch for all Negro applicants and some require Negroes to produce white character witnesses. Registrars in one county where about two per cent of nearly 7,000 Negroes over 21 have registered announced that a "good white man" must accompany Negro applicants.

In a Black Belt county which is somewhat less than 50 per cent Negro, registrars closed their office when a group of Negroes appeared. Other Negro applicants said they were told when the board would meet but then found no one present on arrival. A Negro leader who encouraged other Negroes to vote reported he was threatened anonymously by telephone and told to stop his activities or he would be run out of town. Only about 200 of over 5,000 Negroes have registered.

A Negro leader in Coosa County, Ala., also said he was threatened. Crosses were burned in front of the homes of two leaders of a Negro voter's drive in Choctaw County. In the latter, 112 of 4,822 Negroes of voting age are registered; 28 said they were turned down on their first try, but accepted the second time. Most of those initially refused were teachers. Maids and yardmen have found it somewhat easier to enroll.

Birmingham and surrounding Jefferson County present one of the gloomiest pictures for Negroes in the South. In no other major city of the region has it been so difficult for them to vote. Only about 7,000 of 121,667 Negroes over 21 are registered. Instead of the standard form and the character witnesses, Jefferson County registrars have employed another method unique in the state: added questions about government. They might ask on what date the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution became effective, what was the fourteenth state to be admitted to the Union, on what date did Oklahoma change from a territory to a state? They have recognized no limits to their power to interrogate. While Negroes have been the Board's main target, white union members, particularly if they wore overalls or work cloths, have reported that they some-



times find registration difficult or impossible. Negroes appearing before the Board often have been questioned for from 35 to 40 minutes; they have had to line up separately, and the longer the line the longer the questioning.

Strong,<sup>2</sup> in his study of Jefferson County, described the method used by registrars to avoid suits with the following hypothetical case: a person who failed to satisfy the board was told orally he did not qualify; the applicant then secured an attorney and filed a suit, which was a signal for the board to register the plaintiff. His suit collapsed and no court had an opportunity to pass on Section 33 of the Alabama Code and the "qualified to register" phrase.<sup>2</sup>

In Macon County, Ala., home of famed Tuskegee Institute, many college trained Negroes have found the barriers impregnable. Negroes outnumber white persons about five to one; of the 14,539 of voting age, 1,100 have registered. By contrast, the Associated Press reported in April, 1956, that 2,700 out of a total Macon County white population of 5,000 had registered, or that fewer than 100 white persons over 21 had failed to do so. An Alabama observer said that the Board of Registrars would sit until all white citizens interested had registered and then resign. In any event, for the major part of 1956, there was no board in the county, for two of the three members resigned and it takes at least two to transact business. This was at least the third time in a decade this had happened.

In North Carolina, as in other states with literacy laws, the registrar has considerable latitude. He can have the applicant copy indicated sections of the state constitution or he can dictate. Some Negroes have protested the use of dictation, since a registrar often reads too fast or uses a particularly difficult section. However, the State Board of Elections has upheld a registrar's right to use this means of testing.<sup>3</sup>

A Negro attorney in a rural eastern county of North Carolina said that in certain precincts of this and adjoining counties, "It takes a white man only a few minutes to get registered, but it may take an hour for a Negro. Actually, the latter is given an academic rather than a literacy test. In this county, the tests are tough and the literacy rate low, which doubly handicaps the Negro. The tests given here actually require an interpretation of law."

A Negro college graduate in North Carolina who attempted to register for the May, 1956, primary said he was turned down because he could not write a section of the state constitution from memory. Some registrars

<sup>2</sup>Donald S. Strong, *Registration of Voters in Alabama*, (Bureau of Public Administration, University of Alabama).

<sup>3</sup>See footnote 1 in previous chapter.

who want to disqualify Negroes have asked for a definition of such words as "ordained," "sovereignty," "posterity," etc. The replies often do not "satisfy the registrar."

But there are counties throughout the state, where literacy requirements are ignored for anyone, white or Negro, who wants to register. In others, only Negroes are required to do some reading. In some rural North Carolina counties, Negroes can register with a minimum of trouble only if sponsored by white persons.

Louisiana applicants for registration have been given a rather complicated form and the law has barred any help in filling it out. In most instances, completion is regarded as evidence of literacy although the registrar may, if he wishes, examine an applicant. There has been wide variation in the practice of helping applicants and in the strictness with which forms are scrutinized for mistakes. In some parishes, Negroes have found it almost impossible to satisfy the high standards demanded of them. In others, both Negroes and whites have been permitted to copy from previously completed forms and mistakes have been overlooked.

If a person is unable to complete the form satisfactorily, he still may qualify in some parts of Louisiana. In a number of parishes many white and Negro illiterates have registered under the physical disability provision of the state constitution. This makes it possible in some instances to control their ballot, because such registrants are entitled to ask for assistance in voting. Practice varies widely with respect to registration of illiterates but, as a rule, where literate Negroes have found it easy to qualify, illiterate Negroes also have met few obstacles.

Under one Louisiana statute which adds to the difficulties of Negro voting, two bona fide registered voters can challenge by affidavit the right of a person to be registered. The person challenged has to respond within 10 days by appearing before the registrar to "prove" his right to remain on the voting list. If a person fails to appear, his name is removed automatically. Citizens Council groups have purged several hundred Negroes from voting lists through this device in more than a dozen parishes, including Natchitoches, Webster, and LaSalle. They are able to learn which Negroes have registered under another Louisiana law which permits any 25 registered voters, by application, to copy or photostat registration records.

The *Colfax Chronicle*, county weekly of Grant Parish, reported (Oct. 12, 1956) that members of the Citizens Council worked in the registrar's office that week in a frank effort to disfranchise the county's 864 Negro voters. The *Chronicle* also reported:

Their action followed a White Citizens Council meeting in Dry Prong attended by State Sen. William Rainach and other Louisiana segregation

advocates. W. J. B. Jones of Colfax County, WCC president, said the group voted unanimously to try to purge Negro voters. Louis Earl Stevens, Council secretary, subsequently estimated that at least 90 per cent of the Negro registrants were challenged in Grant Parish.

Where, instead of writing out "colored" on registration blanks the applicant simply put "C", the applications were challenged as being incorrect. Each Negro's age in years, days, and months was refigured and often found off by a day or so. The *Chronicle* checked the first 100 white registrations in one ward and found only one card which would meet the standards set by the WCC for Negroes. Four, including the superintendent of schools, figured their ages incorrectly. In a further check, the *Chronicle* discovered that not a single member of a Citizens Council committee had filled in correctly all the blanks. Needless to say, only the Negroes were challenged. Of the more than 700 Negroes purged two weeks before the November general election, 399 had cleared the challenges a week before the deadline.

The *Chronicle* commended Registrar Maxine Mosley for her fairness in dealing with the Negroes challenged.

Not all members of the white community supported the purge effort. District Attorney Sam L. Wells said he would be a witness and sign affidavits for those challenged registrants whose place of residence he knew of his own personal knowledge. J. M. Straughan of Route 8, Colfax, wrote the *Chronicle*:

"I'm a Southerner born and raised right here in Central Louisiana and I am opposed to integration as strongly as any Southerner could be. But what has integration got to do with the removal of Negroes from the registration rolls . . . I, for one, will be glad to sign an affidavit for those colored voters I know to help keep them from being imposed on."

On Feb. 25, 1957, the Justice Department made public some FBI findings on registration of Negroes in Louisiana. Asst. Atty. Gen. Warren Olney III said the FBI material indicated that testimony by Louisiana Atty. Gen. Jack P. Gremillion to a House Judiciary Subcommittee "might have left a misleading impression in a number of respects." Olney's statement was in a letter to Chairman Emanuel Celler (D.N.Y.) who presided at hearings in which Gremillion testified against the Eisenhower administration's civil rights proposals.<sup>4</sup>

Olney said that Gremillion had mentioned "some difficulty with respect to voting" in Ouachita Parish, but contended this was "more or less an exception."

In fact, Olney asserted, the FBI investigated the handling of registra-

<sup>4</sup>Associated Press, Washington, D. C., February 27, 1957.

tions in 10 Louisiana parishes and found that 8,552 Negroes were challenged when they tried to register in 1956.

Olney said that in Ouachita Parish there were some 4,000 registered Negro voters in the early fall of 1956 but that after a purge in October, "There were in excess of 3,000 Negro voters deprived of the right to vote in the general election of November 6."

The Justice Department official challenged a number of Gremillion's statements, including his claim that registrants had a free choice in selecting the section of the United States Constitution they wished to interpret as part of their test.

"In none of the 10 parishes is there any evidence that the registrar permitted the applicant to choose which clause of the Constitution he wished to interpret," Olney said.

"Specifically, in the case arising from Ouachita Parish, the investigation by the FBI disclosed that the registrar of voters in examining applicants used a card on which was written an excerpt from the Constitution, which card was given to the registrar by the Citizens Council of Ouachita Parish."

Gremillion had told the committee that when a registered voter was challenged, the registrar sent a record of the challenge to the registrant, including a reply form, giving him 10 days to appear and establish his right to remain on the rolls by presenting statements from three voters registered in the same parish.

Olney said this did not appear to be the general practice in the parishes investigated. In six, he added, registrars "did everything to discourage the filing of reply affidavits in the statutory form and generally refused them when offered." He told Chairman Celler that the FBI found instances of registrars refusing to accept white persons as supporting witnesses for Negroes on grounds they were of a different race.

There appeared to be a concerted effort in October, 1956, by White Citizens Councils in Louisiana and other Southern states to get Negro registrants off the rolls or to prevent their registration, Olney added.

"With respect only to cases which have been investigated by the FBI," he continued, "the following numbers of Negro voters were challenged in each of the following parishes:

"Bienville, 560; Caldwell, 330; De Soto, 383; Grant, 758; Jackson, 953; La Salle, 345; Lincoln, 326; Ouachita, 3,240; Rapides, 1,058, and Union, 600."

However, there still are areas in Louisiana where there are no Negro registrants to challenge. For example, in one parish which is over 50 per cent Negro none of the 4,500 Negroes of voting age had registered at the time of the 1956 general election. Only one had tried in recent years.



A local priest recounted the Negro's experience. When he appeared, the registrar immediately took him to the sheriff, who asked, "Aren't you happy here? Is something wrong with the way things operate around here? If you aren't happy perhaps we could arrange for you to leave." The hapless Negro promptly assured the sheriff of his "happiness" and "allowed" that his attempt to register had been a tragic mistake. He remained in the community but his wife lost her job.

There are no Negroes registered in Tensas, East Carroll, Madison, and West Feliciana parishes, all counties with populations over 50 per cent Negro. "In these parishes," the Louisiana Consultant said, "subterfuge is unnecessary to discourage Negro registration. Negroes know they should not and cannot register and therefore rarely attempt to do so."

In the general election in November, 1956, Louisiana voters defeated a proposed constitutional amendment designed to help the Citizens Council cut Negro voting even more. The measure was drafted by the legislative "watch dog" committee on segregation which previously had won approval easily for its proposals. The amendment, which was turned down by an unofficial total of 190,410 to 178,833, required certain administrative steps before a voter losing his registration could take the matter into court. Thus, said the Associated Press in a dispatch from Baton Rouge, it would have set up "administrative barriers to a federal court action."

In South Carolina, the prevalence of discriminatory tactics in some counties where Negroes are in the majority is quite evident. Registration books are moved from place to place to keep Negroes from getting a certificate; they are given literacy tests that have little to do with reading and writing the state constitution, as required by South Carolina law; Negroes complain that if a number go together to register in some counties, clerks will pass only one or two and tell the rest the books are closed for the day. In a few counties, Negroes who had been certified have complied with demands of employers and other white persons that they remove their names from registration books. Some have said they were threatened with harm for attempting to vote and many landlords reportedly have warned their Negro tenants that if they registered, they would be fired.

Calhoun County, S. C., with more than twice as many Negroes as whites—10,449 to 4,304—has no Negroes registered, although 4,437 of them are of voting age. "Any Negro who tries to get a registration certificate is called a smart Negro and sooner or later leaves the community," a field consultant said.

McCormick County, S. C., where the population split is 5,998 Negroes, 3,579 whites, also has no Negroes registered out of the 2,625 over 21. All Negroes who had registration certificates in 1948 had their names purged from the voting list. The majority of Negroes in the county

are sharecroppers; reportedly, they could not sell their produce until their names were removed.

In another South Carolina County, Abbeville, where only 15 of the 3,678 Negroes of voting age are registered, (as compared to 6,000 of the 8,951 whites) an atmosphere of fear was found. Three years ago a Negro cottonwood worker was said to have been beaten at night for voting. Since then, Negroes have not taken part in elections and almost all of those who had registration certificates have "lost" them.

Intimidation as a means of limiting Negro voting in Texas was found to be relatively rare. Recent violence in the state usually has been aimed at school integration, notably in Mansfield. There have been occasional reports of local discrimination against potential Negro voters, generally in the form of a segment of the white population playing on the ignorance of the poorly educated among the Negroes—to imply, for example, that property taxes must have been paid to vote. But, by and large, the poll tax remains the only obvious deterrent.

While discrimination in applying provisions of the Virginia poll tax and registration law is not found generally in that state, nevertheless, it has been reported in certain counties and a few cities. Some Negro leaders feel that poorer white citizens often experience the same difficulties as do Negroes.

The poll tax can be an effective barrier for the politically uninformed, the educationally handicapped, and the socially disadvantaged. Just the use of words confuses many of the poorly educated who often do not know that in paying their Virginia "capitation tax" they have paid their poll taxes. Some tax collectors reportedly have discouraged voting by telling Negroes they do not have to pay poll taxes. Many Negroes have reported they did not receive poll tax bills along with their property tax notices, as did their fellow white citizens. These and similar methods have been employed to discourage Negroes from paying their poll taxes in some counties and it often seems that only those who know the legal requirements and insist on paying can win their right to register.

As for registration itself, Negroes sometimes encounter further barriers in Virginia. The same discriminatory methods of administering literacy tests found in other states turn up here and there: where in some counties Negroes have to meet all the technical requirements of grammar, punctuation, and handwriting in filling out their application forms; they alone are given reading or education tests, or have to complete printed forms containing legal phraseology. Some white registrars will see white applicants at any time but are "busy" or "ill" or do not have their books when Negroes appear. When registrars operate in their homes, this presents a particular problem because of the long-standing Southern custom of Negroes appear-

ing in white homes only in a servant capacity.

In 1940, Florida had 51 counties with no Negroes registered, by 1946, only four, and 10 years later only two. However, the number of counties in which Negroes are registered gives an exaggerated picture of the extent of Negro registration. In some counties, Negro electors constitute a small proportion of those on the voting lists. This is seen, for example, in the following counties:

<i>County</i>	<i>Negro Population Over 21</i>	<i>Negro Percentage of Total Population</i>	<i>Number of Negroes Registered, 1956</i>
Flagler . . . . .	872	45.6	64
Gadsden . . . . .	10,930	56.1	5
Liberty . . . . .	333	18.3	1
Taylor . . . . .	1,945	30.5	91
Union . . . . .	2,453	36.3	6

In the counties where Negro suffrage is limited most sharply, fear is a major deterring factor. In parts of the state, indirect methods are used to discourage Negro voters and the open threat has been reported, too. In one county, the first Negro registrants in history were subjected to several forms of intimidation—cross burnings, bomb-throwings and shots fired into their homes. All but one of the registrants in this county withdrew their names from the rolls.

In another Florida county, in the plantation section, it was reported that Negroes, most of whom live in rural areas, are discouraged from coming to the business district on election day. In still another county one supervisor of registration has told Negro applicants, "Come on in and register," while sitting with his legs stretched across the door. Other Negroes complained that loungers around a courthouse told them, "Go ahead and register if you can take what comes afterwards."

Field studies were made in a number of Georgia counties representative of the various sub-regional areas of the state. One of these is Early, located in the extreme southwest portion of Georgia on the Alabama line. It is in a cluster of counties considered the "hard core" of the state in terms of resistance to integration. In such counties as Early, Miller, Seminole, and Decatur, the Negro population is from 30 to 50 per cent of the total. In other southwest counties such as Clay, Calhoun, Baker, Dougherty, Quitman, Randolph, Terrell, Lee, Sumter, Webster, and Stewart, the Negro percentage of the total population is over 50 per cent. The means of excluding Negroes as registrants in these counties is similar to that reported in other areas of the South. In some, there is the ever present threat of racial violence, which erupts on occasion. Often, police brutality against Negroes indicates to them they cannot depend upon law enforcement authorities to offer them protection if they try to vote. In recent

years, economic pressures have been directed against Negroes militant enough to demand educational and political equality.

In some instances, Georgia sheriffs, instead of the boards of registrars, question prospective Negro registrants about the constitution. Sheriffs being white and also the "law," Negro applicants thus receive two warnings at one time.

In Early county, only 226 Negroes of the 4,790 over 18 (the legal voting age in Georgia) are registered. Many others who went to the Court House to register said they later were summoned to appear there before the Board of Registrars to answer questions. The majority of those who showed up were disqualified and those who did not were removed from the list automatically. This is an effective method of disqualifying Negroes who often think of going to the Court House for any reason with misgiving. They know they are not expected to drive their cars up to the Court House square to park.

Separate ballot boxes for white and Negro votes continue in use in many Georgia counties. This practice of separating ballots on a racial basis is an indirect technique of disfranchising some of the Negro voters who are unwilling to take a chance on having white persons discover how they voted.

Often, racial incidents have an effect both in the community involved and in adjacent counties. There is disagreement on the extent to which they deter registration, but fear of violence is bound to condition the thoughts and actions of some. In Walton County, Ga., many Negroes interviewed said there is more fear of lynching outside the county than inside. Walton County was the scene of an unsolved daylight lynching in 1946 of four Negroes—two men and two women, one of whom was pregnant. One Negro in Walton said he did not think that Negroes generally are afraid to register there. He added that the "so-called leading Negroes are afraid but the Negro working by the day isn't. Negro teachers and ministers seem to be afraid because of what they may lose but what it is, I don't know."

In Arkansas, on rare occasions, clerks in the sheriff's office may tend to discourage poll tax payments through various means of discourtesy. For the most part, however, the poll tax is more important in Arkansas as a source of revenue than as a device for the disfranchisement of the Negro. In 1956, voters rejected an amendment to repeal it. Some important Negro leaders opposed its abolition. They believed that if the state dropped the poll tax it might adopt registration procedures requiring the filling out of forms or answering of questions and that Negroes then would experience far more difficulty than at present.

Finally, Mississippi. All forms of violence, intimidation and discrimina-



tion reported from other states were found here. Where other sections usually rely on one or two means of limiting Negro registration, Mississippi, home of the White Citizens Council, apparently uses them all. As a result, the state which has the highest percentage of Negroes in the country has the lowest percentage registered. Only four per cent were on the list of qualified voters in 1955, although Negroes make up 41 per cent of the total population of voting age.

In the 13 Mississippi counties listed as having a population of more than 50 per cent Negro, a total of 14 votes was cast in the three elections on which information was available for 1954. Five of the counties had no Negroes qualified and three had one registered who never voted. In the seven counties having more than 60 per cent Negro population, two votes were cast by Negroes in 1954.

Violence, threats, and economic reprisals discouraged Negroes interested in voting in Mississippi. Some instances were publicized but it may reasonably be supposed that others went unreported. In 1955 alone, a string of reports of brutality and illegal tactics came out of the state.

In the early spring of that year, Gus Courts, a Negro grocer at Belzoni, Miss., was told to move from his home and withdraw his name as president of the local NAACP chapter. He was forced to move his grocery store and advised to remove his name from the voting rolls. He refused and in November, 1955, he was shot and seriously wounded by a group of men in a car who fired into his store.

Recovering from his wounds, Courts told a reporter: "I've known for a long time it was coming, and I'd tried to get prepared in my mind for it. But that's a hard thing to do when you know they're going to try to slip up and steal your life in the night and not in the bright. It's bad when you know you might get shot just walking around in your store. That's a hard kind of life to lead."

Courts was puzzled as to why anyone would want to shoot him, for, "I've never been a trouble maker and I've never had on handcuffs. I'm 65 years old and I've never had the vote. That's all I wanted."

Courts' predecessor as NAACP president in Belzoni, the Rev. George Washington Lee, was killed May 7, 1954. The United Press, in a story from Belzoni on the Courts' shooting, gave this background on the Lee death:

"The Reverend Lee was shot, allegedly on the day he refused a request from a white citizen that he remove his name from the voters registration list. In that death, first of three race killings in Mississippi this year, Lee reportedly was driving down a Belzoni street when a car in which two white men and a Negro were riding suddenly came from behind and a shotgun blast shattered the Negro's car."

A coroner's inquest returned a verdict of accidental death and made no reference to the wounds in the dead man's face.

Other incidents in Mississippi in 1955, as reported by wire services and newspapers: T. V. Johnson, Belzoni Negro undertaker, was told to remove his name from the voting rolls if he desired continued credit; the Rev. James Hargroves fled the state after he was threatened with the fate of the Reverend Lee if he continued to work for the NAACP. Elsewhere, the home of a Negro leader was fired upon, and crosses were burned in front of the homes of two others. There were additional instances of violence against Negroes for activities other than voting.

If, despite the harassment and brutality, Negroes still try to vote in Mississippi, there is the state's registration law to act as a deterrent. The rigid education test, the essay on citizenship, all the requirements of the tighter registration law passed in 1954, present innumerable opportunities for the white registrar opposed to Negro registration.

## Socio-Economic Factors

THE RACIAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL PATTERN of any Southern community exerts a powerful influence on Negro registration.

Armed with statistics on education, urbanization, farm tenancy, income, and racial composition, it is possible to guess with a fair degree of accuracy whether the percentage of eligible Negroes registered will be above or below average.

Relatively few Negroes are likely to be registered in counties where they make up a large proportion of the population, in counties where education and income medians are low, and in counties that are predominantly agricultural and have a high rate of farm tenancy.

At the same time, in counties where Negroes comprise a large part of the population, white registration tends to be above normal.

Negroes are more likely to be registered in counties where they represent a small percentage of the total population, where they are better educated, are less dependent on the whims of white landlords and employers and are in a sounder economic position generally.

There are exceptions to these generalizations, of course. Louisiana and Arkansas provide outstanding examples of the variations.

Georgia presents a fairly typical picture. In the state's 157 counties with Negro population of voting age, the median percentage of eligible Negroes registered is 25.<sup>1</sup> However, the range of the registration figures is so variable that counties are divided into "high" and "low" categories.

In only five Georgia counties does the number of Negro registrants exceed the number of white registrants, although there are more Negroes than whites of voting age in 27 counties.

It is apparent in Georgia that the more Negroes there are in relation to the white citizens, the lower the percentage of Negro registrants. In counties where the percentage of Negroes in the population is below the state average, 69 per cent show Negro registration above the state median; 68 per cent of the counties above the state average in Negro population are below the median in Negro registration. The association is even more marked in counties with a population over half Negro—80 per cent of these fall below the median in Negro registration.

A further association between registration and population: only 36 per cent of the counties in Georgia losing population list Negro registration above the median but 65 per cent of the counties growing in population are above. A loss of population generally indicates a county is not

<sup>1</sup>The 1950 census reported no Negroes of voting age in two Georgia counties: Dawson and Union.

keeping pace with the state's growing industrialization. It offers fewer job opportunities; educational facilities are below par. Negroes in such counties are particularly hard pressed and the younger ones, who would be most likely to assert their right to vote, move to the nearest city or head North.

The relationship between education and political participation also turned up in the Georgia survey. In counties where Negroes rank above the state median in the number of school years completed 89 per cent also are high in Negro registration. By contrast, only 37 per cent of the counties below the median in Negro educational attainment have high registration figures.

As to the significance of economic factors, it is found that of the Georgia counties having median family income above the state figure of \$1,130, 61 per cent have high Negro registration. In counties below the median income level, only 35 per cent are high in the number of Negroes qualified to vote. In short, Negro registration tends to increase along with overall income.

Also, there is a tendency in Georgia for predominantly industrial counties to rank higher in Negro registration than those primarily agricultural. Among counties in which farm income exceeds manufacturing income, 37 per cent are high in Negro registration, as contrasted with 58 per cent in counties where manufacturing exceeds agricultural income.

And, the agricultural counties in Georgia deriving more farm income from livestock, dairying, and poultry are somewhat higher in the percentage of Negroes registered than those in which the income stems largely from row crops. Also, there is a definite relationship between tenancy and registration. Among the Georgia agricultural counties which exceed the state average in the number of farms operated by tenants, only 34 per cent have high registration figures, but among the counties below the state average in tenancy, 63 per cent rank high in Negro registration.

Social and economic factors which influence Negro registration in Georgia apply in large measure over much of the South.

Louisiana, however, is an exception due to religious-cultural factors.

Negro registration in Louisiana is concentrated in the southern and central portions of the state and is lowest in the northwestern and north-eastern parishes. The following figures show the percentage of Negro registration is higher in the parishes (counties) predominantly Catholic:<sup>2</sup>

	<i>Number of Negroes Registered</i>	<i>Potential Negro Voters</i>	<i>Per Cent Registered</i>
French-Catholic Parishes <sup>3</sup> . . . . .	70,488	138,000	51
Non-French Parishes . . . . . (Predominantly Protestant)	90,922	390,000	23



Both Negro and white persons interviewed agreed that the attitude toward the Negro in French-Catholic Louisiana is different than that generally found in the northern Protestant parishes. To point up the difference, for example, they said that crowds at political meetings in southern Louisiana often are integrated, but segregated in the northern part of the state; that Citizens Councils have strong backing in northern parishes but less support in southern Louisiana, and that in some industries and businesses in southern Louisiana, Negroes work at skilled jobs beside white employees and use the same facilities.

There are several explanations for this variant attitude of the French Catholic people toward the Negro. For one thing, according to the Louisiana consultant for this survey:

"The Catholic Church is virtually the only major bi-racial institution in Louisiana which is actively working toward integration. For example, in a parish in the Mississippi Delta where Negroes comprise over 50 per cent of the population and not a single Negro is registered to vote, the Catholic priest stands alone among whites in his fight for racial equality. In this protestant, Anglo-Saxon, delta parish, this priest has initiated integrated Sunday School and communion classes.

"It should be said on behalf of the Protestant ministers in parishes such as this that the Catholic clergyman is in a much better position than they to take an advanced position on the Negro question. If a Protestant minister should attempt to emulate the priest's example, he would lose his post, whereas the members of a Catholic church have no such control over the selection of their priest."

It should be noted, too, that the Catholic path is not always smooth, as shown by the vigorous opposition of many white Catholic laymen to the pronouncements on integration of Archbishop Rummell of New Orleans. However, whatever the reasons, the fact remains that the Catholic Church is an important variable with respect to Negro registration in Louisiana.

In non-Catholic parishes of Louisiana there is a distinct correlation

<sup>2</sup>Louisiana population figures are based on 1956 estimates.

<sup>3</sup>Taken from T. Lynn Smith and Homer L. Hitt, *The People of Louisiana*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1952, p. 143. French Parishes: Acadia, Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, Calcasieu, Cameron, Evangeline, Iberia, Iberville, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, Lafourche, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Terrebonne, Vermilion, West Baton Rouge.

between the tenancy rate and the per cent of the potential Negro vote registered as shown by the following:

<i>Per Cent Tenancy</i>	<i>Number of Parishes</i>	<i>Mean Per Cent Negro Registration</i>
50% and up . . . . .	11	12
40-49% . . . . .	4	19
30-39% . . . . .	6	25
20-29% . . . . .	6	36
10-19% . . . . .	9	53
0-9% . . . . .	3	59

No measurable relationship exists between tenancy and Negro registration in the French-Catholic parishes, as is seen in the following breakdown:

<i>Per Cent Tenancy</i>	<i>Number of Parishes</i>	<i>Mean Per Cent Negro Registration</i>
50% and up . . . . .	6	65
40-49% . . . . .	0	---
30-39% . . . . .	7	48
20-29% . . . . .	5	67
10-19% . . . . .	7	43
0-9% . . . . .	0	---

A high tenancy rate in a parish indicates the existence of a plantation economy. In the plantation parishes a few individuals own the vast majority of the land and the Negroes are in a subservient position.

"In a number of Mississippi Delta parishes," the Louisiana consultant reported, "The plantation owners take pride in the resemblance which exists between the 1856 and 1956 plantations, and if the 'master' is opposed to Negro registration, few Negroes would think of attempting it."

There also is no discernible relation between urbanization and Negro registration in Louisiana, as can be seen by the following figures:

<i>Per Cent Urban</i>	<i>Number of Parishes</i>	<i>Mean Per Cent of Negroes Registered</i>
70% and up . . . . .	5	29
50-69% . . . . .	4	45
40-49% . . . . .	8	27
30-39% . . . . .	10	46
20-29% . . . . .	14	49
10-19% . . . . .	6	28
0-9% . . . . .	17	43

This exception to the tendency toward a concentration of Negro registration in urban areas is caused in large part, the Louisiana consultant feels, by a lack of leadership and the fact that city Negroes in the state often do not feel a part of their community. In rural areas, on the other hand, the community ties are closer and often Negroes respond in wholesale fashion to appeals of their leaders to register.

In Arkansas, the registration record of Negroes in the state as a whole is decidedly less impressive than that of white citizens. Economic dependency and the lower income and educational status of Negroes are contributing factors. But the Arkansas consultant for this survey feels that an even greater cause of non-voting by Negroes is their exclusion from the entire business of politics, patronage, office holding, and policy making.

Arkansas provides an interesting variation from the usual voting pattern of counties in the South with a high percentage of Negroes. Surprisingly, in this state there is a tendency in such counties for the level of white registration to be lower and that of Negro registration to be higher than in the counties with few or no Negroes.

The Negro population in Arkansas is concentrated in non-metropolitan areas, mostly in the eastern and southern counties bordering the states of Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. Traditionally, these are the areas of the plantation system, tenancy, one-crop agriculture (cotton), and restrictive race relations. In the past 20 years there have been marked changes, with many Negroes moving to cities for a number of reasons, including the mechanization of farms and the promise of better jobs elsewhere. With the exception of the larger urban areas, Negro population dropped strikingly in most Arkansas counties between 1940-50, particularly in those with a large proportion of Negroes.

Still, the old order prevails to a large extent in these plantation counties. Negroes lag behind the white citizens in income and the number of school years completed and both races are below state and national averages.

"Logically, any deterrence to Negro registration and voting would have been found in those areas," the Arkansas consultant commented. He thought the higher Negro registration may be due to "Negro political leadership developed to counteract widespread restrictive racial practices, which in turn tends partially to neutralize the limiting effects of low economic status on suffrage."

In Texas, also, economic status has a definite bearing on Negro voting and as everywhere in the South the self-employed are far more likely to be politically active. The Negro's living still comes primarily from the land in Texas, where there are many independent Negro farmers. They raise cotton and timber in east Texas and rice in the south. The rice farmers sometimes control extremely large holdings. Some of those around the Jefferson County (Beaumont and Port Arthur) area at times gross over \$100,000 a year. Many, however, are small farmers compelled to supplement their annual income by part-time employment in the small towns and cities nearby. This in itself is an emancipating force, for it often marks the first step toward permanent urban habitation and, in some instances, unionization. The independent Negro farmers, with doctors, businessmen,

other self-employed Negroes, and some teachers, form a corps of political leadership for their people.

In North Carolina, economic dependency of the Negro on the white population has its most telling effect on registration in rural areas and small towns, particularly in the eastern part of the state. Most vulnerable to pressure are tenant farmers, teachers, and domestic servants.

The difficulties potential Negro voters encounter in Virginia tend to mount as the per cent of Negroes in the population increases. In line with the rest of the South, the counties of high Negro population usually are high also in illiteracy and low in economic status, which leads to dependency and susceptibility to pressure from the employing class.

Virginia counties with a relatively high percentage of Negroes are in the Coastal Plain, Tidewater, Southside, and Piedmont sections.

Agriculturally, these areas are "largely semi-feudal and paternalistic with the white large land owners operating as quasi-feudal lords," the Virginia consultant wrote.

"For their farms, sawmills, small businesses, and homes they want an ample supply of cheap, tractable, and exploitable labor. Over the years they have worked out a system of economic, educational, social, and political organization which will provide this labor pattern. Being in economic and political control, they have established policies to keep the vote small so as to insure continued political control. . . .

"In many of the localities a few dominant families, their relatives, and friends form something like an interlocking directorate and control the key positions in the economic, social, and political system. The result is that the mere awareness of its presence has the effect of cowering both whites and blacks and especially those who depend on them for land rental contracts, jobs, wages, loans and credit, sponsorship, protection, and representation. . . .

"The educational level of the Negroes, the lack or paucity of leaders among them, their physical and cultural isolation . . . their economic poverty which keeps their minds and energies concentrated upon satisfying their basic physical needs, and the imaginings and fears that accompany a dependent and nigh helpless people all militate against political activity.

"In the northern part of the state, where the Negro population is so much smaller percentage-wise, many of the Negroes work in agriculture and in domestic and personal service occupations. Their small numbers isolate them . . . and bring them psychologically as well as economically under the dominant influence of their employers."

The connection between Negro population and registration also appears in South Carolina, where the median proportion of Negroes is 47.4 and the Negro registration median is 17.4. Seventy per cent of the counties



having fewer Negroes than the state median are above the median in Negro registration; by contrast, only 35 per cent of the counties of high Negro population rank above the registration median.

South Carolina also offers an example of the correlation between a county's population loss or gain and Negro registration. Two-thirds of the counties in the state gained in population between 1940 and 1950 and 61 per cent of these are above the median in Negro registration. In 80 per cent of the counties losing population, Negro registration is below the median. The tendency for higher income and education levels to coincide with greater Negro registration also is evident in South Carolina.

For Alabama counties, the median percentage of Negro eligibles registered is 10.9 per cent. Among the Southern states, only Mississippi has a lower median. The familiar pattern—low Negro registration going hand-in-hand with below average income and education and a high degree of farm tenancy—is apparent in Alabama.

In Mississippi, Negroes make up 41 per cent of the total population of voting age but represent a minute part of the registered electorate. The median registration figure for eligible Negroes is less than one per cent. There were 14 counties in which no Negroes were registered in 1955 (the last year for which figures were available) and 28 in which less than one per cent had registered. As mentioned previously, many observers believe that there are even fewer Negroes registered in Mississippi today than in 1955. Urbanization, industrialization, and Negro farm tenancy have a bearing on Negro registration, as in other Southern states. An increase in the median school years completed by all groups in Mississippi seems to have more effect on Negro registration than the school years completed by Negroes only. This leads to the conjecture that intolerance among better educated whites is somewhat modified, paving the way for increased Negro registration. The same effect appears where the overall income level is above the median.

The county medians of Negro registration found in the survey:<sup>4</sup>

	<i>Per Cent</i>		<i>Per Cent</i>
Alabama . . . . .	10.9	Mississippi . . . . .	.83
Arkansas . . . . .	30.1	North Carolina . . . . .	21.4
Florida . . . . .	44.1	South Carolina . . . . .	17.4
Georgia . . . . .	25.0	Texas . . . . .	26.7
Louisiana . . . . .	40.1	Virginia . . . . .	20.0

<sup>4</sup>Tennessee County by county figures unavailable. All other medians are based on 1956 except Arkansas and Mississippi, where figures are for 1955.

## Political Consciousness

**N**EGRO LEADERS in many Southern counties feel that persons of their race have only themselves to blame for not voting.

There are registration boards which treat Negroes fairly and some even give help beyond what the law allows. There are communities where white persons encourage Negroes to register, or at least do not try to deter them, and where candidates seek the Negro vote. Still, in many of these places the number of Negroes registered remains appallingly low.

On the surface, only apathy seems to limit voting of thousands of Southern Negroes. Such disinterest is found everywhere, of course, among both white and Negro citizens. In the nation as a whole, an average of only about 60 per cent of the eligible voters turn out on election day. And undoubtedly, if all racial distinctions were abolished many Negroes simply wouldn't bother to vote, even as their fellow white citizens.

But as matters stand, a lack of political consciousness is a particularly acute problem among Negroes in the South. Many factors peculiar to the region contribute to its existence.

No one can know, for example, to what extent the system of segregation has deadened initiative and civic interest. After being deprived of first class citizenship and the ballot for so many years, ignored by the white community except in a menial capacity, and cut off from policy-making bodies, Negroes as a group could not be expected to develop a strong sense of civic and political responsibility overnight.

In counties and precincts where registration is easy for Negroes, it has become so only recently. After decades of discrimination, there remains a natural reluctance to test the new policy, an uneasiness about becoming a "guinea pig." Most people, whatever their color, can experience only so many rebuffs before withdrawing into a protective state of inaction.

Often, too, it is difficult to arouse a motivation to vote when there is little concrete evidence of benefits to compensate for the trouble of qualifying. Negro representation on official bodies is still rare and the Negro candidate finds the road to political office exceedingly rough. Many cannot see how political participation ties in with personal welfare and cite the lack of rewards like jobs, personal favors, the preferment of friends or relatives, which many white persons and Negroes elsewhere can expect.

In addition to being so long cut off from the political mainstream, social and economic influences contribute to the seeming indifference.

More often than not, Negroes remain economically dependent on the white community and are afraid to do anything to endanger their jobs.

One Negro in central Alabama, asked about the small number of Negroes registered in his county, answered, "Bread before ballots."

Tied in closely with the economic factor is education. Negroes stand low on the scale in the average number of school years completed. It is only in the past few years that high schools have been available to them in some sections; the one-room school, operating on a split-semester to allow time out for cotton picking, is not yet wholly a thing of the past. The illiteracy rate remains higher than for the population as a whole. Among Negroes with little formal education, particularly if they live in rural areas and small towns, isolated from daily newspapers and the world of ideas, it is not surprising to find little interest in voting.

Consider a field hand with little or no education, earning barely enough to provide himself and family with a substandard diet, living in an unpainted shack, exhausted by long hours of hard labor and completely dependent on a white employer opposed to any change. With only a monthly church service conducted by a visiting minister for recreation and an infrequent trip into town for provisions, with the knowledge that violence to "keep him in line" could come any dark night, it can scarcely be expected that he would be interested in an abstraction like voting.

It is impossible to know to what extent generally fear contributes to "apathy"—fear of violence, insults, reprisals. Though it might seem easy to register and vote at present, many Negroes interviewed did not trust the new order yet. Some foresaw the danger of the clock being turned back if Negroes registered in sufficient numbers to challenge white power at the polls.

But, whatever the contributing factors, consultants throughout the region found indifference one of the strongest barriers to increased Negro voting.

In Tennessee, for example, where Negroes comprise approximately 20 per cent of the total population, it has been fairly simple for all citizens to register since the 1940's; the abolition of the poll tax in 1953 made it even easier. Only in three counties in west Tennessee—Haywood, Hardaman and Fayette—does intimidation pose a major threat. Still, only about 28 per cent of the Negroes of voting age have registered and, of course, even fewer vote. Why?

One Negro active in politics said the answer is, in large part, "lethargy." Another said of the majority of his people, "They're not interested; there's a complacency." A Negro civic worker commented, "If they were prohibited, maybe it would be different."

Negro leaders said it is particularly difficult to stir interest in state elections in Tennessee. One asserted, "The rank and file don't see the

importance of voting for state offices. . . . The vast majority are not conscious that the state government is as important as local and national government; they don't realize that laws can be made by state legislatures concerning local issues and that no city in Tennessee enjoys home rule. They don't realize the importance of voting to prevent the bad issues."

These viewpoints were echoed by a white political leader in Nashville, who spoke of both races: "Only a miserable percentage of those qualified will actually vote. There is a complacency in everybody."

In sections of west Tennessee, Negro leaders have to fight a widespread inclination to leave politics entirely in the hands of the white community.

Evidence of apathy appeared in interviews over most of the South.

In Alabama's black belt, most Dallas County Negroes found in barber shops and pool rooms would not even talk about voting. Among the comments of those who would: "I don't want nothing to do with it;" "If they don't want me to vote, I don't want to," and "Leave them white folks alone." Only 275 of the 18,145 eligible Negroes registered in the county.<sup>1</sup>

Cotton pickers in Escambia County, south of the Black Belt, joked at the idea of voting and most said, "That's white folks business."

The same answer came from a spokesman for 20 cotton pickers in a field in another Alabama Black Belt county. During this conversation, the white land owner came over to ask, "Is he (the interviewer) trying to start trouble?" There were widespread reports in the county that plantation owners generally see that their Negroes don't vote and another that the former practice of white persons taking Negroes to register and then controlling their vote has stopped. Voicing a view heard often in the county, one Negro said, "We have never had any trouble, but was always told how to vote. Now we are left alone."

In Barbour County, Ala., 24 Negroes selected at random all saw no reason for voting. Only 220 of 7,158 eligible Negroes have registered. The same disinterest was reported among Negroes in Chilton and Walker counties; in the latter, it was difficult even to persuade veterans to register.

Registrars in one Alabama county helped both white and Negro applicants fill out their forms; in one period, not a single Negro was refused, while 23 whites were. Still, only 600 of the 4,029 eligible Negroes have registered. Boards of registration in several other counties in Alabama are obliging also. In these, the major portion of the blame for low registration rests with the Negroes themselves and the background which has shaped their attitudes.

The majority of Negroes in Ellis County, Texas, (1,711 of 5,841 eligible registered) were described as indifferent, feeling that there is no

<sup>1</sup>Registration figures referred to throughout this chapter are for 1956.



point in being interested in politics because no candidate would do anything for them.

This same attitude is evidently prevalent in Walton County, Ga., where, according to a spokesman, many Negroes feel, "There is no need to vote. It won't amount to anything anyway. White folks are running things and will keep on doing so." Some registered Negroes refuse rides to the polls on election day and some Negro women who promise they will vote will "get in bed on election day to keep from doing so." In Walton, scene of the unsolved lynching of four Negroes in 1946, only meager educational facilities were available to Negroes until recent years.

In Peach County, Ga., where Negroes outnumber whites by a ratio of six to four, many said also that their votes don't count. They have to enter the rear of the City Hall to deposit their ballots in a black box; white voters use the front door and place their ballots in an unpainted box.

In those South Carolina counties where more than 1,000 Negroes have registered, the field consultant said hundreds of others could qualify. Many have not learned the advantages of the ballot and are novices in politics. They have been told over and over in one way or another that voting is none of their business and this long period of indoctrination is still having its effect.

Education and economics play a part, too. In Horry County, S. C., where 2,700 of the 6,969 Negroes of voting age are in the registration list, many who might qualify will not try. However, approximately 70 per cent depend on the white community for their living. In Florence County, where only 1,600 of the 16,650 Negroes over 21 are registered, it seems that what appears to be apathy is in fact pressure. One of the small towns in the county, Lake City, is a center of White Citizens Council activity.

In Lee County, S. C., 1,500 of the 6,246 non-whites have registered; some of those who have not are uninterested in voting and the literacy level of Negroes in the county is so low that others could not pass the reading test necessary to qualify.

The view that politics should be left entirely in the hands of white men and women was heard frequently among Negroes in several South Carolina counties, including Lancaster, Marlboro, Barnwell, and Dillon. In at least two other counties, the white community has encouraged Negroes to vote, but some of the older Negroes, particularly, are apathetic. This lack of interest is considered a major reason more Negroes are not registered in perhaps as many as 13 counties in South Carolina.

The survey consultant in Florida believes that one of the big obstacles in arousing Negroes to vote is the psychological difficulty of convincing them they need not be afraid. He feels they would experience little more

than token resistance in 63 of the 67 counties in the state. This was illustrated in 1954 in a county where Negroes never had registered before, individual applicants having been discouraged or frightened away. A group of about 100 Negroes went to the courthouse in a body and found they had no trouble in registering. In 1956 over 900 Negroes enrolled.

In the Mississippi Delta sections of Louisiana where no Negroes are registered, the majority appear almost totally uninterested in voting. However, they are not far removed from slavery in terms of economics and education; in the main, they follow the dictates of the plantation owners. The immediate hope for an increased Negro electorate in Louisiana lies elsewhere, particularly in the cities. Much remains to be done in Louisiana to overcome the urban Negroes' political indifference, which a field consultant blamed largely on three factors:

1. Often, they are new to the city, without roots in the community; for many this is only a step toward Los Angeles or Chicago.

2. Urban Negro leaders often fail to coordinate their efforts and by confining their attention to their particular organizations fail to mobilize the resources of the entire Negro community.

3. Urban Negro leadership often is rather poor in quality or so closely identified with the white community it loses the confidence of other Negroes.

In the eastern part of North Carolina, a Negro commented, "The hardest trouble now is to get people to register; they have been rejected so often that they are hesitant about trying again and again." Some migrants into the state come from rural areas in Georgia and South Carolina; trained to avoid anything concerned with politics, they have refused to register.

A Negro minister in a Piedmont county of North Carolina contended, "The Negro has no problem in registering in this county. Even illiterates can get on the books. Perhaps the Negro has it too easy in this respect; if it were harder to register perhaps more would be interested in exercising their franchise."

The Arkansas field consultant suggested that wider opportunities for Negro participation in the political process over and above registration and voting could do much to overcome apathy. For example, Negroes have practically no voice in the political patronage system. When they run for local elective office, they are not an integral part of the machinery regulating party selection and support of candidates. In the past two years several Negroes have been appointed by the governor to the state Democratic Committee but many believe their participation was meant to be of a token nature. Only Garland and Miller have Negroes participating in the county party organization. In only one or two areas of the

state are Negroes utilized in the actual machinery of balloting, as poll watchers, judges, and counters.

In Virginia, the consultant gave a lack of understanding of the significance of political action or a feeling of the uselessness of such activity as reasons a large number of Negroes seem uninterested in voting. Often, also, there is a vague fear of being unable to register successfully. In the southwest section of the state, where a two-party system generates vigorous political contests, there is a tendency for Negroes to be more active politically.

Because of the fear caused by intimidation in Mississippi, pressures exerted against an already depressed economic group, the low level of education, stringent registration requirements and the general attitude of white citizens, it is not difficult to understand the failure of most Negroes to seek to register and vote. Until the opportunity to vote is improved, the extent of disinterest cannot be measured.



## Organization and Leadership Pro and Con

**L**EADERSHIP often is the factor determining whether or not Negroes vote in the South. Alternately, it is the great hope and the great need of thousands.

In recent years one of the most spectacular developments in the field of Negro voting has been the tug-of-war between the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and such prosegregation groups as the White Citizens Councils.

Area-wide, these two powerful organizations work at cross purposes, the NAACP to increase Negro voting, the WCC to limit or end it altogether.

While their struggles often hold the limelight, there are many organizations throughout the South working quietly to enfranchise Negroes. Some are statewide, more are local. Often, where there is no formal organization, individual leadership comes from teachers, ministers, business and professional men and women.

However, there still are a great many counties where Negroes have no political leadership. Teachers in such spots often face the loss of their jobs if they urge their people to vote. In some counties there are no Negro doctors, dentists, lawyers, or white collar workers, nor even a resident Negro minister to offer leadership.

Scores of Negroes living in areas where the white populace is hostile show great courage. Often, they know their jobs, credit, and perhaps even their lives are at stake. Still, they forge ahead.

When Negroes in Laurens County, Ga., were registering in large numbers and white men talked about trouble between the races, one Negro leader said, "I have already outlived my time on earth and will meet whatever they bring." He remembered how Isaiah Nixon, Negro, was killed in nearby Montgomery County in 1948 after he dared to vote. Fortunately, that incident has not been repeated in Georgia.

Atlanta offers one of the most dramatic examples of what coordinated, forceful leadership can accomplish.<sup>1</sup> From 1908 until 1943 Negro voting there was confined to general and special elections. However, as early as 1932 citizenship schools were started in Atlanta by leading Negro citizens to encourage voting by Negroes in elections then open to them and to prepare them for the day when the courts would outlaw the white primary. The first spurt in Negro registration in Atlanta came after the Georgia legislature repealed the poll tax in 1945 and lowered the voting age to

<sup>1</sup>Material on Atlanta voting: C. A. Bacote, "The Negro in Atlanta Politics," *Phylon*, The Atlanta University Review, fourth quarter, 1955.



18. Following this legislation, Negro registration reached a total of 3,000, largely through the efforts of the Atlanta Civic and Political League, the *Atlanta Daily World* (Negro newspaper) and the NAACP. Another drive to swell registration for a special congressional election in February, 1946, increased the total to 6,876.

Then, the United States Supreme Court on April 1, 1946, invalidated the white primary. Forseeing this possibility, the Atlanta Urban League and other groups already had spurred the formation of the All-Citizens Registration Committee. In all, 870 Negro men and women volunteered to serve as block workers and an intensive drive to enroll Negro voters began. Placards and 50,000 handbills were distributed, mass meetings arranged, door-to-door contacts made, speakers provided for church and social affairs. Car pools were set up to take workers to registration offices, where volunteers were stationed to assist those who wanted help. The effectiveness of this activity was soon apparent. For example, 678 Negroes were registered at one spot in a three-hour period; the next day, 750 in the same length of time at another registration desk. At the end of the drive, nearly 18,000 Negroes had been registered in a period of 51 days. This represented the peak of Negro registration in Atlanta, a total of 24,137. In succeeding years this figure dropped to 19,000, despite a sizable increase in Negro population.<sup>2</sup> Some Negro observers blamed this in part on the failure of the Negro community to develop a permanent registration organization which would do more than make a spasmodic push at election time. Today, however, Negro registration has climbed to about 27,000.

In most Southern states some type of Negro voters league exists.

Alabama has a State Coordinating Association for Registration and Voting; there is an organization in each Congressional district of the state and in some counties to stimulate interest in Negro voting and provide a yardstick for measuring candidates. Some groups hold political rallies, provide cars to take voters to the polls on election day, conduct classes to explain the process of registration. At rallies of the Walker County Voters League, white candidates have paid \$5 to the League treasury for the privilege of speaking.

North Carolina has no completely organized statewide group to encourage Negro voting but there are many Citizens Leagues, Civic Improvement Associations, and Civic Forums which work on the local level.

Louisiana Negroes also depend on local groups. In New Orleans alone there are several, including the Peoples Defense League, the Progressive Voters League, and the Crescent City Voters League. Many

<sup>2</sup>Georgia Department of Public Health estimates that the Negro population in Atlanta—the city limits of Atlanta were extended 82 square miles in 1952—has increased from 121,416 in 1950 to 153,100 in 1956.

other Negro clubs and associations in New Orleans also seek to extend the franchise—so many, in fact, that some Negroes contend the work overlaps and that there is a great need for coordination.

South Carolina has not only the Palmetto Voters Association, which is highly effective in many counties, but its own Progressive Democratic Club. Negro women's clubs, civic groups, and some churches also contribute to the unusually high standard of leadership in the state.

The Virginia Voters League for Negroes has chapters in 28 cities and counties.

In Arkansas, the State Negro Democratic Association is one of the chief instruments for increasing Negro political activity. In some Arkansas cities, Negro business and professional people have organized Civic Improvement Associations with political participation one of the chief aims.

In fact, throughout the South there are scores of Negro civic, fraternal, farm, social and business associations which promote registration, augmenting the work of organizations formed solely to encourage Negro voting. Negroes in several states work separately, but within the framework of the Democratic and Republican parties.

Leadership for the various groups comes most often from those who are not economically dependent on the white community.

As for the role of educators, the late Luther P. Jackson, professor of history at Virginia State College wrote in 1948 ("Race and Suffrage in the South since 1940"—*New South*, June-July, 1948):

"The Negro community contains in its schools, and particularly in its colleges in the South, a basic institution for the increase of civic education. It will be generally agreed that aloofness and timidity with respect to civic participation have all too frequently characterized the Negro educational forces of the South. This is evident from the poor voting record of Negro teachers themselves."

This situation remains unchanged in some schools but elsewhere there is a growing spirit of civic consciousness among Negro educators. Unfortunately, teachers often are subject to great pressure and too many are in a situation similar to that at Fort Valley State College in Georgia. This Negro institution is state-supported and instructors feel they will lose their jobs if they attempt to provide leadership.

Jackson also wrote, "Another institution of a democratic society upon which falls some of the responsibility for stimulating a voting interest is the church, through its ministers. Unfortunately, the record of the churches as a whole is no better than that of the colleges or the public schools, because the vast majority still adhere to the old belief that the affairs of the church and those of the civil state should never mix."

But there are signs that the old order is crumbling, with many educated young Negro ministers becoming increasingly active in encouraging their people to vote.

The role of Negro newspaper editors should not be overlooked, for no single group has taken a more militant stand for equal political rights. They conduct unrelenting campaigns to awaken Negroes to the value of the franchise.

Periodic appeals of local white newspapers in Arkansas for all citizens to pay their poll taxes and vote have had a considerable influence on Negro registration. Generally, however, the white newspaper in the South which encourages Negro suffrage is the exception; most either oppose it or ignore the subject.

Labor unions, for the most part, have not played a major role in promoting Negro voting in the South. Perhaps they are too engrossed in fighting opposition to unionization, still prevalent in the South, to scatter their strength. As a Georgia consultant put it, "Aside from shedding some of their prejudices, labor union members do not want to turn a single line of employer and community resistance into two lines of resistance, with the second developing because of an alliance with Negro voters."

In addition, unions are in a newly embattled state as a result of formation of White Citizens Councils. The racially prejudiced and the insecure who fear job competition were ripe for the WCC movement. Many union members have joined and some locals have threatened to pull out of parent organizations, though these threats have usually turned out to have no real determination behind them.

The Civil Rights Committee of the AFL-CIO Executive Council reported at its annual meeting in Miami in February, 1956, that "there is a close link between these organizations (WCC) and the drive to weaken and destroy trade unions."

There are unions in the South which have encouraged Negro registration. Locals in some Southern cities have conducted classes and other programs to promote voting by both white and Negro workers. Also, some labor unions have given financial aid and provided personnel in the organization of campaigns to increase Negro voting. Many locals which are predominantly Negro have conducted a continuing drive to increase voter participation, not only by their own members but by others in the community.

In Durham, N. C., Negroes have held the balance of political power; this is related to the fact that they have worked closely with organized labor. However, while professional union men have held to the alliance, it has been somewhat weakened because of racial tensions.

Since 1948, organized labor in Arkansas has encouraged all workers to pay poll taxes, with the result of an increased registration of both white and Negro union members.

The NAACP functions effectively in some areas as a gadfly to force precinct and county officials to follow the letter of the law on registration and voting. While the organization centers its efforts on fighting cases of disfranchisement where illegal tactics are used, NAACP leaders act on their own in their communities to encourage registration. Also, the NAACP serves as a training school or motivating force for many men and women active in groups formed to encourage Negro voting.

In some communities, the NAACP is the only organized group to offer leadership for Negroes. Elsewhere, it does not function locally, although local Negroes contribute. A few chapters became inactive when Negroes thought it expedient to press their claims by other means, in view of the rising tide of sentiment against the NAACP in the South.

As the NAACP has chalked up success after success in the courts, the animosity of the conservative white South has found expression in a campaign of harassment and a series of official maneuvers. In Louisiana, the NAACP was banned, under an old anti-Ku Klux law which forbade meetings unless membership lists were filed.

The Alabama Supreme Court refused to review an injunction and a \$100,000 fine against the NAACP. When the organization was outlawed in Alabama, regional officers were moved to Atlanta during 1956.

The Georgia NAACP is involved in litigation over its tax exempt status and has surrendered financial records to the State Revenue Commissioner on order of Superior Court.

The Virginia General Assembly has passed a series of six bills aimed at curbing NAACP activities. *The Washington Post and Times Herald* in an editorial (Dec. 2, 1956), accused the Assembly of engaging in "an orgy of recrimination" against the NAACP and said, "The result was a series of laws that constitute a modern version of the Alien and Sedition Acts."

NAACP members in South Carolina have been barred by the state legislature from employment by school districts and by state, county and municipal governments. During the same session in 1956, the legislature called for an investigation of NAACP activities at South Carolina State College for Negroes at Orangeburg.

An injunction has been issued against the continued operation of the NAACP in Texas.

Most of these actions took place in 1956.

Opposed in every way to the NAACP are the White Citizens Councils and similar organizations, such as the Society for the Preservation of State



Sovereignty and Individual Liberties in Virginia, Southern Gentlemen in Louisiana, the Patriots of North Carolina, and a number of others.

The White Citizens Council movement was born in Sunflower County, Mississippi, in 1954, when 14 influential men met to devise ways to preserve the "Southern way of life." It grew quickly until in 1956 there were more than 300,000 members in the various resistance groups in the 11 Southern states.

The plan for the Citizens Councils reportedly was drawn from the book *Black Monday* by Circuit Court Judge Tom P. Brady of Brookhaven, Miss., in which the theory of economic pressure was advanced as a means of coping with Negro demands for equal rights. ("Black Monday" was used to designate May 17, 1954, the day of the U. S. Supreme Court's school integration decision.)

It is difficult to assess the effect of the Citizens Councils on Negro voting. The majority of the most active ones operate in areas where Negro registration already was low. While there are many reports that the pro-segregation councils have had little effect in a given county, no one can know to what extent their very existence intimidates many Negroes.

Medgar E. Evers, state secretary of the NAACP in Jackson, Miss., said in 1955 (AP, Jackson, Aug. 20, 1955) that one of the Citizens Councils' primary aims is to eliminate Negro voting. Asked what steps had been taken up to that time to purge Negroes from voter registration lists in Mississippi, he answered:

"The place most people know about is Humphries County. There were a number of Negro voters there . . . the employer would have a (voters) list and if he found this person's name . . . he'd say, 'we can't employ you until you get your name off this list.'

"By this method they knocked down registration to about 90 names and they started getting down to the hard core and other types of pressure were used. They'd come and tell them, 'You've lived in this community for a long time and if you want to stay here in peace, you'd better get your name off this list.' After they started making personal visits, the Negroes gave in to the extent that there are now only about 35 left."

Prior to the organization of the Citizens Councils, Humphries County had 126 Negroes registered. A random check by the AP of three neighboring Delta counties in 1955 showed that Negro registration in Sunflower County had dropped from 114 to 0, in Montgomery County from 26 to 0 and in Yazoo County from 125 to 90.

The Citizens Councils, which often enjoy official sanction, have emphasized that they will oppose integration in lawful ways. The *Jackson Clarion Ledger* (Jackson, Miss., Aug. 2, 1955) said the parent Association of



Citizens Councils of Mississippi was organized to keep segregation in all walks of life and centered its campaign against Negro voting.

Economic sanctions have been used in Mississippi so that Negroes often have to choose between their jobs and voting. In Louisiana, WCC members have played the key roll in a move to purge hundreds of Negroes from voting lists by means of the legal "challenge."

As for opposition, the *Louisville Courier-Journal* observed in an editorial (Nov. 29, 1955), "The flower of Southern chivalry either has mobilized itself in the councils or remains silent about their deeds." It noted that the comparatively few "indignant and courageous voices" among white men and women were not considered "true" Southerners by their fellows and added:

"But Southerners had better thank God for such non-conformists as these, else the night of the spirit that has descended wherever the Citizens Councils have taken over law and order might well plunge the South into a depth from which it could never emerge."

Substantial attempts are being made to revive the Ku Klux Klan, at least a cousin—however, embarrassing at the family table—of the Citizens Councils. Increasingly, the hooded order, which is on the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations, is burning its crosses and staging its sheeted parades. It remains to be seen whether the Klan or the Citizens Council will emerge as the dominant champion of segregation.

## Voting Performance

THE PERCENTAGE of Southerners who vote is well below the national average, as field reports for this study emphasized once again.

And, it is not only Negro disfranchisement which depresses the South's average for, except in occasional, heated contests, white citizens in the region are less likely to vote than citizens in other parts of the country.

Compare the North and South turnout in a presidential election or the vote for governor in Southern Democratic primaries and in general elections in the North—whatever the yardstick used, the voting performance of the South generally lags behind.

Many reasons for this lack of electoral enthusiasm can be advanced: the one-party system, lower educational and economic levels, poll tax and registration requirements, plus the historic tendency to leave public affairs to the few in the South.

V. O. Key in *Southern Politics in State and Nation* studied primary and general elections from 1920-47. He found that "by any standard, precious few Southerners exercise the rights of citizens in a democracy."

He discovered that, in the period surveyed, "Usually less than 30 per cent of all citizens 21 years of age and over vote for governor in Democratic primaries in most Southern states. In four states—Virginia, Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama—the rate of participation averages less than 20 per cent.

The Key study showed that about five times as large a proportion of the electorate voted for governor in the general elections of Ohio and New York as in gubernatorial primaries in Virginia. The New York rate was about twice that of Texas. Key found that even fewer Southerners vote for U. S. Senator. For example, Vermont, virtually a one-party state, had nearly 65 per cent turnout of eligible voters in the election of a Senator in 1944, while Alabama had slightly less than 20 per cent. Research showed that "Northern one-party states exceed the South in electoral interest only in lesser degree than do two-party states."

For years the absence of a contest for the South's electoral votes resulted in an exceptionally low turnout for presidential elections. However, in 1956, when there was a far more spirited battle, the region still did not respond to the same degree as the rest of the United States. The Associated Press reported that the total vote in the nation consisted of 77.4 per cent of those registered and represented 60.4 per cent of the estimated civilian population of voting age. In the 11 Southern states, approximately 70 per cent of those registered voted, representing only 39 per cent of the eligible population.

How does the registered Southern Negro react within this framework of low voter participation? Does he, for example bloc vote? The answer to the latter question is "yes" and "no."

Whenever Negroes feel their special interests are involved, they are inclined to vote in a bloc. They are neither more nor less vulnerable to the charge of wholesale support or opposition than those who rally in an opposing bloc to the "white supremacy" banner. All groups—including farm, labor and industry—tend to vote solidly against the candidate who singles them out for special attack.

If race is not an issue, voting by Negroes usually follows the general pattern and their vote splits as does that of the rest of the population.

The question of "bloc voting" arises in any assessment of Negro suffrage because it has long been a pet charge of Southern white supremacists, who hold that the Negro is trying to achieve political domination by this means.

In regard to this charge, a Negro lawyer in Shreveport, La., summed up a common attitude: "I am told that I should vote as an American and not as a Negro. Well, I love America as much as anyone and I would like to weigh our policies in the Middle East and Far East when I vote. However, I'm too busy trying to be free—to become an American—to concern myself with such questions. When I vote I must concern myself with what is good for Negroes."

Unfortunately, the Negro in the South often is forced to decide between two racist candidates, in which case he is likely to follow the advice once given by the NAACP: "Vote against the incumbent."

Where candidates represent overlapping issues of particular importance to Negroes, their vote is likely to split. An example of this was noted in the 1956 gubernatorial primary in Louisiana, when Earl Long and New Orleans Mayor de Lesseps Morrison were the principal contenders.

Negroes outside New Orleans voted overwhelmingly for Long and his ticket. The name "Long" (Earl is the brother of the late Huey Long) is identified by Negroes with pensions and other state services oriented toward lower economic groups. Because most Negroes still are in this stratum, they tended to vote for Long. However, in New Orleans, the name "Morrison" is as well known and is identified with low-cost housing for Negroes, better park and school facilities, and related services. Negroes there divided rather evenly, giving Morrison a slight edge.

There also was a split in the vote for Earl J. Amedee, Negro candidate for attorney general in the same Louisiana primary. Amedee received little more than 50 per cent of the Negro vote. (In the state, he received only nine per cent of the total vote.) Again, Negroes were divided, in this case between a Long and a Negro candidate. Undoubtedly, economics alone

did not account for the split. There was evidence that many Negroes outside New Orleans did not know Amedee was a member of their race; also, no one could know how many others saw his candidacy as a gesture, without hope of success, and preferred to vote more practically.

The fact that the presence of a Negro candidate on the ballot does not always result in overwhelming support by members of his race was also seen in Rome, Ga. In, 1952 an elderly Negro ran for the Board of Education there. Since he had not gone beyond the seventh or eighth grade, some of the Negro political leaders felt he was not qualified and refused to endorse him. Others thought it was not yet time for a Negro to seek such an office in Rome. Whatever their reasons, Negroes did not support the candidate.

The same thing happened in 1956 primaries in Chattanooga and Memphis, Tenn., when Negro candidates for the general assembly did not win overwhelming—or, in some precincts, even majority—support of their race. Several of those interviewed said this was because the candidates simply didn't have the proper qualifications. Among others, the bandwagon psychology was apparent—they felt the Negro candidate didn't have a chance and preferred to stick with the winner.

On the other hand, in a special election for councilman in Nashville in 1956, a Negro grocer ran against a white minister. The Tennessee consultant said that both candidates were generally considered progressive and fair. The Negro precinct in the ward voted 1,132 to 64 for the Negro candidate and the white precinct went 1,373 to 60 for the white minister.

By and large, Negro registration has risen noticeably in both Memphis and Nashville as Negro candidates with wide popular appeal entered various races or as white candidates who offered a real choice of issues competed.

As Negroes do not always back a candidate of their race, neither do they necessarily support those white candidates who seek to flatter them by soliciting their votes. A white supporter of former Gov. Herman Talmadge approached a Negro businessman who carried some weight with others of his race in McIntosh County, and asked him to support Talmadge in his bid for the United States Senate. The Negro told him, "I won't enslave my soul. What's the use of giving me a piece of bread and then calling me 'nigger'?"

Throughout the region, Negroes often show particular interest in local elections for through these the greatest immediate benefits can be realized. Where the Negro has been enfranchised in sufficient numbers to have a marked influence on local elections, politicians are inclined to pay attention. Material benefits such as paving, improved street lighting and recreational facilities are likely to result. Frequently the most intense interest is

shown in election of sheriffs. There are special reasons for this. As Negro registration and voting increases, police brutality against Negroes is likely to decrease; this, in turn, can lead to an even larger Negro vote. In short, the sheriff's office is seen as a key position affecting the Negro's security and well-being.

In discussing this, a Georgia field consultant commented:

"Generally speaking, persons who don't understand the racial set-up can't imagine what goes on in the mind of a Negro political leader who knows that the law enforcement officers and some other white citizens are avowedly against what he is doing. Further, he knows that it is difficult to select a jury that will convict any of its 'white bretheren' who move violently against Negroes 'who get out of their place.' This is one reason why Negro political leaders readily seek to influence the election of the sheriff and the mayor, who often appoints the chief of police. They wish to reduce the threat and force of police brutality and thus increase the area in which they and their racial followers can find more personal physical security. When this happens their minds are relieved somewhat and they can forge on with their political leadership."

But, in addition to a lessening of police intimidation, Negroes can look for other gains from local participation, particularly where they hold or promise to hold the balance of power. Although Southern Negroes still have a long, difficult road to travel before gaining major benefits by their vote, there are straws in the wind.

These are particularly evident in Texas. Negro strength at the polls has resulted in such things as a Negro youth center in Midland; in Longview, three new elementary schools in Negro areas in three years, Negro service on juries, delegates to county political conventions, employment of Negro policemen. In Brookshire, a bond issue for construction of a Negro gymnasium and a white school cafeteria was carried by two votes: Negroes held the balance of power. Greenville and Beaumont Negroes have served as delegates to county or state Democratic conventions. In large part through the political efforts of Negroes in Fort Bend County, farmers are benefitting from a huge federal project which has been draining 18,000 acres of farm land, all owned by Negroes. Where farmers were able to grow three bales of cotton on 50 acres before the project, they are increasing their yield to one bale per acre.

In Darlington County, S. C., where the Palmetto Voters' League (Negro) was founded, 9,000 of the 10,455 Negroes of voting age, or 86 per cent are registered and 13,000 of the 15,235 eligible white men and women, or 86 per cent. Since Negroes began voting in Darlington, all streets in their communities have been paved and lighted; two Negro policemen with a radio car added; three Negroes named to the Darlington



County Democratic Executive Committee, and Negroes put in complete charge of three voting precincts.

Still another example of what the vote can bring is seen in Dublin and Laurens County, Ga. Negroes in Dublin had no running water; their streets were unlighted and in poor condition and, although they had paid taxes for the sewage system for years, almost none benefitted. Then the county split into two factions and the Negro vote suddenly assumed importance as the balance of power. As a result, the city council, mayor and sheriff decided that \$350,000 would be spent in extending water mains and sewer lines into Negro neighborhoods and in paving the main street of the Negro section. Negroes in Spaulding County, Ga., benefitted in similar fashion when their vote increased.

In Floyd County (Rome), Ga., Negroes began registering in appreciable numbers in 1946. Ten years later, 45 per cent of the eligible—2,830—were on the voting list. In that period, police brutality, once intense, subsided; two Negro policemen were appointed and others promised.

In addition to practical incentives and the aim of good citizenship, what other factors motivate the Negro voter?

In South Carolina, the voting pattern of Negroes varies greatly. Those registered in some counties can be counted on to vote in all elections; in others, it takes a sharp local contest to arouse interest. Issues dealing with civil rights have drawn the largest Negro vote in Georgetown, Dorchester, Colleton and Horry counties. The 1956 primary brought the largest Negro turnout in Charleston County as a protest against the Citizens Council, which backed certain candidates. In Florence County, it was reported that a large number of Negroes voted only when one of their race was mistreated by an official before an election. Negro candidates have brought the heaviest Negro vote in Spartanburg.

The latter factor also accounted for the largest Atlanta Negro vote up to that time when Dr. Rufus E. Clement, Negro educator, ran successfully for the School Board in 1953. Still only an estimated 10,000 of the 19,000 Negroes then registered there voted.

On the other hand, when a Negro candidate ran for local office in Portsmouth, Va., approximately 90 per cent of the Negro registrants voted. Observers in Richmond estimated that about 50 to 65 per cent of the Negroes registered there generally vote. In Petersburg, Va., the range is from 35 to 95 per cent, depending upon local issues, whether a Negro candidate is running, and whether there is an intensive get-out-the-vote drive.

In Virginia as a whole, however, it must be emphasized that even a 100 per cent turnout of the white and Negro registrants still would leave the state with a poor voting record. Only 35 per cent of all citizens over 21

had registered in 1952 for the general election (and Virginians usually vote in the greatest numbers in presidential elections). Four years later, the picture had changed little. Key found that over the years, the organization of Sen. Harry F. Byrd has had to win the support of only five to seven per cent of the adult population to nominate its candidate for governor in the Democratic primary.

Compared to Virginia, electoral enthusiasm runs high in Mississippi, which has a better participation record, despite its large non-voting Negro population. Key reported that in the 26 year period surveyed, the percentage of whites voting in Democratic primaries in Mississippi almost equalled the average participation rate of all citizens in New York or Ohio general elections.

But while the white citizens in Mississippi are more inclined to vote than in some Southern states, a vast segment of the population remains disfranchised. Negroes make up 41 per cent of the total population of voting age but only four per cent of the total registered. And, if one could judge by figures for 1955, the only year for which estimates of Negro participation are available county by county, only a small percentage of the comparatively few Negroes qualified vote.

Gov. J. P. Coleman estimated that of the 20,000-22,000 Negroes registered in Mississippi in 1955, fewer than 8,000 voted in statewide elections. The governor said earlier he did "not now favor the Negro voting in Mississippi. He is wholly unprepared to assume this responsibility."

A special city election in Greenville, Miss., in 1954 indicated what some encouragement could accomplish. Of 942 Negroes registered, 546 voted. An official there said this was the only time, the Negro vote was solicited in Greenville.

Apparently, some Negroes have registered in Mississippi for reasons not connected with voting. Some have qualified in order to get post-office or other government jobs but never vote even though they have paid poll taxes for years. In one county, the clerk said Negroes registered in order to have a public record of their age for use in old age assistance claims.

No study of voting performance in the South can be complete without some mention of an ugly facet of political life which is not necessarily confined to the region below the Mason-Dixon line—vote buying and manipulation.

Negroes in some parts of the South, have a long history of "being voted." They were used during the Reconstruction Era by scalawags and carpet-baggers. After Reconstruction, some Negroes were "voted" by former masters, often against their own interests.

By and large, this manipulation of Negroes by whites has ended, but it has not disappeared altogether.

For example, in North Carolina, reports were rampant in one area that the white political machine has had a "slush fund" with which to purchase the allegiance of Negro ministers who were expected to influence their congregations.

From Arkansas came reports that certain liquor interests have paid poll taxes for Negroes with the understanding that they would "vote right" on a liquor referendum.

In an Alabama town, a Negro minister and leader discouraged Negro voting; some suspected he was in the pay of a white industrial firm.

In Louisiana, there were reports that in some areas where sheriffs permitted gambling there was a tacit political alliance with Negro voters. This quixotic situation works out thusly: The white middle class opposes gambling. The sheriff has to look elsewhere for political support. He finds it among Negroes and "pays off" with a cessation of police brutality and passing of the word to the machine that the Negroes have needs which must be met, such as paved streets and electric lights.

Like all rumors, these are hard to pin down but if true, one thing is clear: in each case, members of both races are vulnerable to charges of corruption.

## Kentucky—Pattern for the Future?

**K**ENTUCKY is a mixture of North and South in its racial attitudes; but in protecting the voting rights of all citizens, it stands firmly with states above the Mason-Dixon line.

"Neither the state's constitution, nor statutory requirements, nor administrative procedures impose any barrier against Negro participation in Kentucky political life," the state consultant for this survey reported.

"Even in the counties where slavery once flourished and in the counties which are lagging in school desegregation, Negro voting is not controversial.

"Paul Lewinson in his study of Negro suffrage published in 1932 found no evidence of disfranchisement in Kentucky in this century.<sup>1</sup> The last publicized litigation over suffrage arose out of the 1898 election. . . ."

Because Kentucky is closely identified with the South in many ways, it offers a clue to the possible political role of Negroes in the region during the years ahead, once voting restrictions are lifted.

In this state, where voting is easy, it is impossible to obtain an accurate count of the number registered. Voting lists range from the highly reliable ones of Jefferson (Louisville) and a few other counties to those which are absurdly inflated. In 1952, for example, 54 of the 120 counties had more voters listed than there were residents of voting age.

The consultant suggested it "would be safe to assume that official registration figures overstate legal registration by 20 per cent or more in the state as a whole."

But, after checking county clerks and local party leaders, he estimated Kentucky had 150,526 Negroes of voting age in 1956, of whom 86,973, or 57.8 per cent, were registered. White registration was 1,447,427.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the lack of political discrimination, Negro registration lags behind white registration in Kentucky, in large part because of social and economic factors. Negroes rank below the white population in average income and education and often are isolated from forces which tend to encourage voting—urbanization, civic and political organizations, trade unionism and industrialization.

A statewide picture of the actual voting performance of Negroes, who are widely scattered in Kentucky, was not attempted. Instead, the consul-

<sup>1</sup>*Race, Class and Party*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1932, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup>Kentucky had a white population over 21 of 1,612,267 in 1950. However, in 1955, the state's voting age was lowered to 18; because age distribution estimates for this group are unreliable and because they felt the migration factor is greater for the white group, consultants thought it unfeasible to estimate the white population over 18 in 1956.

tant concentrated on Louisville, where reliable registration and voting figures are available.

Historically, the pattern of race relations in Louisville had been southern. Until the 1950's, segregation was the rule in most education and recreation facilities and still is a factor in employment, housing, health facilities and service in privately-owned places which cater to the public.

However, Negroes have been free to vote and participate in party politics in Louisville since 1870.

The border character of the city has been demonstrated also by its success in desegregating public and parochial schools, its university, library and recreational facilities in the past few years. The transition has been aided by civic leaders of both races and the city's two daily newspapers, *The Courier-Journal* and the *Louisville Times*.

Louisville has increased its percentage of Kentucky's Negro population from 13.7 in 1900 to 28.6 in 1950. While the Negro group increased numerically, its percentage of the total city population declined from 19.1 per cent in 1900 to an estimated 15.1 in 1955. (In the state as a whole, the white population has been exceeding the Negro in growth since 1900. At that time, Kentucky had 268,071 Negroes and in 1950, 201,921.)

The survey consultant said, however, that "the political significance of the Negro population is potentially greater than its proportion of Louisville's total population," due to three factors:

1. The concentration of Negroes in a limited geographical area.
2. The system of nominating and electing officials.
3. The mobility of the Negro voter in his party affiliations.

Although they reside in each of the city's 12 wards, housing segregation has resulted in a heavy concentration of Negroes in certain precincts of six wards.

This concentration is politically significant since aldermen are nominated on a ward basis in Louisville, although they are elected by the city at large. Negroes have been nominated as aldermen from wards with large Negro populations regularly since 1945 and three have been elected, one Republican and two Democrats.

Elections, as well as nominations for the Kentucky General Assembly, are on a legislative district basis. The 58th legislative district was estimated in the 1930's to be 90 per cent Negro. Several other legislative districts also have large Negro populations, which has encouraged nomination of Negroes for state offices. In 1935 both parties nominated Negroes from the 58th District. The Republican won and served six consecutive terms in the legislature. More recently, two other Negro Republicans have been elected to the Kentucky House of Representatives from this general area.

However, only "since the Republican monopoly was broken have



Negroes begun to receive consistent recognition as candidates . . . by both parties," the consultant said. "Down until the 1930's the potential of Negro political power was not even partially realized because the Negro vote was completely controlled by the Republican party."

From the beginning of Negro suffrage in Louisville in 1870 until the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the overwhelming majority of Negro voters followed the standard of the Republican party. As late as 1931 only 129 out of a total of 26,434 Negro registrants were listed as Democrats. In Louisville as a whole, the Democratic party has been ahead consistently in registrations.

It was not until economic benefits of the New Deal trickled down that Negroes began joining the Democratic ranks in sizable numbers. In 1932, for example, in three wards which were approximately one-third Negro, President Hoover received about 60 per cent of the vote, as contrasted to his total city vote of 48.7.

The Democrats made considerable progress in 1936 in the above three wards when President Roosevelt won nearly 55 per cent of the vote. However, the Democratic majority still was less than in the city at large. The picture was similar in 1940.

In the 1944 presidential election, Democrats made their first strong bid in Louisville for Negro support. In advertisements in the *Louisville Defender*, Negro newspaper, and in other ways, they emphasized the economic programs of the Roosevelt administration. In this election, the Louisville Negro vote was almost evenly divided between Roosevelt and Dewey. Of 5,526 votes cast in 23 precincts which were 85 per cent Negro, Dewey received 50.1 per cent and Roosevelt 49.9. In the city at large Dewey's vote was 42.1 and Roosevelt's 57.9.

In 1948, Negro support for the Democratic candidate declined. In 23 precincts which were 88.4 per cent Negro, Governor Dewey received 63.1 per cent of the vote and President Truman only 35.7, although the latter carried the city with 52.3 per cent of the total. This drop in Democratic strength among Negroes came with the passing of the magic of the Roosevelt personality and the failure of the local Democratic party to appoint Negroes to important posts in city government.

However, in 1952 the Democrats regained lost ground and Adlai Stevenson's percentage of the presidential vote in the same 23 Negro precincts was 48.3 per cent. In the city as a whole, Stevenson won only 47.1 per cent of the vote so that for the first time Negro support of the Democratic party outstripped that of the entire community.

In 1956, many Louisville Negroes switched back to the Republican column; some observers estimated that 58 per cent voted for President Eisenhower. This was despite the fact that changes in party registration

among Negroes in Louisville between 1952-56 showed a continued movement to the Democratic party.

While many Negroes feel this party flexibility has resulted in greater attention from both parties, some suggest that the local Republican party no longer is trying quite so strenuously to get out the Negro vote because of the increasing uncertainty as to which party will benefit.

Negro support of the Democratic party in Louisville since 1943 has been greater for national candidates than for state and local Democratic nominees by a margin of 6.6 per cent.

The Negro voting performance in elections in which special issues were at stake has been remarkably consistent. On each of 18 municipal, school, and constitutional amendment issues, the 23 predominantly Negro precincts voted "yes" in larger proportions than the rest of Louisville. The municipal elections were on bond issues for such purposes as a police building, university and hospital improvements and construction of a sewage disposal plant. All the issues passed but the average vote for them was 88.4 per cent in the predominantly Negro precincts and 74.7 per cent in the city as a whole. The same Negro precincts have been considerably more friendly toward local school levies than has the general Louisville public. The average vote has been 82.8 per cent favorable in the Negro precincts and 57.7 in the city at large.

The consultant suggested that further study is needed to determine the reasons for the strongly favorable attitude of the Negro voters toward issues in the special elections, whether white precincts with comparable social and economic backgrounds behave similarly and if Negro voting in other cities varies.

For, he added, this would shed some light on the historical controversy over liberalization of the suffrage. Some conservatives argue that the poorer groups, when given the vote, will vote for change for the sake of change or for higher taxes because they have no stake in the status quo or property rights. Some would contend this is borne out by the Negro vote on the special issues in Louisville; others could argue that the issues voted upon were in the interest of the general public and that the Negro precincts showed better judgment than the population as a whole.

It can be seen that Louisville Negroes have not voted as a bloc in recent national elections of record; in fact, they have shown increasing division on party issues and candidates. The pattern is mixed when there is a Negro candidate in the race. In four Louisville school board elections since 1946, Negro candidates have run far ahead of the white candidates in the precincts with heavy Negro populations.

But, the situation is different in the election of aldermen. Candidates are nominated from wards but elected at large. Party considerations, not

race, seem all-important. For example, in 1953, Republican aldermanic candidates ran ahead of Democratic nominees whether they were Negro or white, in the 23 predominantly Negro precincts and all the Democrats were elected in the city whether they were Negro or white. In 1955, a Negro Democrat ran behind his white Republican opponent in the Negro precincts; despite this, he was swept into office along with the white Democrats in the city.

The consultant pointed out that the difference between the school board and the aldermanic elections is that the former involves a non-partisan election in which the candidate himself is the focus of attention, while the latter involves a party slate, with all the pressures for straight ticket voting the parties can muster.

As in the rest of Kentucky, Negro participation in Louisville elections lagged behind the city-wide participation by from five to eight per cent in three elections studied.



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