INDEPENDENCE FROM 'WHITE COMMUNITY' AIM OF BLACK CO-OPS

SNCC Vets Building CO-OP

By AL RUTLEDGE

Two years ago Jesse Morris decided to open a chain of small cooperative factories to provide jobs for colored Mississippians. He had only $3,000 which he had raised by writing civil rights sympathizers in the north and the fire and zeal his experience as a field secretary for the SNCC had afforded him.

PPC

He dubbed it the Poor Peoples Corporation and it has outlasted most of the civil rights organizations which cropped up in the South.

The Poor Peoples Corporation has been expanding. It provides work for 110 of Mississippi's black folk and ships products as far north as upper New York state and Michigan.

Half-done

Working to desegregate Mississippi's hotels and restaurants during 1964, the famed Summer of Discontent, Morris learned that only half the job had been completed once the blood had ceased to flow.

The legal-law opened the doors to the public eating houses to the colored man but the economic-law closed it right back again. The share-croppers and common-laborers of Mississippi could not afford to visit the places they had sweated and toiled so hard to gain entrance to.

In an effort to counter this outgrowth Morris and several others who had survived these difficult months set up a cooperative in the front room of a house in Jackson.

And in two years with the same determination and convictions that won the voting rights for colored citizens of Mississippi they built a warehouse and headquarters building, 11 cooperative factories in Mississippi and retail outlets in New York, Detroit and Jackson.

Mistakes

Morris serves as executive secretary of the corporation for $20 a week, he's 27 years old and displays all the optimism of youth. "We made mistakes in the beginning," he admits "but we're learning."

Growth

Indicative of how well they're learning is the mild but substantial growth of the manufactures and sells 46 items on the mail order market. It catalogues dolls, suede and leather handbags, book bags, quilts and women's dresses.

They were trained by Mrs. Barbara Shaum of New York in the leather crafts and now are able to earn as much as $50 a week. This amounts to about three times the amount they earned during the season picking cotton.

A DREAM becomes a reality as the ribbon is cut by P. K. Pendleton, past president of the Natchez Business and Civic League. He originated the idea for the new supermarket. Assisting him is Aaron Barnes, a member of the Executive Board of CMI and assistant manager of CMI.

MRS. FLORENCE BACON checks customers with a smile, displaying her pride in the sharing of this precedent. Being able to have a hand in the building of their much desired independence has taken hold of the entire colored population of Natchez.

Sadly enough, because of the lack of operating capital there have been weeks when the workers made only $9. "But," says Miss Dorothy Head, one of the workers, "if we were working on the farms, we wouldn't even be getting that much this time of year. There ain't farm work to do in the winter."

And having no farm work to the Mississippi cotton choppers means having no money at all.

Ford Fund Recruits YOUTH

Educators hope to implement a graduate program to prepare colored youth for careers in business.

The plan, proposed by Indiana and Washington Universities and the University of Wisconsin, has a $300,000 Ford Foundation "challenge grant" to get going on the program, but the grant first must be matched on a one-for-one basis by contributions from industry.

Dr. Sterling H. Schoen, professor of management at Washington University, and program director, said the Ford grant "will enable our consortium to begin implementation of this educational program."

He said, however, that both the graduate schools and the Ford Foundation "recognize that the major support properly belongs with the business community."

Reasons

Schoen said the graduate schools of business of the three universities have formed a consortium to carry out a mandate of educators, businessmen and government to discuss the feasibility of the program.

The plan has been described here "as a step toward making equal rights a reality through the preparation of more colored youths to assume management positions in the field of business, an area which has attracted few in the past."

A Ford Foundation report included reasons for the scarcity of colored men and women in business.

Few graduating from college choose to enter the business world because they have learned that they have little chance to succeed and/or they know little of the opportunities.

Careers

—Many colored students attend colored colleges where the educational program often is not sufficiently rigorous. They are not as well prepared to compete for executive business jobs as their white counter-parts.

—Colored students find it hard to get meaningful job experience which might prepare them for business careers.

First colored students to be recruited for the program will include those receiving their baccalaureate degrees; college graduates with one to four years of work experience in business, government agencies or educational institutions.

Also graduates whose employers believe them capable of benefitting from a master of business administration program and will finance the employee's course of study, and graduates who have completed their military obligations and who wish to seek careers in business.

A spokesman, who said recruiting will be carried on nationwide, said an estimated 9,000 colored men receive bachelor's degrees each year in the United States.

Links Do Lower BARRIERS

I am like no one in the whole world. I may be no better, but at least I am different. Those 200 - year - old words of Jean-Jacques Rosseau still serve as a reminder of people's right to their differences.

Mrs. Ann Wolfe analyzes the positive forces that link people of the same ethnic and national groups together, as well as the barriers that limit their participation in the larger society in differences enrich our lives. One clear barrier is inadequate knowledge about cultural patterns that are unfamiliar to the dominant group, which is reflected in this very moving incident:

Incident

"A young volunteer working in a youth club on an Indian reservation tried to compliment a young Hopi girl by praising her neat hair. Instead of being delighted, the child wept in great distress because for a Hopi to be singled out is a terrible shame.

Mrs. Wolfe believes that society must allow those of various minority groups who want to assimilate to do so — to blend into the dominant group in society.

Pluralism

But she is concerned at evidence that we don't fully accept, in practice, the idea of diversity, of pluralism, which "implies the acceptance of cultural variety and the encouragement of contacts among the different groups in the population . . . Our experience," she points out, "indicates that most wish to pursue this course and for them, too, society must be open and flexible and accepting."

Mrs. Wolfe includes many specific suggestions for helping children "grow up free of those attitudes which are destructive to the victim and which distort the personality of the prejudiced."

She gives examples of experiences and explanations that can help children understand such ideas as these: "people are alike;" "people are different;" "people need each other;" "the right to be what you are." Reading, she believes, is particularly effective in helping children "rediscover America," and she offers an annotated bibliography for different age groups and for parents and teachers.

Diversity

DIFFERENCES CAN ENRICH OUR LIVES: Helping Children Prepare for Cultural Diversity is No. 399 in the Public Affairs Pamphlet series, now in its 31st year. The series includes many other distinguished titles covering social and economic problems, intergroup relations, family relations and health and science. All pamphlets sell for 25 cents each; a list is available upon request.

Jeff Sawyer, Gulf Oil Corporation's oldest annuitant, celebrated his hundredth birthday on March 8 with wit and deference. "You'll have to check with the Lord on that," was his counter to the inquiry by a doctor about how he has made it to a hundred.

A possible answer is given by Mr. Sawyer's friends still employed at Gulf's Port Arthur, Texas, refinery who remember him on the job up to his retirement March 22, 1930, after more than 19 years of service. The general consensus today, 37 years after Mr. Sawyer retired, holds that he seemed to thrive on hard work, meeting all comers with abundant good spirits, patience and tolerance.

"I guess I just enjoyed working," said Mr. Sawyer a few weeks ago. "Lots of times I'd be waiting at the old commissary door when the manager arrived at six every morning.

1910

Mr. Sawyer is a resident of a Port Arthur nursing home just a block from the Seventh Avenue approach to the refinery main entrance, a road he's traveled on foot, by mule team, horse-drawn trolley and vintage auto. Employed in 1910, eight years after he moved to Port Arthur from Lake Charles and Shreveport, his birthplace, Jeff Sawyer filled his assignments in the eight-year-old refinery's commissionary complex that included an ice plant and bakery.

Adjacent was the "Gulf Park," a community of nearly 30 homes, row upon row, to which Mr. Sawyer made daily deliveries, followed "Pied Piper fashion in his mule-drawn, two-wheeled cart, by a gaggle of children on wooden-wheel roller skates. He'd also help assembly and deliver supplies and bulk ice to tankers moored along the loading docks.

Memory

Mrs. Margaret Perkins, secretary to the Refinery Services manager, recalls that as Maggie Cook, childhood resident of the Park in the years after World War One "We kids would follow Mr. Sawyer back from the Quarters to the bakery shop to wait for he pies and other goodies . . . each one of us got a nickle a day for that express purpose." Mrs. Perkins' father, Frank Cook, recalls the amazing memory demonstrated by Mr. Sawyer in keeping provision orders and recipients straight throughout a day's deliveries with no written directions.

Distinctions

"My father or another commissary staff man would point among, say 200 parcels: 'This is going to the USS Patoka; this box is going to the Colemans; this one to the Smiths; this order to the Dorseys, this one to the Babins, . . .' and on, through the 200 orders. They'd say it just one time, and Mr. Sawyer is never remembered as mixing them up." Mrs. Perkins observes that Mr. Sawyer, besides being Gulf's oldest annuitant of record, holds the distinction of being one of the first annuitants as well.

HOMECOMING FOR GULF OIL ANNUITANT — Viewed through the doorway of the old commissary building at Gulf Oil Corporation's Port Arthur, Texas, refinery are Frank Nichols, Nichols Nursing Home, Port Arthur; Jeff Sawyer; and Ed Pierre and E. A. Syers of the refinery's Labor Department. Mr. Sawyer, who retired in 1930, used to work in the commissary building, which since has been converted into a bathhouse.

his first 100 YEARS

Familiar

Another old friend who remembers Mr. Sawyer as a co-employee at the commissary is Mrs. Stella Ferguson, currently an accounting clerk in the Laboratory Division. "Mr. Sawyer was quite familiar with the stock room: in those days whenever the manager, Mr. Dickey, had a question about the inventory at the commissary, he'd call on Mr. Sawyer and his marvelous memory.

When he delivered inter-office mail up from the commissary to the main office, he kept it straight by using his hands to advantage — he'd put Mr. Stevenson's mail between little and third finger; someone else's between the next two, and so on, so that he was famed for his consistency in keeping both mail and orders straight. I remember Mr. Sawyer as always being a very even-tempered, agreeable person to work with."

1915

Even-tempered Mr. Sawyer remembers one occasion when everyone at the refinery was plenty excited. This was during the aftermath of the 1915 hurricane that, notes Mr. Sawyer, "moved that marsh water into the commissary building knee deep and brought an infestation of snakes and animals along with it . . . We had 'em all over the place, even an alligator in the bathtub of one of the smaller houses back there in the Quarters." After such a reminiscence, Jeff Sawyer grins wide and reaches for a cigar — King Edward — with clear, sparkling eyes looking to the years ahead.

A Minute With The BIBLE

In his great Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul introduces himself immediately as "a bondslave of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle," to proclaim God's good news about Christ.

Epistles

Paul's "gospel of the grace of God" was essentially about Christ. He was always talking about Christ. His epistles are filled with Christ. Christ, in his message, was everything. This is in striking contrast to much of our modern preaching and evangelism, which is not Christ centered, but man centered.

The gospel Paul proclaimed was God's good news about Christ and His power and glory in defeating Satan, overcoming death, paying for sin and nailing the law to His cross.

This is why the apostle calls his message "the good news of the glory of Christ" (II Cor. 4:4) and "the good news of the glory of the blessed God" (I Tim. 1:11). To enter experimentally into the truth of this good news is the greatest blessing one can possibly enjoy.

In Verse 4 of his introduction to the Roman Epistle, the apostle declares that Christ was powerfully declared to be the Son of God "by the resurrection from the dead."

Now the resurrection of Christ had been both prophesied and proclaimed as an historical fact before Paul, but to Paul was committed a special message of good news in connection with the resurrection. In his God-given message, Christ was raised from the dead to demonstrate that as God the Son He had paid the full penalty for sin, that would have sunk a world to hell. Thus the apostle writes to Timothy, his son in the faith:

"Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

Evildoer

"Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David (this is how Christ had formerly been known), was raised from the dead ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL, wherein I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even unto bonds" (II Tim. 2:7, 8).

Read the Epistles of Paul and see how salvation by grace through faith always hinges upon the finished work of Christ for our redemption. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."