

So many of our newsletters have been heavy with accounts of repeated violence that it is a great joy to report that there have been no acts since the bombing of the Birdsey Feed Store on May 19. As reported in our last newsletter, this incident was followed by a visit from the leading citizens of Americus and Sumter County who asked us to move away.

After several weeks of deliberation, we invited the same group of citizens to return for a consultation, this time suggesting that they add a minister and an educator to the lawyers, doctors and business men already represented. This suggestion was accepted but not carried out. On the whole, however, the group represented practically every phase of civic life in the city and county.

Koinonia began the conference by stating that we shared their concern for stopping the violence and finding some solution to the problem which was so unpleasant to all of us. We did not agree with them, however, that our moving away was the only solution, though certainly a possible alternative. Such a decision, we felt, was of such magnitude that neither they nor we were capable of enough objectivity to make it.

We proposed, therefore, that some impartial third party be called in to help all of us see clearly and to determine the whole matter on the principles of fairness, justice and democracy. Perhaps Koinonia could ask some national organization, such as the National Council of Churches, to appoint a well-qualified person, and then the local citizens' group could ask another national organization, perhaps the National Chamber of Commerce, to appoint another person. These two men would then get together and choose a third organization which would appoint a third man. These men would then come to Americus, hold open public hearings and make a thorough investigation of the whole matter. On the basis of this they would present their findings and make their recommendations. If they decided that the best interests of the state and nation would be served by our leaving Georgia, then we would do so. If, on the other hand they felt that as citizens we had a right to live here and that we should be given protection of the law and that the boycott should be lifted, we would expect this to be done. In other words, all parties would agree to abide by the decision of this three-man "jury."

The proposition to arbitrate the problem was promptly turned down by the citizens group on the grounds that people outside of Georgia did not understand the situation in the South. We then proposed that the same plan be followed, with the exception that we ask Georgia organizations to appoint the men. The reply to this was two-fold: (1) people outside of Sumter County do not understand our problems, and (2) the citizens group had no power to carry out such a thing, since they were just a group of interested individuals who had gotten together to come out and talk over things with us. They emphatically repeated that there was but one solution, and that was for us to move away. We then emphatically re-affirmed our intention to remain. Thus the conference ended.

While it is impossible to make any predictions in a situation as volatile as this, it is probable that the violent stage is pretty well over and we are in for a long, drawn-out struggle for economic survival. The boycott, already in effect for over a year, has become increasingly intense ever since the Birdsey store was bombed for lifting it. Negro business men, under threats and pressures from law enforcement officers, are no longer able to deal with us. The local Sears Roebuck store, thru which we had obtained many of our supplies, requested that we no longer make purchases there. (We can still order from Atlanta by mail.) The Citizens Bank of Americus recently sent us a note requesting that we withdraw our checking account and stating that if we tendered any further deposits they would be declined. (Last fall the Citizens Bank refused to make any further loans to us, despite our many years of dealing with them and our perfect credit record. Not wishing to retaliate, we left our checking account there. It is this account which they now wish removed. The bank is a member of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, but maybe it doesn't insure just any kind of deposit. Apparently all filthy lucre is divided into three kinds: white lucre, colored lucre, and mixed lucre. The bank will accept the first two kinds.)

Because the boycott has already deprived us of three of our major sources of income - eggs, irrigated crops, and farm market - it is obvious that we must find some other means of livelihood. After thorough investigation of many possibilities, we have decided upon the processing and shelling of pecans. To us this seems the least vulnerable to boycott of anything we might go into for three reasons: (1) The market for pecans is almost entirely outside of Georgia; (2) The supply of pecans, abundant in this area, can be readily obtained from large auction markets which are operated by the state and therefore cannot boycott us; (3) the shellers are powered by electricity which comes to us through REA lines. Another advantage is that the busy season for shelling comes in the late fall and winter, which is the slack season for farming. There are other reasons too numerous to mention why we feel we should proceed at once with this undertaking, so that we can be ready when the season opens about October 1. We definitely believe that by going into this we can once again become self-supporting and will be able to weather the boycott.

The machinery for shelling pecans is very complex and expensive. New equipment is completely out of our range, but by buying good used machines we can outfit the plant for approximately \$30,000. The necessary buildings and cold storage equipment will cost another \$20,000, making a total of \$50,000. The plant will have a capacity of about half-million pounds of nuts per year and the net income should be around \$15,000, which will just about offset the loss of income on the three projects we have had to abandon. While operating, the plant will provide work for 15-25 of our people.

To finance the project we could sell off the major portion of our land, but this would be a mistake because the community will need the land when things return to normal and it might be very difficult to get it back. The simplest way, of course, would be to try to borrow the money from commercial credit sources, but this becomes a cold business transaction, and gives us no sense of partnership with those who wish to stand with us in this struggle. What we would like best to do is follow a procedure similar to the insurance plan, to which there was such a wonderful response. (The goal of 2000 pledges of \$50 each has now been reached.) The whole amount could be raised by finding 2000 people who would lend \$25 each. We would issue notes, which would bear 4% interest, or \$1.00 each, per year. For example, at the end of 5 years a \$25.00 note would be worth \$30. We would arrange to repay these notes over a 10 year period, having 200 of

them come due each year. As much as possible, we would give preferences to those wishing notes to become due in any given year. Otherwise, we would arrange the due-dates in the order in which the notes were made, the first 200 coming due the first year, the second 200 the second year, and so on.

But we must hurry. The pecan season begins October 1. By this date we must have our buildings constructed and the machinery installed. Not one day can be lost. If you feel that you would like to share in this with us, may we ask that you act as soon as possible. Please specify if you have any preference as to due-date or if you do not wish interest. Because of the urgent need to get much of the money in hand within the next 30 days, we will welcome larger loans.

Our life here continues to be strengthened by a large number of visitors who come by for a few hours or a few days. It has been especially meaningful and significant to have those who have come to share the life and witness with us for longer periods, some for the entire summer. With us now are Helen Corson, Mary Kolb, Jim Rich, Jim Smith, John Rowse, Norman Smith and Lee Morgan. They have pitched in and helped with every phase of the life here from canning and carpentry to field and office work. Their contribution has been invaluable.

In addition to these, there are others who are here on either a long term basis or as prospective members. These are: Lee and Ann Peery and their small son, Will; Charles Reese; Arthur Lacey; Eddie and Mildred Johnson; Oran Hoffman; and Paul Goodman and his two children, Michael, 8, and Paulette, 7.

Then there is a large circle of friends who cannot come and stand beside us but who, nevertheless, are active and helpful in many ways. Groups called "Friends of Koinonia" have sprung up in various parts of the country. The Washington, D. C. group has provided Koinonia with a nice used car to take the place of one of our dilapidated ones. The Cincinnati group is getting out the mailing of our newsletters and helping with other literature. The Pennsylvania group has helped to raise the down payment of the New Jersey farm, besides coordinating the activities of all the Friends of Koinonia groups. Robert Swann, 2845 Sussex Rd., Trevese, Pennsylvania, is the coordinator. The Chicago group is organizing a vigil of ministers to aid in keeping night-watch here. Several other groups have been especially helpful with the insurance plan and raising funds. To all of these friends we express our abiding gratitude.

The new Koinonia Community at Neshanic Station, New Jersey, has been busy getting the place cleaned up and putting in crops and vegetables, besides getting the leather work started. Sandals are being made now, and later this fall belts and hand-bags will be added. Write for descriptive folder. This community has recently been strengthened by the transfer of Chris and Jeanette Drescher from here and the addition of Leo and Vicki Pagano, who have decided to seek membership there. The total number in New Jersey is now about 20, and approximately 45 in Georgia. It should be made perfectly clear that the New Jersey community was begun with no intention of leaving Georgia. On the contrary, it was formed to undergird and strengthen the one here. We have no plans or intentions of withdrawing.

The inter-racial children's camp was held this year in cooperation with Highlander Folk School at Monteagle, Tennessee. It lasted only three weeks instead of the usual eight, but it was filled to capacity with 30 children from various parts of the country. Hiking, boating, swimming, archery and other recreational activities helped to carry out the Indian theme of the camp. The cooperative venture with Highlander grew out of last summer's experience when Highlander offered its facilities after an injunction was brought against the camp here.

All of us send you our greetings. We ask your prayers, that we might be faithful to Him who has called us, and in whom there is truth, justice, love and brotherhood. May the light and joy of His peace shine through the darkness of the present strife and turmoil, that we all may dwell together under Him as brethren.

The Koinonia

## *Koinonia Communities*

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