

It has been a long time since you have heard from us. We apologize for causing some of you to think that you've been dropped from the mailing list. Some, though not all, of our delay has been due to the fact that things seemed to be boiling up again here and we thought it best to "lay low" and give time for cooling off.

In our last letter we reported that Con Browne had been beaten on the streets of Americus, and later arrested, jailed and put under \$500 bond for operating a vehicle without a proper license. His case was heard Jan. 13. He produced the registration certificate showing that the Georgia license had been bought, and he explained to the judge that the reason the station wagon had a New Jersey license was that it had just come from the community up there, and that it had both Georgia and New Jersey licenses, even though the Georgia plate was not displayed at the time. The charges then were changed to "operating a vehicle without proper display of licenses," and Con was fined \$60 and court costs. No mention was made during the hearing of Con's previous beating and jailing. No one has yet been apprehended for this.

On the day that Con was beaten, the Rev. Paul Ritch, rector of the Episcopal church and long-time friend, was asked to bring him home, since he was too weak to drive. Mr. Ritch was at Koinonia when the sheriff arrived and made Con get up and go to jail. Shortly thereafter Mr. Ritch was asked to resign from his church for allowing himself to get mixed up in the situation. (It was rumored that Con didn't get beat up, but that he fell and bashed his face on the curbing.) The church felt that their minister should not have been so gullible and should have refused to bring Con home. Mr. Ritch took up the request for his resignation with his bishop, who strongly supported him and told the church that he was leaving Mr. Ritch right where he was. After continuing for several months, Paul handed in his own resignation recently and has moved to a church in Florida. The only other white minister who stood by our side, the Rev. Edward Carruth, a Methodist, was transferred last year. We feel keenly the loss of these two men.

During the recent session of the Georgia legislature, a bill was introduced by Rep. Jack Murr, of this county, "to create an interim committee of the house to investigate and hold hearings relating to Koinonia Farm, Inc., with the object of securing evidence and information necessary or needful in the drafting of prescribed legislation." The bill cited the unsubstantiated charges which have repeatedly been brought against Koinonia: it is amassing huge profits; it is keeping "large numbers of innocent and guileless people in a state of peonage;" and that its "officials have conducted acts of violence and destruction against its own property and inhabitants so as to encourage riots, tumults, unlawful assemblies, engender hate and inflict libel upon the people and the law enforcement agencies of Sumter County and to defraud misinformed sympathizers out of contributions, gifts and donations." The bill further stated that "all of the foregoing reports are reliably substantiated by findings of the Sumter County Grand Jury under date of April 5, 1957." No mention was made, however, of the fact that Koinonia had fully answered these charges in its reply to the Grand Jury, and that the Grand Jury, while it had the power to indict, failed to do so and even admitted that it did not have legal evidence to support its charges.

The bill was hotly debated. The Atlanta CONSTITUTION (Jan. 29, 1958) gave this account: "Author of the resolution, Rep. Jack Murr of Americus, pressed the judiciary committee for immediate action Tuesday. However, Rep. James Mackay of Decatur recommended a delay while committee members study Murr's bill. In asking for time, Mackay noted 'messes that were gotten into by (hasty) legislative investigations.' I have no brief for the farm, but I think an investigation would only give those people what they want - publicity.

"Murr said it would be a 'great mistake' not to investigate the farm. No action, the Sumter County representative said, would be the same as condoning the farm.

"Rep. Paul J. Jones, Jr. of Dublin said he was ashamed Koinonia Farm existed in the state. Its existence, he continued, 'seems to weaken our whole stand on segregation. Something ought to be done about it.'

"Committee chairman Frank Twitty of Camilla said he thought the matter should be debated on the House floor. 'A little spotlighting of this problem won't do any harm,' he said."

After three weeks the bill, with various modifications, was passed and sent to the Governor, who urged its passage. Then on March 5, a headline in the Americus TIMES-RECORDER said: "GRIFFIN EVIDENTLY PLANS TO KILL KOINONIA BILL. Gov. Marvin Griffin indicated he will kill a proposed investigation of Koinonia Farm, a bi-racial project near Americus.

"The Governor yesterday signed 11 resolutions, including one approving a legislative investigation aimed at the NAACP. But he declined to act on the Koinonia resolution indicating he will let it die by pocket veto. This means simply not acting on the measure within 30 days after the Feb. 21 adjournment of the legislature.

"The governor's aides said the Sumter County grand jury has made a more complete investigation of the farm than a legislative committee could make."

But on March 27 the TIMES-RECORDER had this item: "GRIFFIN CHANGES MIND AND SIGNS KOINONIA BILL. Governor Marvin Griffin Thursday signed a resolution calling for an investigation of Koinonia Farm in Sumter County. Earlier Griffin had indicated he would not sign the measure passed in the General Assembly recently on introduction of Sumter Rep. Jack Murr. It would have died by pocket veto....."

So that's where it stands. We don't know what the investigation will mean for us. We have no fear of any honest attempt to find out the truth about the violence, boycott, etc. and would like to urge a wholesale investigation not only of Koinonia but also of law enforcement officers, merchants who have been intimidated and bombed, professional men who have been pressured, Negroes who have been terrorized, in short, an investigation into the whole situation. This, we believe, would be a wholesome thing and would restore the County's respect.

While the bill was being debated, it seemed for a while that violence would flare up again. An attempt was made to burn the home of a Negro whose son had helped us with the corn harvest. A 5-gallon jug of gasoline was put on the front porch and ignited. The sound of the car speeding away awakened the occupants, whose quick action succeeded in putting out the fire before it reached the main part of the house. The same night, shots were fired into the house of another Negro who had worked here. A few nights earlier, a pruning crew went to work on our orchard at the Roadside Market site and with saws and axes chopped down 297 peach, pear, plum, fig, chestnut and pecan trees. They had previously burned down the signs and bee-hives. Since the trees were chopped off at the ground, we've been hoping that a return visit would pile the limbs and burn them, but maybe that's expecting too much of a free land-clearing job.

On Saturday night, April 5, while several men and boys were unloading a truck-load of farm material, a car drove slowly by and then four shots rang out. But nobody ducked or ran for cover, and as the unloading continued someone casually remarked, "It sounds like they're shooting at us again." About half an hour later the car returned and shot once. Still no score.

Perhaps the thing that frightens us more than the bullets is what's happening to the freedom of the people around us. The dentist who had been doing work for us for many years gave in and joined the boycott. This caused us grave concern, not for ourselves, but for the dentist, who is a tragic symbol of the way people lose their freedom.

Later we went to another dentist in Americus, but after a few weeks he phoned and suggested that we get our work done in Albany (35 miles away). Perhaps it did not occur to him that since the pressure on him is so great here, he himself might wish to move to Albany where he could practice with greater freedom.

After months of slow recovery, Danny Wittkamper, aged 3, who was stricken with polio last year, is beginning to walk again. It is still necessary for him to wear braces on both legs, but he is able to get around without crutches.

Feeling that he was no longer in unity with the group here, Norman Long decided to leave. He is now working in New York, his address being 168 W. 77th St., New York 24, N. Y. Norm came to Koinonia in 1950 and while here held many responsible positions. He pioneered the hog program, and was later placed in charge of the field crops and general farm work. He was very active in seeking to create closer relationships between Koinonia and our Negro neighbors.

John and Iola Eustice, with their John two children, Vi and Georgia, left in April to become one of the "founding families" of a new community beginning at Meadowlark Homestead at Newton, Kansas. While at Koinonia had been largely responsible for recreation, including the interracial children's camps which created such controversy. Iola held various positions, primarily with the nursery and kindergarten and in the office.

Gene Rocque, 17, from Chicago, arrived this week to spend an indefinite time with us. Never having lived on a farm before, he is finding that milking, feeding hogs, driving tractors are quite fascinating.

Due to unseasonable weather the farm program is way behind schedule and we're working long hours trying to catch up. At the moment we're trying to get corn planted and out of the way. Before a seed goes into the ground, the soil must be thoroughly prepared. We first go over the ground several times with a big John Deere diesel "R" tractor, pulling a heavy-duty 24 disc harrow. This works the organic matter into the soil. (We refuse to burn it, as is still too commonly done.) Then with a sub-soil plow we chisel to a depth of 12-16 inches to break the hardpan without disturbing the topsoil. This increases the water-holding capacity of the soil and allows the roots to go deeper for subsoil moisture and nutrients. After this, we used a lime-spreader to broadcast about 1000 lbs. of 4-12-12 fertilizer per acre. This too must be worked into the soil with the disc harrow. To smooth the seed-bed we go over it several times with a drag harrow. It is then ready to plant.

This is done with two Ford tractors each equipped with two planters which put the corn in 36" rows spaced 16" in the row. We use Dixie-18, a yellow hybrid. Well over 100 acres have been planted, and because of cold weather, hail and other factors, we'll probably have to plant at least 60 of them over. But such is the life of the tillers of the soil. In a later newsletter, we'll tell you about our life as crackers of the nuts, a detailed account of shelling pecans.

Incidentally, despite the short crop last year, we did have a very good pecan season, and we appreciate the many orders which have come in from all over the U.S. Peanuts are all gone now, but we still have a supply of shelled pecans. Prices are: Boxes of 2, 4, 8 and 24 one-pound cellophane bags - halves, \$1.50 lb; pieces, \$1.35 lb; sprinkles, \$1.20. All prices are postpaid, except on orders going west of N.M., Colo., Wyo., and the Dakotas. For these, add 10¢ per lb. on orders under 25 lbs., 5¢ per lb. above 25 lbs. We need to move these nuts before hot weather, so would appreciate prompt orders.

Several student groups spent their spring holidays with us and gave a big hand with the pressing farm work. They drove tractors night and day, milked cows, fed hogs, cleared land, did fencing, spread fertilizer and pitched in with any other tasks which needed to be done. And still they weren't too tired for several classes and discussion periods each day.

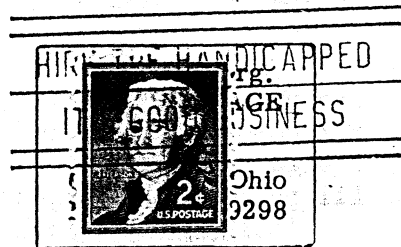
After weeks and months of discussion, searching and prayer, it has been definitely decided to discontinue the New Jersey location. For the past few months, only the Atkinsons and Angrys have been there, and now both families feel that they cannot come back to Georgia. The Atkinsons will go to the Society of Brothers' community at Rifton, N.Y., and the Angrys are undecided about their future plans. We shall give a more complete report in our next newsletter.

For the love and loyalty of each of you we are sincerely and humbly grateful. At times we have been almost engulfed by doubts and fears and discouragements. Your faith in us has quickened our faith in God and has helped us to keep our hearts stayed on Him. And we would like to offer our encouragement to you, for no doubt many of you are being sifted and tried during these critical times. May the God of grace give to each of you sufficient strength for each day.

---from all of us at Koinonia

KOINONIA COMMUNITY

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