

THE NEW BUILDING

During the summer there was continual discussion among the Atlanta staff and some members of the executive committee concerning the growing problem of space in the Atlanta office.

In July Forman suggested to Minnis that he begin looking around in Atlanta for a building which would suitably house the national SNCC office.

Also in July, the SNCC education committee met to do some preliminary planning for staff and work-study education institutes. The education committee instructed Minnis to secure a facility in Atlanta suitable for housing the projected education institutes.

Before leaving Atlanta for Atlantic City and the convention challenge, Minnis asked Curtis Clark, an Atlanta real estate dealer, to begin looking for the two facilities--a place for the Atlanta office, and a place for the education institutes.

Upon returning from Atlantic City, Minnis talked with Clark and learned he had located nothing suitable. Meanwhile Mark Suckle had been scouring Atlanta for a building into which the printing and production operations could be moved. In his search, he came upon the building of the Bethany Methodist Church at the corner of Elizabeth Place and Bankhead Hwy.

The Bethany building is located in a neighborhood into which blacks are moving and out of which whites are moving. It is presently in that condition which the polite segregationists call "transitional". The direction of the "transition" was not pleasing to the good Christian brethren of Bethany Methodist, so they were folding their tent and moving elsewhere, leaving the building and land for hardier souls.

Suckle was impressed with the facilities and took several Atlanta staff members to see it. By the time of the September 6th executive committee meeting most of the Atlanta staff and some committee members had seen the building. During the committee meeting all committee members visited the building and inspected it thoroughly.

After a lengthy discussion of the advisability of buying the building (the idea being that it could be used for the entire Atlanta operation, plus the functions of the education institutes, with plenty of room for expansion) the executive committee appointed a committee composed of Forman, Garman, Moore, Robinson and Minnis, whose responsibility it would be to answer the various questions that had been raised during the discussion and to find out how much the building could be purchased for, etc. This committee was instructed to proceed with negotiations for the building if it felt the questions raised by the executive committee had been satisfactorily answered.

Prior to leaving Atlanta for New York and Africa Forman had asked Howard Moore to represent SNCC in negotiations for the building, and had engaged Curtis

Clark to serve as real estate broker.

After some six weeks of negotiation, a contract was signed in mid-October providing that SNCC (Student Voice, Inc.) would pay \$125,000 for the building if and when the church had secured a change in the zoning regulations governing the site. The church had begun negotiations by asking \$160,000. SNCC countered with an offer of \$110,000. After much dickering and stalling by the church, \$125,000 was settled as the price.

Application for the zoning change has been submitted to the Atlanta zoning commission. It will act during the latter part of December. If the commission agrees to the zoning change then, under the terms of the contract between the church and SNCC, SNCC will be obligated to buy the building at the above price. The contract specifies that the deal shall be closed on the 15th of February.

The building is composed of two parts--the church and the education annex. The two are interconnected as one building. The church part of the structure contains the auditorium which will seat about 250 persons. It is air-conditioned and central-heated. The same heating unit which serves the church also heats the annex. The central air-conditioning unit serves only the church. Three window air-conditioning units go with the annex.

In addition to the auditorium, the church building has approximately 2,500 square feet of space suitable for office and other space. Also, on the lower floor it has a kitchen (which comes fully equipped) and a dining room which will seat about fifty people. The dining space can easily be expanded.

The education annex has three stories. Each story contains slightly over 3,000 square feet. The floors are divided into rooms of varying size. Present plans (very very tentative) are to use the first floor for printing, production and photography, the second for administrative offices, and the third for research and education.

We have secured the voluntary services of Tom Bloom, of New York, a specialist in business space design, to work with us in laying out a plan for the most efficient utilization of the building.

The building is situated in a residential area, just at the border of a commercial area. A half-

black, half-white high school is right across the street from the building.

We do not know precisely when the church building was built. Our best information is that it is about twenty years old. In 1954 the Atlanta Federal Savings and Loan Association loaned the church \$50,000 on the church building and just about one half the land included in our purchase. Atlanta Federal never loans more than 65% of the appraised value of a building, so we know that a conservative appraisal of just the church building and half the property was, ten years ago, about \$75,000.

The education annex was built in 1954-55 at a cost of \$65,000, and more than twice the original amount of land was acquired. The land was acquired by donation, so we are unable to appraise its value by considering a purchase price. It is difficult to reason, from the values of ten years ago, what the value of the property is today. The value of the buildings has depreciated, obviously. Just as obviously, the value of the land has increased. All we can say, from this point of view is that ten years ago, the property we are purchasing was worth more than \$140,000.

Howard Moore secured an appraisal of the property by a professional appraiser. The appraiser put the value of the property, as it stands, at \$125,000.

City and County property taxes on the building will amount to about \$2,500 per year. It is as yet unclear whether the Student Voice, Inc., a non-profit corporation, will be required to pay property taxes. However, considering the politics involved, there seems small likelihood that exemption from city and county taxes can be secured.

Insurance agents inform us that full coverage on the building will cost about \$400 per year.

