

A BRIEF HISTORY

The Northeast Florida Council on Human Relations

Its background, its function, its importance...

Founded April 28, 1956, the Northeast Florida Council on Human Relations strives to achieve racial harmony through education, mediation and consultation. The objectives of the council are to keep open lines of communication between differing points of view, trace down and expose rumors which incite fear, and, through fact-finding and research, provide a background of information to stabilize turbulent situations. This information is made available to newspapers, magazines, radio and television. A major project was an objective study of the riots of August 27, 1960.

The Northeast Florida Council was founded through the cooperation of the Southern Regional Council of Atlanta, Georgia, with which it maintains a close working relationship, and is an affiliate of the Florida Council on Human Relations.

The Southern Regional Council was chartered in 1944, a successor to the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. It had no connection whatsoever with the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, with which it is often confused. Incorporators were Dr. Rufus Clement, president of Atlanta University; Dr. Charles S. Johnson, president of Fisk University; Ralph McGill, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*; Bishop Arthur J. Moore, of the Methodist Church; and Dr. Howard W. Odum, professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina.

Others active in the formation of the council were: C. H. Gillman, Georgia Director, CIO; George L. Googe, southern director, AFL; M. Ashby Jones, Baptist minister; Rabbi David Marx, the Temple, Atlanta; Stuart R. Oglesby, Presbyterian minister; Dean S. Paden, president, King Hardware Co.; J. McDowell Richards, president, Columbia Theological Seminary; Bishop John Moore Walker, the Protestant Episcopal Church; Goodrich C. White, president, Emory University.

The board consists of some 80 southerners, representing the major religious faiths, both races and the 13 states of the region. Financial support has come from such organizations as the Julius Rosenwald Fund, General Education Board, the Fund for the Republic, Division of Home Missions, and Church Extension of the Methodist Church, Women's Division of Christian Service of the Methodist Church, Phelps-Stokes Fund, Catholic Committee of the South, Board of Education of the Methodist Church, Ashby Jones Memorial Fund, Committee on Women's Work of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, the National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church, the Marshall Field

Foundation, the Doris Duke Foundation and others. Individuals support the council through contributions and legacies.

In 1951 the following statement of Policy and Aims was adopted by the Southern Regional Council:

The South of the future toward which our efforts are directed, is a South freed of stultifying inheritances from the past. It is a South where the measure of a man will be his ability, not his race; where a common citizenship will work in democratic understanding for the common good; where all who labor will be rewarded in proportion to their skill and achievement; where all can feel confident of personal safety and equality before the law; where there will exist no double standard in housing, health, education, or other public services; where segregation will be recognized as a cruel and needless penalty on the human spirit, and will no longer be imposed; where, above all, every individual will enjoy a full share of dignity and self-respect in recognition of his creation in the image of God.

Until 1951, the council strongly advocated the "separate but equal" policy decreed by the United States Supreme Court. Its policy changed because of a belief that segregation conflicted with moral values, with democratic principles and the best interests of the country and the South.

Present functions of the council are summarized as follows: 1) it provides consultive services to private and official agencies; 2) it carries on research and publishes frequent reports of findings; 3) it publishes a monthly magazine, *New South*, and works with the press, radio, and television; 4) it is a clearing-house for other agencies concerned with Southern problems.

In 1953, Dr. George S. Mitchell, executive director of the council, received the award of the Catholic committee of the South for his "significant contribution to the welfare of the South."

The Southern Regional Council is assisting interracial organizations in twelve Southern states. The Northeast Florida Council on Human Relations has its own membership, elects its own officers and makes its own decisions concerning policy and program. Meetings are monthly.

Chairman of the Northeast Florida Council on Human Relations is I. H. Burney; Co-chairman is Dr. James O. Bond; Program Committee Chairman, Mrs. John Rutledge; Treasurer and Membership Chairman, Mrs. Charlotte Bostick; Secretary, Mrs. Julia Geiger; Members-at-large of the Executive Board (composed also of the above officers) are L. I. Alexander, Thomas Hargrave and the Rev. Charles White McGehee.

The council invites the participation of all persons interested in its objectives. Address communications to: