

OPENING CLOSED DOORS

Narrative of the American Friends Service Committee's Work in Prince Edward County, Virginia. 1959-1965

INTRODUCTION

In 1865, just a few weeks after Appomattox, in nearby Prince Edward County, Philadelphia Friends organized schools for the children of former slaves. This was part of a broader response by Quakers to meet the urgent demands by black Americans for the education denied to them during slavery. Much of the work of Philadelphia Friends beginning in the 1860s was under the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Association, an ecumenical effort in which Friends provided significant leadership. Members of black families who had been engaged for decades in anti-slavery and social justice movements joined them. Among the active black teachers, for example, was Charlotte Forten, sent by Friends to teach at Penn School, on St. Helena's Island in South Carolina. In the immediate responses to crises over black education, many of the relationships led to long-term associations joining northern Friends, black civil rights leaders and southern communities. One of W.E.B. Dubois's case studies of black communities was Farmville, Virginia, in Prince Edward County. There may be evidence that he chose this rural Southside Virginia town because he had heard about it in Philadelphia.

Almost a hundred years later, in 1959, Virginia officials defied court orders to desegregate Prince Edward County schools and chose instead to abandon public education. The American Friends Service Committee was there, demonstrating solidarity with the families of the 1,700 black children who were locked out of their schools. A segregated school system was organized for white children with tuition grants from public funds enabling them to attend the hastily organized private academies. AFSC representatives anticipated a crisis of perhaps a semester or two. They were there until 1965, a year after public schools were reopened. Amidst the chronological unfolding, drama and individual stories during these years, several major themes emerge in the full narrative of AFSC involvement in the county.

One major theme in this story is the AFSC commitment to capacity building, as the conceptual framework for this evolving program in the County. AFSC remained convinced that any staff that might work in the county could never be seen as "substitute leaders," in either the black or white communities. They believed that in the midst of tragedy, injustice and practices of inhumanity that were being manifest, local people had strengths. AFSC's task was to find and

build on those strengths and to respond creatively to the crises in the white as well as the black community.

Another theme is AFSC's indispensable leadership role within the community of southern human relations/civil rights agencies. In 1960, AFSC became the lead agency in Prince Edward County, coordinating regional and national efforts to respond to that particular crisis. AFSC's leadership continued on local, state, and national levels, and its unrelenting advocacy within the federal arena became a key to necessary changes.

BACKGROUND

In the fall of 1957, the Community Relations Division (CRD) of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) launched a southern civil rights program with Jean Fairfax as the National Representative for Southern Programs. This program was south wide and comprehensive, with a major focus on school desegregation. The AFSC, convinced of the value of intensive work in localities, strived to establish community-based projects where local leaders could be identified and supported. Sometimes AFSC regional offices did the work. For example, staff of the Southeastern Regional Office (SERO) was engaged full time in promoting desegregation. Occasionally, AFSC loaned national or regional staff, as during the Little Rock school crisis.

The Southern Interagency Conference (SIC), an informal coalition of representatives of religious, human relations, labor, civil rights, foundations and educational organizations began to meet in the late 1950s to share information on developments in race relations and to explore how they might cooperate to prevent and address crises. Fairfax represented AFSC, often accompanied by SERO staff members, and filed reports of the meetings with Philadelphia Staff. The Atlanta-based Southern Regional Council (SRC) hosted the meetings in its Atlanta office and served as the secretariat for this group. These meetings were off-the-record. Outsiders, including the press, were excluded; there were no official minutes and names of the organizations and their representatives were not made public.

At the SIC meeting in January 1959, developments in school desegregation, especially school-closings, were the main items on the agenda. It was clearly a south-wide issue, but Virginia was taking an especially hard line using its "massive resistance laws of 1956 which authorized the governor to close any school ordered by the courts to desegregate. Reports at the SIC meeting showed "Save the Schools" movements were having mixed success and opinions differed about strategies. Some persons were even convinced that apathy and low commitment to public education were the problem and

that closed schools might create an upheaval that would force action.

By SIC's October 1959, meeting, the Prince Edward County schools had closed, and 1,700 black students were without educational facilities. Prominent white segregationist leaders had established a "Foundation" to organize school facilities for white children, and the County Board of Supervisors had allocated funds for tuition grants to supplement state tuition grants.

The discussion at the October meeting included an appeal to "any agency to release someone for a few months" to get information on Prince Edward that could be widely shared. There were still interesting differences within this group of human relations workers about what should be done--about priorities and strategies. Some believed that funds should be raised to enable the 39 senior students to graduate. Some advocated identifying the most talented and providing education for them. At least one participant, who was convinced that all 1,700 were not needed for the legal test, suggested that some black students should take the state tuition grants. There was general concern that agencies had done no planning in advance of school closing and thus were unable to respond quickly and creatively to this crisis. It was generally agreed that there would be more school closings, and SIC asked AFSC, SRC and the southern regional office of the NAACP to consider the plight of children and make recommendations for temporary educational services.

At meetings in November 1959, AFSC's Community Relations Committee and its Sub-Committee on Southern Programs considered a memorandum, "A Proposal for an Emergency Educational Service for Displaced Pupils." Members expressed approval for AFSC to find appropriate roles in crises connected to desegregation processes and to respond with "imaginative planning." The Committee also approved continuing explorations into emergency educational services and authorized the Executive Committee to consider any specific recommendations, which were received. It was understood that AFSC participation in this venture would depend on financing, the establishment of criteria, and the clarification of the legal implications.

AFSC then joined with SRC and the NAACP to plan "A Consultation on Emergency Educational Services for Displaced Pupils" that was held at Davis House, the Quaker Center in Washington, D.C., on December 19, 1959. Professor Dan Dodson of New York University, an international expert on human relations, chaired. The report of the meeting includes a long section on Prince Edward County and contains important comments about black and white relationships, especially the news of "a new and separate private corporation, Southside Schools, Inc.," composed of ten white persons under the leadership of J. Barrye Wall, Jr., a local lawyer. Their plan was to operate

schools for Negro children and to use Virginia's tuition grant program to finance the schools. They would begin by surveying the Negro community to determine interest in the schools intended to open in February 1960.

The community of human relations, religious and civil rights workers ended 1959 with a sense of shame and embarrassment that advance planning has not been undertaken to prevent and address school closing problems. The focus was on students--as displaced and in need of emergency educational services. Prince Edward County was recognized as the most critical but not the only community in distress. The group of concerned agencies and individuals was confronted with a regional problem that had emerged with a blast and with grave implications for the future of public education.

IRENE OSBORNE DESCRIPTION OF PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY

In summer 1960, AFSC consultant, Irene Osborne described the county and summarized the school situation:

Prince Edward County is a small rural county in south central Virginia, sixty-five miles west of Richmond, Virginia. It has a population of approximately 12,000, of which about 47% are Negroes. Negro children constitute 51% of the school population. The county seat is the little town of Farmville with a population of approximately 4,000.

Small farm owners, both white and Negro, raise mostly tobacco, but large farms, owned by white people, use tenant farmers and sharecroppers. New industry has not been coming to the county, and there has been a steady stream of out-migration in the past ten years. Extremes of wealth and poverty pervade with new modern homes and large older houses along with sub-standard shacks, with no central heating and wood burning stoves for cooking. Most farm families have no plumbing, a few have no electricity, and in large section of the county, lack of telephone lines means no telephone service.

The struggle by Negroes to obtain adequate schools dates back to the 1920's when no high schools were available. By 1950, a complete high school was offered but it was housed primarily in tar paper shacks with inadequate protection against rain and cold. Adult groups had petitioned, protested and pled for a better facility--to no avail, and in 1951, the high school students went on strike. This led to the now-famous Prince Edward School case, which, along with four other cases in other parts of the country, culminated in the 1954 Supreme Court decision against segregation in public education.

After complicated court proceedings, in the summer of 1959,

the court finally gave a definite order to Prince Edward school officials to proceed with desegregation at the high school level. The county Board of Supervisors who controlled funds promptly ceased raising taxes for school purposes thus guaranteeing that no funds would be available for public schools that year. In the meantime, the Prince Edward School Foundation, a private group formed several years previously had already begun to collect money for private schools for white children. And they made arrangements for school facilities for all the white children in the county in churches, vacant business buildings and other makeshift facilities. Then in winter 1959-1960, white persons closely connected with the foundation group set up Southside Schools, Inc. They offered to raise money and assist Negroes in forming a private school system for Negroes. The offer was universally refused by Negroes who answered that they wanted a public school system operated within the law.

That fall, over 60 Negro students were admitted to the high school department of Kittrell Junior College in North Carolina, some children went to live with relatives and attend public school there. At mid-year two students entered Scattergood, the Quaker School in Branch City, Iowa. A very few had some instruction at home, but the bulk of the Negro children--about 1,700 were totally without schooling.

The Prince Edward County Christian Association was formed to give all aid possible to these Negro children, and in February 1960, ten training centers were organized in different parts of the county in churches, recreation hall and private homes. Children were given organized group experience from 10 AM to 1 PM each day.

The Prince Edward Foundation is now raising \$300,000 to build a private school for white children. The county Board of Supervisors has recently passed a law so that children attending may receive tuition grants from the county, which will supplement state tuition grants. Legislation has also passed which will give property holders tax credits for contributions to the Foundation. People are raising questions about the legality of the tuition grants and the tax credit system.

Many white persons, some of stature and many of real leadership ability, dissent vigorously-- from the closing of schools to private schools for white. But they are not organized and hold no political power. Many who have spoken against county actions have been subjected to reprisals, boycotts by segregationists, threats of job-loss, social ostracism and whispering campaigns of a particularly insidious nature.

Note: (Interviewed by Jennifer E. Spreng in 1995, John Fox, a local resident stated: "I always used to say, you can go down to Alabama to be in the Deep South, but you don't' have to travel that far; you can come to Farmville.")

THE EMERGENCY PLACEMENT PROGRAM FOR PRINCE EDWARD CHILDREN

By the beginning of 1960, there was a clear mandate to the AFSC to serve as lead agency, providing information and coordinating efforts in the Prince Edward situation. Fairfax and other AFSC representatives visited the county frequently and developed a close relationship with the black community. Between January and the appointment of Helen Baker as resident program director in the fall, work was directed towards support of the Prince Edward County Christian Association (PECCA), its leader the Rev. L. Francis Griffin, and the training centers it had organized. Reverend Griffin, the outspoken minister at the black First Baptist Church, was known as "the fighting preacher." He had a quality of toughness along with deep insight into issues of race, but most importantly, a total respect for the black community which he led--all qualities crucial in the evolution of AFSC's program. All of the AFSC staff who worked with him held "Griff" in the highest regard.

Irene Osborne supervised a youth group of PECCA that conducted a survey to assess the educational needs of the black community. During the summer of 1960, outside groups organized various kinds of summer "crash programs," and the AFSC often acted as the vehicle through which human, educational, and financial resources came into the black community and to PECCA. The predominant feeling in the black community, well into the summer, was that schools would reopen in the fall. "Whites just couldn't be that cruel." Thus it was extremely difficult to convince parents that they should begin to make alternate plans for their children. By late August, when it became clear that legal efforts would not result in the opening of public schools, the atmosphere was near panic and precipitated the establishment of the Emergency Placement Program for Prince Edward children.

It was evident that the biggest job of responding to the crisis had to be done in Virginia--the major challenge was to achieve peaceful desegregation of the public schools. The closing of the schools was part of a larger and long-standing crisis over racial issues, and it was important that outside efforts not be perceived as undermining the legal strategies underway. While other groups brought in "crash programs" for the children, AfSC supported them, helped introduce them to the community, provided office space and supplied but felt its task was to provide a way for some of the children to be educated outside the state.

Fairfax wrote to directors of five regional AFSC offices directors, asking their help in placing about 50 junior and senior high school students. She shared the Scattergood School experience where one student of average and the other of below average ability, had both made progress "in a school which has demanded more of them." Regional offices were asked to find communities and to organize local sponsoring committees that would recruit host families, select schools, involve counselors, provide cultural experiences and raise money. Within the county, AFSC did not recruit, but attempted to let parents know and find the Prince Edward families who would entrust their children to AFSC.

With assistance from local leader, Mrs. Daniel Brown, news about the project was disseminated, and interested students and parents were interviewed and participated in an orientation program. AFSC also began to comply with legal and other requirements for the interstate placement of minors. Within a few weeks, 47 students, grades 7-12, had been placed in ten communities, plus Scattergood School and Moorestown Friends School. Forty-two host families, black and white were involved. The Project was organized very quickly--between late July and Labor Day, 1960. Thus, it was only after the children had arrived in some communities that policy issues arose and became problems. Among them were whether tuition had to be paid, if it could be waived, and whether families had to be officially certified.

During the 1961-62 academic years, AFSC's continuing Placement Project sponsored 37 Prince Edward children in 10 communities in 8 states. During this period, new placements were made in Kentucky at Berea College's Foundation School and in Massachusetts. Seven students graduated. During the holidays at the end of 1961, Helen Baker and Jean Fairfax visited the County, had meetings with the families and were pleased to observe how students had matured with an expanded vision of opportunities in their future. But the exodus of black children had increased. About 30 were attending schools in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the Prince Edward Educational Committee. More parents were making private arrangements to send their children to other districts in Virginia or out of state.

By August 1962, again it was clear that the schools were not going to open, and AFSC decided to continue the placement program for 1962-63. Students who had been in the Program were advised that sponsorship would continue for those who had made good academic and social adjustments, who were willing to accept a new placement if necessary, and who promised to remain throughout the school year.

By the end of its third year and final year (1962-63) The Placement Project had sponsored 67 students. The communities that served the students were Dayton and Yellow Springs in Ohio; Inskster and Kalamazoo in Michigan, Iowa City; Baltimore, Md.; Moorestown, N. J.; Media and Landsdowne-Yeadon in Pa.; Greater Springfield, Greater

Boston and New Bedford in Mass. Schools that served were Berea College's Foundation School in Kentucky, Moorestown Friends School in New Jersey and Scattergood School in Iowa. Each of these sites has their own stories about their participation in the placement project. Throughout the life of the Placement Project, AFSC was faced with the problem of waiting for news about court and or/legal decisions that might impact the reopening of the public schools. Financial problems in some communities made it hard for them to continue their sponsorship of placements, which meant that children had to sometimes be relocated several times.

CAPACITY BUILDING

From the fall of 1960 through August 1961, Helen Baker served as the resident director of AFSC's Prince Edward County Program. Although empowerment of local groups and individuals is a continuing theme in AFSC programs, Baker's work was state of the art. She was an extraordinarily gifted woman. Her regular reports to the AFSC show that by the closing of the year, AFSC had headquarters, an office, an apartment and meeting rooms as needed in a new building owned by a black dentist, Dr. Miller and his wife, a former teacher. They were gracious landlords and strong supporters of the AFSC work, giving wise counsel and introducing AFSC staff to the community. The Miller Building was the home of Helen Baker and other AFSC representatives through 1965. It was also the gateway through which a wide variety of concerned outsiders--individuals, agencies and the media--entered into the Prince Edward drama, experientially, to get the story, to provide services and to demonstrate solidarity with the victims of the crisis.

The program launched by Helen Baker moved from an effort to provide educational services to displaced pupils into a more comprehensive program addressing the specific challenges raised by the closing of all public schools. Along with strengthening local leaders, and sponsoring activities for children, especially teenagers who remained at home, and facilitating interracial contacts, Baker created a Leadership Institute for the 24 women who conducted the student centers. Its objectives were to enhance their skills as educators, to be a forum for sharing experiences and to provide opportunities for broadening their horizons. Baker wanted to use the crisis as an opportunity to prepare some local citizens to become knowledgeable advocates of strong public schools as vital to democracy. In addition to monthly meetings, she organized educational trips for the women--to Williamsburg, as guests of the interracial council, to study Virginia's role in creating the foundation for democratic ideas and institutions, and to Washington, as guests of the National Council of Negro women to study the

federal government. They also visited AFSC's regional office in High Point where they had discussions with black students who had already integrated schools in North Carolina.

Baker also helped create the Friends' Club, where parents could discuss the experiences and problems that their children in the Placement Project were facing and strengthen their capacity to stay involved while families were separated. The Club had gatherings that involved parents and children who came home from their placement communities for their vacations. For teen-agers who did not leave the County, Baker was their counselor. She organized special events, such as trips to the University of North Carolina, and facilitated their participation in summer camps and high school seminars.

From the beginning, it was clearly established that AFSC's program in Prince Edward County would be interracial. Baker facilitated visits by white and interracial groups, out of which began relationships with college students, especially from Sweet Briar, Randolph Macon, Smith and Virginia Polytechnic Institute. The students performed community service and became an important link to students from Hampden-Sydney and Longwood, the all-white colleges in the County.

Also, in those beginning dim days for the black community, the Richmond Committee of Volunteers to Prince Edward County came to the county and started a baseball team and other recreational and educational activities for the youth. The group, involving volunteers from all over Central Virginia, was organized, with the help of Helen Baker, by Ed Peebles and Ruby Clayton Walker, public assistance workers for the City of Richmond. The program was in the county earlier and lasted longer than many of the "crash" programs from the outside and forged many life-long friendship and civil rights collaborations in the area.

THE WHITE COMMUNITY

Capacity building in the white community continued as part of the focus of AFSC work in the County in 1962. It required careful listening and engagement at the right moments. The objective was to raise the crisis as a moral issue and to discover how white citizens perceived it. Then came identification of persons to provide the leadership required to resolve the crisis. It was imperative to explore the potential for a genuine bi-racial committee that would take a long-overdue and comprehensive look at race relations. Its findings would hopefully result in action to remedy the injustices. AFSC representatives visited about 80 white persons in their homes or offices.

Harry Boyte was resident program director from March to August 1962, and William Bagwell, from the AFSC regional office in North Carolina spent considerable time in the County during the fall months. They interviewed all of the members of the Board of Supervisors, businessmen, clergy, persons in the media, and faculty members from Longwood and Hampden-Sydney Colleges.

The white community was not monolithic. Rigid segregationists believed that the Supreme Court's 1954 decision was not the law of the land. Convinced of their racial superiority, they voiced no compassion for blacks whom they blamed for their plight. They were against the education of the masses, and especially of blacks--as a waste of white people's money because blacks paid so few taxes. At least one powerful person was ready to use violence to promote his racist agenda.

Serious concern about the crisis was widespread, but it was hard to place individuals accurately along the conservative-moderate-liberal continuum. There was some deep resentment that the County was controlled by a small group of white men who used intimidation and reprisals (or the threat of reprisals) to inject fear and prevent any challenge to their control.

AFSC staff also found growing concern about the foundation that operated the segregated schools: its financial troubles; the quality of its educational program and the turnover of its teachers; property damage to the churches that provided facilities for the schools; pressure on poor families that were delinquent in paying fees. Some whites believed that the foundation was participating in illegal arrangements with families who rented homes in nearby counties, using their residence to receive tuition grants with which they paid their children's fees to the foundation. Faculty members at Hampden-Sydney were uneasy because the College paid tuition fees for the children of faculty and staff but did nothing to provide education for the children of their black employees. They were distressed when highly regarded faculty members resigned because of the school crisis.

Some whites who were thought to be moderates had mixed feelings about local black leaders whom they judged to be controlled by outsiders, especially the national NAACP. Paternalism in attitudes and actions was pervasive - from the rather sinister comment that "we take care of our own colored," to initiatives by whites who were convinced that they knew what was best for blacks--without consulting them. A faculty member at Hampden-Sydney admitted his belief in black inferiority, but sought nevertheless to create a private school for the College's black workers to be sponsored by his denomination. He never consulted black leaders about his plan and then could not understand why they did not support it.

The absence of genuine interracial relations that were not based on paternalism--even benevolent paternalism--was not surprising.

Nor was staff surprised to learn of the ineffectiveness of efforts to create interracial groups or even to organize white persons to develop a white agenda for change. An interracial group that had attempted to meet at Spencer's store in a rural part of the County was ineffective and faced a history where "active" whites suffered harassment and social and economic reprisals.

Harry Boyte had meetings in Richmond with state senator Dr. Edward Haddock who had access to the governor and who began efforts to convene a meeting of prominent Virginians whose intervention might produce a resolution of the crisis. Neither Rev. Griffin nor AFSC representatives were invited to participate. The message remained clear: whites would set their own agenda for change and would resolve the Prince Edward crisis without the involvement of local black leaders or their advocates.

Over the years, there had been some outspoken individuals, notably Dr. Gordon Moss, a professor and the dean at Longwood College. Moss was clearly the best contact for AFSC staff, and grew from an unclear position on integration to an outspoken advocate for change. Support from AFSC over the years certainly enabled this growth, and his letters and speeches are informative and moving.

There were other voices of protest by persons in their official capacity. In 1960, six members of the school board resigned to protest plans by the Foundation to purchase school buildings. But still, there was no major effort to mobilize the total community for change. Finally, even those whites who resented the involvement of outsiders on behalf of blacks became increasingly convinced that only outsiders, and especially the courts, were going to resolve the crisis. Some wanted action by the governor--perhaps to create a human relations commission that would be more acceptable than the Virginia Advisory Committee of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. None saw the potential or were willing to provide leadership to organize local citizens and challenge the small powerful white group that controlled the county.

By the end of the year there was growing tension and some clear differences in the white community over an acceptable solution. An increasing number would accept the reopening of the public schools knowing that they would be predominantly black with token white enrollment. Boyte detected no disagreement about tuition grants and the ability of whites to attend private schools. Obviously, this was not acceptable to blacks.

A situation that involved Boyte and AFSC's national office could have led to an international incident! The Ford Foundation appointed Longwood's President Lankford to serve as an educational consultant in Pakistan and then learned that he had provided no leadership to resolve a major educational crisis in his own community. Fearing demonstrations when his appointee arrived in Pakistan, a Foundation official traveled to Farmville to persuade

Boyte, representing AFSC (well-known to Ford in Asia as well as in this country) to endorse this appointment. Boyte could not do so conscientiously since Lankford had refused to make a public statement giving his commitment to public education and the reopening of the Prince Edward public schools. Lankford proceeded to Pakistan.

In general, 1962 was a year of raised expectations that ended with dashed hopes and mounting frustration in the black community. The courts failed to resolve the legal issues, public schools remained closed, PECCA was unable to sponsor its freedom centers. However, during the summer, the "Summer College Educational Project," an interracial group organized by 11 students from northern colleges and seminaries, conducted a program in which about 150 black children participated. More parents were making private arrangements to send their children to other districts in Virginia or out of state.

Meetings of the Community Relations Division Executive and the Southern Programs Committee in May, June, July, September, and November 1962 continued to demonstrate support of Prince Edward programming. They were kept fully informed about PEC program developments. They commented on the value of the Emergency Placement Program, the potential for long-term involvements with Berea College, the new and deep relationships in the host communities that were being established across lines of social and economic class and the challenge they faced as they became aware of many aspects of race relations in the North. Committee members provided wise and practical advice as staff sought to promote the creation of some kind of PEC bi-racial group that would operate publicly. The committees expressed concern that they were forced to develop the Prince Edward Program as patchwork, because of the uncertainties of court developments as well as the difficulty of raising funds.

Already in 1962, staff and committees were anticipating the potential for demonstrations or protests and were discussing what AFSC representatives should do if such events occurred. By the end of year, AFSC was convinced that a new phase was developing with a major new initiative requiring more major federal agency involvement. A petition to President Kennedy was being circulated in the County by black parents. But AFSC was also convinced that a broad interagency involvement in the Prince Edward crisis--above and beyond court actions--must remain. However, as the end of the year approached, Prince Edward County still had not developed a solid core of citizens committed to and mobilizing for quality integrated public schools--on grounds of either morality or a sense of reality. The situation was bleak, but AFSC was determined to stay the course.

(SEE APPENDIX 3 for Boyte report on Gordon Moss-1962, for Moss's

letters and speeches of June and October 1963 and Boyte full report on Prince Edward situation)

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

During 1962, AFSC representatives renewed and intensified their advocacy work with federal agencies. One goal was to convince agencies to take the lead in showing the serious national implications of the abandonment of public education. Priority agencies were:

1. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Through a series of meetings in Washington and Richmond, AfSC representatives persistently urged the Commission to fulfill its mission--to become actively involved in critical civil rights issues--especially using its authority to conduct formal hearings and investigations and to issue reports. In May, 1962, Tarrt Bell of SERO, Harry Boyte and Jean Fairfax met in Washington with Berl Bernhard, the Commission's director and other senior officials. In a lengthy August meeting in Richmond, Harry Boyte met with Senator Edward Haddock, chair of the Virginia State Advisory Committee. Boyte had developed a good relationship with Dr. Haddock and learned that he was exploring the feasibility of a hearing or study that could produce a report on Prince Edward County. Communications between Washington and Richmond had taken place, and Bernhard had encouraged Haddock to use a report prepared by the North Carolina State Advisory Committee as a model of outstanding work by a southern state. Haddock invited Boyte to help with the work of the Advisory Committee, especially in hearings and in the preparation of a report.

Fairfax spent two days in December with Commission officials: William Taylor, assistant director; Peter Libasse, his deputy who had been associated with AFSC since his student days; Peter Sussman, and Elizabeth Cole. Discussions were comprehensive, serious and frank. Fairfax was questioned closely as she advocated an official hearing by the full Commission. Commission staff arranged for Fairfax to visit Spottswood Robinson, Dean of the Howard Law School. An appointed member of the Commission, he had handled the PEC litigation from 1960-1961 when he was a lawyer in Richmond. This session with a distinguished lawyer who had been deeply involved in PEC and who understood the Commission as an insider was extremely valuable as AFSC considered its objectives as an advocate.

Meanwhile, Dr. Kenneth Morland, a sociologist at Randolph Macon College, had been appointed to a special bi-racial sub-commission of the Virginia State Advisory Committee, to study closed schools in PEC and the effect on the county and state, both educationally and economically. Fairfax had advised the Washington staff that AFSC had been asked to consider releasing William Bagwell to undertake research for the study and was told that some Commission staff might be available to assist him in areas where an AFSC-related investigator might have difficulties..

At the end of 1962, AFSC was cautiously optimistic that advocacy at the Commission would produce some results. Dean Robinson promised to talk with Bernhard and other Commission members on the possibility of a hearing (even though he would have to dissociate himself from it) and on all other options. By spring, however, it was clear that there would be no hearings. Bernhard advised Haddock that the Taconic Foundation had provided a modest grant of \$3000 for a study. Morland went ahead with his study with field interview data from Edward Peeples. The 100 page report, "The Tragedy of Closed Schools: Prince Edward County, Virginia" The report was submitted to the Civil Rights Commission in the first week of January 1963, during the heat of the Congressional debate over whether the Commission would be renewed and whether the 1964 Civil Rights Act would come to life. The report did not survive the debate. When, in the summer the report had not been published, Morland and others asked the Commission staff why. The answer: Byrd and other Southerners in the Congress had quietly warned staff and Commissioners that if the report appeared, both the Commission and Civil Rights bill legislation would meet a dismal fate. This was the backdrop of racial politics during the Prince Edward struggle.

2. The U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) and its Office of Education. In a meeting in May 1962, AFSC urged Stanley McMurrin, the U.S. Commissioner of Education, to undertake a comprehensive study of the impact of closing schools. After he had responded that he saw "no immediate prospect of being able to do anything useful," staff met with James Quigley, HEW Assistant Secretary, and urged him to respond not only to requests from the Justice Department to study closed schools but to initiate a review of services and grant-in-aid programs in Prince Edward County.
3. The U.S. Department of Justice. Jean Fairfax and other AFSC staff continued to meet with Burke Marshall, Asst. Attorney General for Civil Rights to report and circulate information

on the situation in the county.

4. The U.S. Department of Agriculture. (USDA). AFSC recommended that USDA's Extension Service undertake an expansion of its work in Prince Edward County, especially its 4-H programs, and consider a basic literacy program for 7-10 year old children as part of its commitment to improve rural life.
5. President's Committee on Juvenile Justice and Youth Crime Sanford Kravitz, a former AFSC college secretary, urged AFSC to submit a proposal. They were interested in new ways to combat cultural deprivation and were eager to have a rural project-- especially one sponsored by a national private agency that could replicate findings. "A Proposal for a Project in Prince Edward County Virginia, to Develop Curriculum and Techniques to Overcome the Effects of Deprivation in Rural Negro Children" was submitted in April 1963, but was later withdrawn. A review of the months of negotiation about this proposal provides an excellent example of the involvement of AFSC committees and the Board in exploring the potential for a new program that presented challenges and problems. They were ready to be partners with a federal agency but wanted assurances that it shared AFSC's commitment to help children and make desegregation work-- that there would be no loyalty oaths or security clearances and that the agency's sponsorship would not inaccurately label youth as delinquents.

Persistent efforts by AFSC in Washington began to produce results early in 1963. Staff members had been conferring regularly with knowledgeable and politically savvy persons in Washington who gave valuable advice on federal initiatives to help the Prince Edward program. Louis Martin of the Democratic National Committee and Harold Fleming of the Taconic Institute advised AFSC as they increased and broadened contacts with the Federal Government. AFSC wanted contact with both individual agencies and senior officials who could authorize comprehensive interagency approaches to the crisis. ASFC national and regional staff also worked with the national office of the NAACP on the petition to President Kennedy that was being circulated in the county.

Early in May, AFSC learned that Asst. Attorney General Burke Marshall and Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel were coordinating explorations into special projects for Prince Edward County. Fairfax wrote Commissioner Keppel to convene a meeting of all of the agencies that were now exploring the feasibility of

Prince Edward programs. Receiving no response, she wrote Burke Marshall and then went to see him. Fairfax has a clear memory of sitting in his office while he called Francis Keppel and got the commitment to convene an interagency meeting that would include appropriate federal officials and black and white persons from the county and state. There would be a special emphasis on consulting with black and white citizens as decisions were made to launch the Free School.

The federal interagency meetings held in June and July 1963 mirrored the hard work and unrelenting pressures from the AFSC. For the first time, representatives from all of the agencies that were or should have been involved in the County came together for briefing, got acquainted with black and white locals and explored collaboration with them, including plans for the Free School to open in the fall.

Other important activities and events took place during the summer of 1963. A group of about 30 teachers from Queens College and the United Federation of Teachers joined Dr. Robert Green's team from Michigan State University. Ruth Turner was serving as a consultant for the AFSC program. She had participated in the 1962 summer program sponsored by students from northern colleges and seminaries. Since she brought knowledge of the community and contacts with families, her assignment was to conduct interviews with young people to get information about their experiences and interests. This would supplement the Green study and help AFSC recruit agencies to undertake a program for older youth.

Of Turner's 55 interviews, 25 children had not been to school at all. Of those who had been in school, 8 had been away 3-4 years; 16 for two years; and 6 for only 1 year. Of the 55, 13 had been involved with AFSC. Her objective was to discover what the young people's experiences had been since 1959, their ambitions, whether they had plans to return to school and to live in the county; their feelings about blacks and whites, the crisis and the demonstrations that were going on.

According to Ruth Turner, the NAACP Youth Council organized a developing "movement" that summer in Prince Edward County, with advice from several black ministers. Two volunteers from New York trained the young people in direct action, and Ivanhoe Donaldson, Roland Sherrod, and Gladys Giles, SNCC staffers conducted workshops. The demonstrators included a large number of high school children who had been involved in the AFSC Placement Program. In addition to picketing at downtown stores, conducting "stand-ins" at the local movie, a "try-on" at department stores, and "sit-ins" at J.J. Newberry, activists attempted to attend services one Sunday at four churches. Ruth was among those arrested for "disturbing public worship." Ruth wrote that adult leaders felt that the Sunday episode "was pushed too far" and that the arrests had a negative

effect in the removal of 23 demonstrators from picket lines. She agreed upon reflection that it was unwise. Fairfax remembers arriving in Farmville during the demonstrations and seeing police cars with dogs.

In one of his remarkable statements, written on July 21, 1963, shortly before the demonstration at the churches, Gordon Moss asked himself what his part would be if "demonstration" became the final effort to seek justice. After listing what he had attempted to do without alleviating or solving the problem, he wondered, "where does this leave me?" He concluded: "There is only one thing left to do--demonstrate as the means of ultimate focusing the white man's attention upon a problem that must be met and solved. However distasteful conspicuous action may be to me, how abhorrent peaceful action, which may produce violent counter-action, may be to me--I have no choice. My higher responsibilities...demand of me the ultimate logic, participation in 'peaceful demonstration'." That Sunday, seven youth and one adult, at his invitation, joined him in his pew at the Episcopal Church. Resident AFSC staff provided support to Moss and others in the county, as they deepened their moral commitment and became actively and public involved in resolving crises.

The organization of the Free School and the demonstrations in Prince Edward County were taking place within a larger context that added a sense of urgency. The March on Washington was being planned by National Civil Rights groups and took place in mid-August.

THE FREE SCHOOL

During this period the Justice Department was involved in some high-profile, nationally publicized crises, including the assassination of Miss. NAACP field secretary, Medgar Evers and Alabama Governor George Wallace's attempt to block desegregation at the University of Alabama. These pressures and the constant AFSC contact and meetings helped provide the context for Burke Marshall and William Vanden Heuvel to respond to the Prince Edward situation. Vanden Heuvel was a New York attorney who was appointed as special assistant to Attorney General Robert Kennedy and assigned to work out a solution for Prince Edward. The search began for private funds to establish the Prince Edward County Free School Association.

Jean Fairfax made recommendations on how a principal and teachers for the Free School could be recruited even on short notice. She wrote to Vanden Heuvel in August, 1963 on several policy questions about the Free School and expressed the special concern that older black youth might be uncomfortable about returning to school with much younger students. Fairfax also had a long interview in August with Dr. Robert Green about the findings of

his project. The result was a memorandum, "Planning for the Older Youth of Prince Edward County," and it was used in AFSC's continuing discussions with federal agencies planning to work in the county.

The Free School opened on September 16, 1963, under a board of trustees made up of leading Virginia educators appointed by the Governor of Virginia. However, from the beginning AFSC expressed concern that the School not be seen as a substitute for the re-opening of the public schools on a non-segregated basis. The school was established in four buildings rented from the county, with an interracial faculty. Six white children attended and about 1,500 black children. Dr. Neil Sullivan, an educator from New York, was brought in as superintendent of the Free School Association. Although the program was elaborate with many field trips and extra-curricular activities, there was little attention to remedial efforts, so that many of the children were left behind. Nonetheless, AFSC committees in the fall were clear that work in the County could not end until the major objective--the opening of public schools on a desegregated basis--had been accomplished. The suggested program for 1963-64, from the minutes of the Division Committee of October 5, 1963 included:

- (1) Encouraging the black community to take advantage of the Free School and involving the white community in the program of the Free School.
- (2) Relating outside resources to the community-- AFSC, state, and federal resources, such as job training.
- (3) Supporting SERO staff's interest in using Prince Edward experience and contacts for work in other Southside Virginia counties.

The proposed budget for the program as presented by Robert Blackburn for the Southern Programs Committee was \$11,000. During the discussion, Community Relations Division Committee members reaffirmed the importance of staying long enough to finalize what had been started and working closely with the whole community. But they also noted the difficulty in raising funds for the project and that the Free School itself was having problems in getting money from foundations.

A TIME TO SPEAK

From January 1964 through the summer of 1965, the Prince Edward program was a companion to AFSC's work in Mississippi--first

to promote compliance with 1964 court orders for initial school desegregation and then in 1965 for compliance with administrative regulations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Much of the AFSC work in Mississippi was in rural counties with many of the same characteristics as Prince Edward. The AFSC objective in both states was to support blacks who led the struggle for justice and especially to aid families and children who were the pioneers in desegregation. There was also the ever-present concern to discover and support white citizens who were convinced that desegregation should not destroy public education. Fairfax was spending most of her time in Prince Edward and Mississippi. Two AFSC representatives in Mississippi, Constance Curry and Winifred Green, were providing encouragement, staff support and technical assistance to Mississippians for Public Education, a group of white women working towards peaceful school desegregation in the fall of 1964 and curbing white flight to newly organized private schools.

While in Mississippi, Fairfax met Nancy Adams, a young white woman who was working on voter registration in Jackson. Jean persuaded her to shift her involvement in the civil rights movement to Prince Edward County. Nancy was a capable, wise and energetic worker, who easily established trust with black activists. Adams arrived in Farmville in March 1964 with the primary mission of developing "the spirit of constructive compliance in the white community." Although she may have been "living in the enemy camp," she had no difficulty getting white persons to open up to her candidly--perhaps because she was perceived as a white outsider who needed to be educated, but more likely because she was a good listener. (Her reports are among the most important documents in the AFSC files and show an extraordinary determination to meet and work with every group in the in the County.)

In a community that was struggling simultaneously to resist and to maintain efforts to overcome segregation, Adams was a participant observer in the best sense of that term. She discovered very early that the number of white persons reported to be moderate had grown, but they were beset with hopelessness and inability (or unwillingness) to confront the small power group that controlled the county. They were talking, studying, meeting--mostly among themselves. The little interracial group continued to meet at Spencer's store, but it was ineffective. Nancy found some members of the group to be more than just paternalistic and condescending; they were hostile in their attitudes and comments to black participants.

She also discovered the intricate, convoluted relationships that whites had with each other and how they guarded information they had. One boasted of having lists of moderates in the county, but failed to share them. The head of the radio station reported private conversations he had with Barrye Wall and produced cards that a

local organization sent to white taxpayers. The cards showed what they had paid when there was a school tax and urged that amount be sent as a contribution to the Foundation. A professor at Hampden-Sydney revealed that his father who was the president of Madison College was a source of information about and an entree to powerful figures in higher education and politics. It was evident that whites--absent genuine and trustworthy lines of communication with blacks--were seeking to use Nancy as a sounding board for their ideas, as a vehicle to get their thoughts into the black community and as a way to get an assessment of black leaders, especially Rev. L. Francis Griffin.

There were some stirrings. Nancy learned that shortly before the announcement of the Free School, there had been plans to build a parochial school for all Catholic children and Negro pupils of all religions who wanted to attend. A Bishop in Brooklyn had promised to send money. In view of the tenuous situation of Catholics in the county, this would have been an interesting development with an unsure promise.

The Rev. Dr. Field, pastor of the College Presbyterian Church at Hampden-Sydney, had held a study group for more than a year. The bi-racial group turned to the subject "Christian Social Responsibility," and discussed books that seemed relevant to Prince Edward problems. However, they steered clear of involvement in "action," except for the creation of an "Action Subcommittee." College President Revely had supported the group and sometimes attended the sessions although the remaining faculty was divided. Field's bi-racial group sent a letter in mid-April to all of the "white and colored" churches, inviting them to send representatives to a new, church-centered bi-racial committee. He then met with persons in the power structure including the mayor and Barrye Wall to answer rumors about his efforts. They encouraged Field to expand the group but indicated that they would not participate. Feeling he had an unofficial endorsement, he sent another letter, asking for persons to join as individuals and not as official representatives of their church. It clarified that this effort was "not controlled by any outside group; it has no intension of planning demonstrations or proclamations; and is not working for a program of integration."

A bi-racial school committee grew out of Field's efforts, with Field and Griffin as co-chairs. Nancy soon learned that the central issue was tuition grants. The "moderates" were becoming aligned with the power group in what was called the "education for elites" solution. The demand was that the black community should delay the actual integration of schools. Public schools would then reopen and white students would continue to attend private schools with tuition grants. "Leave the academy alone!" was the slogan, and Griffin and Adams were subject to enormous pressure to accept this plan. Nancy reported her frustration with Field's group and told of the response

from the group when she and Reverend Griffin spoke of the "progress" in the County. "What progress?" they queried, and some members accused them of "forcing people to mix."

The Supreme Court heard the Prince Edward case at the end of March and ruled at the end of May, ordering the reopening of public schools but leaving unresolved the constitutionality of tuition grants. It is important to understand the long road through the courts from Brown to the opening of the schools in Prince Edward. The legal history is confusing because there were so many different plaintiffs, issues, victories and defeats. The original suit was filed in 1951 (Davis) and was part of the 1954 Decision by the U.S. Supreme Court declaring that segregation by race is inherently unequal. Cases varied for the next fifteen years, dealing with massive resistance laws, the legality of closing schools, the right of the U. S. Justice Department to intervene, the legality of tuition grants, and the right of the County supervisors to levy taxes to support private education. Finally in 1969, the courts invalidated all state and local aid to the private academies. Later in 1978, the IRS revoked the Academy's tax exempt status, but it was restored in 1986.

The spring and summer of 1964 were months of tensions, some involving the Free School. There was tension between the school superintendent, Neil Sullivan, and Robert Green over the Michigan State Study. Questions were raised about William Vanden Heuvel's role--had he fashioned a deal for the Free School that involved commitments not in the best interest of the black community and whom was he representing when he urged delay in the integration of the schools? Nancy wrote of her visit in April to Rev. Heslip Lee, the Executive Director of the Virginia Council on Human Relations. Her report on their conversation reveals the suspicions about Vanden Heuvel's role and the confusion among funders on the real leaders in the county and whether the Free School was the answer. Some staff and community people felt that the roles and contribution of both Vanden Heuvel and Neil Sullivan were really minimal and often exaggerated in the larger picture of change in Prince Edward County.

Adams had a mixed relationship with the Free School. She organized a trip to the University of North Carolina for the junior class, and tried to arrange summer activities for students but ran into conflict with Neil Sullivan when she became involved in plans for a program that he refused to support because it involved interracial swimming in a lake in the county.

AFSC became involved again with President Lankford of Longwood College. Some Longwood students began to plan a statewide seminar on "The Role of Students in the Desegregation Process in Southern Universities." They were denied permission to hold it on campus. Lankford chastised them for seeking guidance from Adams and for being "pawns for a questionable organization," but he later tried to

persuade AFSC to take over the conference sponsorship to get the College off the hook. Adams refused to undermine the students. The May conference was a great success. More Local students became involved in the Virginia College and Virginia High School Human Relations Council, which had begun in fall 1963 through the efforts of Heslip Lee and Ed Peeples.

In the spring of 1964, a group of black women, determined to "play our rightful role in the anticipated public school system," organized the Concerned Citizens for Public Education. Many of them had been involved in Helen Baker's leadership groups. They conducted an extensive study of the needs of Prince Edward children and reviewed the operation of the Free School. They attended a national meeting in Washington on public education and were warmly welcomed by Robert Blackburn, one of the conveners and chair of AFSC's Southern Programs Committee. Their most intensive work was analyzing proposals for the budget for the public schools and presenting recommendations to the appropriate authorities they were confronting, including the school board.

Adams reported to Rev. Field's group the comments made by Dr. Ray Moore, Jr., a medical doctor, a member of the school board and highly influential in the church, among Hampden-Sydney alumni, and as a graduate of the University of Virginia Medical School.

Dr. Moore had attended about three meetings of Field's group and had never made any comments, so his presentation to the school board and the resultant discussion were absolutely amazing. As it turned out, Moore was a militant segregationist and first charged that the author of a book that Field's group was studying was "a dean of a communist hassle in the United States." He then explained to his fellow board members--a captivated audience--that he was a segregationist because he refused to "get down into the gutter with niggers, that he didn't think lowering himself would help them." He related experiences that proved the inferiority of Negroes to himself. He told the college professors present that they were "cloud nine residents," and told the Negroes present that they were the most prejudiced people in the world--prejudiced against white people "because they are superior to you,"-- that they wanted to race-mix because they knew it would better them and that they would love to have white servants if they could afford to.

(Dr. Moore was recognized at the Hampden-Sydney Conference on Prince Edward County in October 1999, where he declared himself a "changed person.")

In a lengthy and dramatic June meeting, in response to the U. S. Supreme Court's order to re-open the public schools, the Prince Edward County supervisors voted four to two to comply with the Court. They appropriated local monies to run the school system, but

also appropriated monies to be paid out in tuition grants to help white children's continued attendance at private schools. Nancy reported to Jean Fairfax that Reverend Griffin was very depressed over the state of affairs. He had been to Washington to visit Vanden Heuvel who had urged him to "not balk at Negro public schools." Griff had returned "angry and disillusioned," and after the court's decision allowing tuition grants and a non-productive visit from Robert Kennedy, Griff said, "Thank your Mr. Charlie for what we started out with."

Field's group issued a report calling for educational measures to meet the needs of all Prince Edward children and extending membership in their group to all concerned white citizens. They submitted their report and appeared before the Board of Supervisors to present a petition signed by 1300 residents urging an appropriation of more than the \$130,000 budgeted for public schools. The Board refused, adjourned the meeting, and then reconvened secretly at night to appropriate \$320,000 of local funds for tuition grants. Throughout the night, whites were contacted to pick up their tuition grant checks, all of which had been cashed by noon the following day. On August 5, after receiving a phone call from Nancy, Barbara Moffett wrote the following to Burke Marshall at the Justice Department: "After a midnight action of the Prince Edward School Board approving tuition grants, white parents were informed house-by-house during the early morning hours to appear promptly at the armory for the county's share of their tuition grants--long lines were before all five cashiers of the Farmville Bank by 10 a.m."

In September 1964, The Prince Edward public schools finally reopened with 1500 students in attendance, including 8 whites. The fact that almost all of the white parents involved in Adams' program had taken their tuition grants was a devastating blow. Nancy reported in October that Field's group, which had continued to meet, had voted to become a Prince Edward Chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relations. She also reported that the poor conditions at the school and the "illiteracy of many students remain the big questions that plague and stump me--I have no suggestions to effect a quick and massive correction. Perhaps (it seems almost heresy to say this), there is none."

The black community was undeterred and in November 1964, announced "WE'RE ORGANIZED!" and demonstrated that Rev. Griffin, Nancy Adams and others had achieved what Helen Baker called "a Herculean task." Committee members from Concerned Citizens for Public Education were visiting schools, making recommendations about teachers, facilities, programs and budgets. A vigorous advocacy group for public education was being created.

Towards the end of November, Rev. Griffin wrote a letter to Vanden Heuvel expressing gratitude for some of the accomplishments of the Free School but also expressing concern that the school board

was meddling in community affairs not related to education and that they were making "certain concessions to the authorities in Prince Edward County without consulting Negro citizens." In this moving four-page letter, Griff outlines the denial of justice over the years and talks of the "generation of our children--permanently crippled and disabled educationally," and how the lack of good teachers, the failure of authorities to "inspire the children to excellence, leave us in the position which James Baldwin describes so well--'making peace with mediocrity.'" "

By early 1965, CPE had reorganized with a constitution, a structure of committees, and Carl Walters, a professor at Hampden-Sydney, became chair. Meetings were held with the school superintendent to get permission to visit schools. They were told they could see only the blueprints, and requests for Longwood students to tutor at the schools were denied.

In February 1965, CPE launched an aggressive campaign to convince white parents of the value of public education and to find those who would enroll their children in the Prince Edward public schools. The group felt reaching out to the white community to bring their children back to public education was an important phase of its work. Patterning their efforts on the successful work of Mississippians for Public Education in which AFSC had been involved, CPE put a full-page advertisement in the local newspaper and sponsored prepared a report on the reading needs of Prince Edward children. There was no response to the ad. They sent this report to the school board, along with an extensive report on public school financing for consideration at a board meeting. At the meeting, CPE representatives were told never to return to the Board and to not waste their time with reports.

Nancy's reports on attempting to reach all parts of the white community are moving: "We were convinced that there was a public to be reached. We had only to go on the back roads of the county, ride the dirt roads where the poorer farms were, to find white children out of school and their tremendous need. Every day we heard rumors of families where one child was able to go to school, the rest were kept home.

In March, 1965, CPE prepared a brochure, "A Time to Speak..And Act," that was distributed to 7,000 citizens. With 50 volunteers from around Virginia, CPE conducted a survey over a 3-month period to find concerned white parents and visited 5,000 households. By the end of August, they had located 130 parents with 235 children. Thirty of them would have registered for the public schools if the superintendent had met with them to discuss their anxiety about being tokens. Some white parents expressed disappointment that there would be no genuine desegregation in the Prince Edward schools.

In her presentation to the AFSC Annual meeting in the fall of 1965, Nancy spoke of her work with poorer white residents as one of

the most "enlightening and disheartening experiences I have ever had. They were absolutely terrified. At one meeting, they refused to get out of their cars, occasionally peering with their eyes at the window level, because they had heard that there might be a trap. They were violently anti-Negro—in no way sympathetic, but they were desperate. They were willing to put their children in the integrated school, simply because they had no schools to go to. They were bitter, frightened and hostile. They wanted the superintendent to meet with them and assure them what they might expect, but he refused." She reported further that the 30 parents, who had originally signed the forms, tore the registration forms up and asked that it be kept secret that they had ever signed them. "The project came awfully close, but it failed, and yet I think it was significant, because, for the first time, after struggling for two years, these particular white people were reached, and we learned a great deal from it. In my opinion this is really a group of lost people in the South."

Although the Prince Edward program focused primarily on the series of crises that surrounded the closing and reopening of public schools, Adams and the Farmville office had offered support to the Southside Virginia School Desegregation Project. Bill Bagwell and Charles Davis, AFSC staff in the Southeastern Regional Office, worked devotedly to avert crises in nearby counties. Ed Peeples from Richmond had been involved in local work with both Helen Baker and Nancy Adams in Prince Edward County, and also worked in tandem with Bagwell and Davis in other Southside counties. During the fall months, Bill and Charles Davis from AFSC's regional office and Ed Peeples contacted concerned black leaders throughout Southside Virginia to get updated. Peeples also gathered information on the growth of private segregated schools throughout Virginia.

AFSC's Prince Edward work did not end with the opening of the schools. Their concern about the plight of older youth, who did not leave Prince Edward County and whose needs were not met either by the Free School or the reopened public system, led to efforts over the years to get federally funded programs for them. Results included the Southside Virginia Project for Out-of-School Youth, and a project to increase reading skills. Eleanor Eaton, of AFSC's national staff, who had had experience in developing programs in rural areas in California, had ongoing contacts with the Departments of Labor, HEW, and the Office of Economic Opportunity. AFSC was often able to educate federal officials about the reality of funding projects in deeply segregated rural areas where decisions and oversight were located in segregated state bureaucracies. With Eaton's help, Adams facilitated the organization of a Head Start program in the County.

In September 1964, local black groups had also undertaken an intensive voter registration drive to take advantage of simplified forms and the absence of poll taxes in Virginia for the first time. With Nancy's guidance and support, the Club canvassed door-to-door and organized transportation to get rural residents to registration offices. Bi-racial and well organized, this effort resulted in a substantial number of new black registrants

AFSC was in Prince Edward County to embolden people who felt powerless--who were unable to act, even though they felt a deep moral concern to end the crisis over the closed schools. AFSC was not there to take over leadership, but to develop and strengthen the capacity for change and to facilitate the coming together of local citizens, black and white, in a precedent-setting effort to lead the community in new directions.

By the fall of 1965, AFSC, convinced that it had accomplished what a group from the outside could do, ended the PEC program. Adams gave a poignant and moving report on the Prince Edward Program during AFSC's Annual Meeting in late October.

A letter from Carl Walters, the chair of the CPE, expressed deep appreciation for AFSC and especially for Nancy Adams:

"I must express how deeply indebted the people of this county are to the American Friends Service Committee, and we must pay proper tribute to Miss Nancy Adams. It is a measure of Nancy's effectiveness that she has so completely 'identified' with us (both Negro and white and all of us together) that she is automatically considered to be one of us and is included whenever we employ the pronoun 'we.' Most often 'we' means Nancy--originally and throughout in provocation, encouragement, support and just plain laborious toil in committees, in homes, over typewriter and mimeograph machine. I was wrong when I said that CPE grew out of a number of us who share common convictions and concerns and who 'just sort of found each other.' Nancy found us all and brought us together. It is perfectly safe to say that we could not be what we are now, nor done what we have done, without Nancy."

CONCLUSIONS

The archival documents and files on Prince Edward County illustrate dramatically how AFSC can function in a perilous situation of injustice: their ability to involve many different

kinds of people from its broad national constituency; the availability of staff who bring wisdom and experience from other parts of AFSC's worldwide work; the participation of committees and the trust they give staff members to "proceed as way opens" in extremely difficult situations and in the absence of a roadmap; the continuing determination to "speak truth to power; the ability to empower local community people to speak and act for themselves; and success in recruiting extraordinarily gifted persons for assignments in periods of crisis.

These many and diverse forces--working together in Prince Edward County helped open many doors, and the most important ones--the public schools.

SOURCES FOR THIS PAPER

1. Documents in the special AFSC archival collection on Prince Edward County are organized and indexed by the years 1959-1965 as pdf (Acrobat Reader) files, and can be found on the following website.

<http://www.afsc.org/archives/princeedward/princeed.htm>

Photos, additional articles, reports, artifacts and other internet links are in the collection or can be identified and located on the site.

2. Additional information can be found at:<http://www.library.vcu.edu/jbc/speccoll/pec.html>

3 For additional information on general school desegregation work in Southside, Va. SEE AFSC Archives, CRD, Southern Program Project, School Desegregation, Southside Va., 1965.

WORKING PARTY

The Working Party on AFSC's Prince Edward County, Va. Program was created in January 2000. The group has been supported by a special grant from the AFSC's board of Directors and a generous contribution of professional services from Archives staff members.

Its goals have been:

1. Collaborate with AFSC Archives Dept. as its staff worked to

- ensure that the extensive materials about this program are organized and accessible
2. Publicize the availability of this collection.
 3. Find ways to tell the story of AFSC's role in addressing the crisis that erupted when public schools were abandoned in 1959.

The Working Party:

- William F. Bagwell
- Robert Blackburn
- Constance Curry
- Jean E. Fairfax
- Joyce D. Miller
- Edward H. Peeples
- Catherine Scott