

'Bloody Sunday' Was Year Ago; Now Selma Negroes Are Hopeful

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SELMA, Ala., March 5—No one here has forgotten March 7, 1965, when the buttercups and tulip trees were fouled with tear gas. The Negroes still call it "Bloody Sunday."

But there is new air in Selma this March. Almost 11,000 Negroes in Dallas County are registered to vote, for the first time, in this spring's election. Because of that, this Black Belt county is turning toward moderation, as Tuskegee and other such places have turned away from political extremism where all-white rule was abolished.

The Negroes have one score to settle before they let Selma slip quietly into the American blend of moderation. They are determined to put Sheriff Jim Clark out of office.

To get him out, it seems likely that they will team up with Wilson Baker, one white leader who kept the Negroes' constant, if grudging, respect all through the civil rights turbulence last year. Mr. Baker, who recently resigned as Public Safety Director of Selma to enter politics, is Sheriff Clark's opponent in the Democratic primary on May 3.

Things to Remember

It was Sheriff James G. Clark Jr., and his men who used cattle prods and nightsticks on the Negroes, who marched their children into the countryside until they were exhausted after they had gone to the Court House to demonstrate and who jailed thousands of Negroes for marching to the voter registration system.

And it was Jim Clark and his men who joined the state highway patrol to stop 525 Negroes from marching to Montgomery one year ago Monday. The officers tear gassed the marchers and clubbed them and herded them back across Pettus bridge with horses. When the terror subsided, 17 persons were in hospital and 50 had been treated for minor injuries.

That day's event led directly to the Federal Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Not more than 300 Negroes were registered here a year ago. Almost 9,500 whites were on the voting books.

Now the whites have about 12,000 registered and the Negroes nearly 11,000. Exact figures are not available. The Negroes, slightly more than half of the county's population, are expected to overtake the whites in registration before the general election in November.

Another segregationist officeholder threatened by the new political force is State Senator

Walter Givhan, the dean of the Alabama Senate and a long-time segregationist leader.

A year ago, Senator Givhan was safe. Now, because of Negro registration and legislative reapportionment that expanded his district to take in two nearby counties, the Senator is in danger of being unseated by David Ellwanger, a young white liberal.

Mr. Ellwanger is a brother of the Rev. Joseph Ellwanger of Birmingham, who led a group of white integrationists in a demonstration of sympathy with the Negroes here last spring.

Five Negroes are running for lesser Dallas County offices. They have little chance of winning, but their candidacies demonstrate that the Negroes must be reckoned with from now on.

The Rev. P. H. Lewis, pastor of Brown's Chapel A. M. E. Church, the scene of the nightly mass meetings during the civil rights upheaval, is running for the State House of Representatives. He said he had noticed changes in the whites' attitudes already.

"They put 'Mr.' and 'Mrs.' on your letters now," he said. "They used to call me 'P.H.' Now it's 'Reverend Lewis.' That might not seem like much in Chicago and New York, but down here it's important."

Whites Promise Help

White officeholders and candidates have begun to promise to "look out for all the people," Mr. Lewis said.

On "Bloody Sunday," one of the women clubbed down and left gasping in the tear-gas was Mrs. Amelia P. Boynton, a civil rights leader who is a real estate and insurance agent.

Mrs. Boynton this week expressed optimism and said that Selma had improved greatly.

She and a group of friends are trying to promote a garment factory and a poultry processing plant to employ Negroes. A Negro-owned supermarket, opened here in September, is reported to be prospering.

Not all the Negroes are happy. The movement barely touched those of the rural area last year. It is just now arriving there.

"The system is not broken at all," said Miss Shirley Mesheh, a white woman who is Dallas County project director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

"The only thing the Negroes have gotten is the vote," she said.