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MISSISSIPPI: A COLONY OF
STANDARD OIL AND SEARS, ROEBUCK

The political and economic power of the men who run and profit from Sears, Roebuck & Co. and the Standard Oil of California stretch like the tentacles of an octopus deep into Mississippi and Alabama, the black ghettos of Harlem and Watts and Chicago, the dictatorships of Brazil and South Africa, Venezuela and Spain, the Middle East, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic and many other strongholds of oppression.

Not only do they employ a large chunk of the workers in Mississippi, but they also use their wealth to influence the government of the state and to perpetuate the "Way of Life" which has beaten down Negroes and poor people in the state since the first planters came two hundred years ago.

Standard Oil of California (headquarters in San Francisco), one of five Standard Oil companies in the U.S., is the 13th largest corporation in the country, with sales of two billion dollars a year. Sears (headquarters in Chicago) is the world's largest chain of retail stores, with sales of over five billion dollars a year, stores in all 50 states and many foreign countries, and almost a quarter of a million employees.

The men who run Sears and Standard Oil control the jobs and incomes of over twelve thousand people in Mississippi who work in their plants in at least twenty-seven Mississippi towns and cities. These twelve thousand people make up ten percent of all factory workers in the state. Add to these thousands the countless workers who pump gasoline from Standard Oil pumps and sell goods in Sears stores around the state, and you see that the men divide the profits of Sears and Standard Oil have a heavy stake in what happens in Mississippi.

Here are the holdings of Sears and Standard Oil of California in Mississippi: Standard Oil has a \$125 million refinery in Pascagoula which employs 500 people and is building an ammonia plant costing \$22 million which will employ 50 people. These plants occupy at least 3000 acres of land near Pascagoula, and the state of Mississippi has agreed to deepen the harbor outside Pascagoula for the convenience of Standard's tanker ships which will carry oil where it can be sold.

Sears controls Armstrong Rubber Co., which employs 1000 people in Natchez. Sears owns more than 10% of the shares of Armstrong, shares with it three common directors, and buys 70% of Armstrong's products. Sears has nine department stores in Mississippi and several catalog offices. Sears controls MPI Industries, Inc., which makes Sears television cabinets, and employs 2000 people in Jackson. Sears also controls the Kellwood Co. (named after two Sears directors), which employs 2365 people in seven Mississippi towns: Calhoun (480 employees), Liberty (260), McComb (800), Monticello (400), Oxford (200), Summit (190) and Wesson (125). Five of these towns, as with Natchez, are in areas where the Ku Klux Klan is particularly strong. In fact, a car belonging to George Metcalfe of the Natchez NAACP, was bombed in summer 1965 in the Armstrong Rubber Co. parking lot.

In addition to their direct holdings in Mississippi, Sears and Standard Oil have common directors with the following corporations which have plants in the state: Procter & Gamble (the common director is Edgar G Burton) - 50 employees in Corinth; Johns-Manville Corp. (common director Edgar G Burton) - 325 employees in Natchez; Quaker Oats Co. (common director T V Houser) - 100 employees in Greenville; Drew and Pascagoula; General Cable Corp. (common director L R Crandall) - 150 employees in Brandon; National Dairy Products Corp. (J H Wetenhall) - 61 employees in Booneville, Brooksville and Houston; Swift and Co. (D M Kennedy, who is a trustee of the Sears Employees Pension Fund) - 204 employees in Jackson, West Point and Meridian; Weyerhaeuser Co. (W M Allen of Standard Oil) - 150 in Columbus; U.S. Gypsum (D M Kennedy) - 425 employees in Greenville; International Paper Co. (through links with International Harvester Co., Chemical Bank of New York, and Quaker Oats Co.) - 3500 employees in Natchez, Moss Point and Vicksburg; Endicott-Johnson Co. (R V Horton, director of two Sears subsidiaries) - 340 employees in Ackerman.

The tentacles of this economic octopus also reach out to strangle people in other strongholds of oppression. One of the directors of Sears, L R Crandall, for instance, is also a director of the Harlem Savings Bank, a half-billion dollar business with four branches in Manhattan, two of them in the center of Harlem. According to one of their officers, they and two other banks hold the mortgages on almost all of the rat-infested slum property in Harlem. Where do they get the money to finance their slumlordcustomers: From the "small depositors" (poor people) who contribute most of the money in the bank's Harlem branches. In other words, Crandall and his friends are taking the money of poor people and giving it to slumlords, who then carry on the game by over-charging the poor who have been bottled up in their slums. Crandall and his friends have made this a half-billion dollar game.

One of the major stockholders in Standard Oil is John McCone, a veteran super-spy who ran the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for President Kennedy, who is now running the "investigating" commission California's Gov. Brown appointed to make sure the people of Watts could never again express their opinion of the Great Society. As of 1961 McCone held 18,000 shares in Standard Oil, which would now be worth two million dollars on the market. The CIA, of course, is that bunch of not-so-glamorous James Bonds who have through the years wrecked many a democratic government in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It is no coincidence that McCone's Standard Oil of California has gotten permission to exploit the wealth of some 160,000 square miles around the world, or in other words enough land to fit in the Dominican Republic, South Vietnam, Cuba and one-fourth of the Congo.

Another Standard Oil man is W M Allen, a director who also sits on the board of directors of the Boeing Co., which has a \$125 million contract to make helicopters for the War Department, which then sends them to Vietnam where they are a big help in wiping out the Vietnamese people.

One of the directors of Sears is Charles A Meyer, a director of the Gillette Safety Razor Co., which has plants in South Africa and in Brazil (where the head of a military government has recently outlawed political parties with the quiet support of the U.S., which declared, when the generals wrecked the Brazilian democratic government, that it was all in the interests of "constitutional democracy"). The same Charles Meyer is a director of the United Fruit Co., which early in this century bought out most of the governments in Central America and has owned them ever since, and which has made its bananas the largest single cargo of ships docking at the state-owned port of Gulfport, Miss.

Still another Sears director, Edgar Burton, is a director of the Brazilian Traction Light and Power Co., which operates 80% of Brazil's telephones and sells 50% of its electric power.

The octopus of Sears and Standard Oil and their allies reaches into the white-only economy of South Africa. The following companies in the Sears-Standard groups have investments in South Africa: Standard Oil of California, Gillette, International Paper Co., Abbott Laboratories, International Harvester, Procter and Gamble, and the Chemical Bank of New York.

Clearly the tentacles of the Sears-Standard Oil octopus have worked their way deep into the economy of Mississippi. What political effect does this stranglehold have on the people of the state? Let's start with Natchez, where Sears and Standard and their allies have captured nearly 3000 workers. Recent Klan investigations by Congress have named Natchez as a Klan stronghold, which probably accounts for the countless bombings and terrorism which have confronted attempts by Negroes there to become part of the Great Society. On November 5, 1965, a group of white businessmen in Natchez gave support to retaliation against Negroes (a favorite Klan tactic) who had been boycotting local stores, by pressuring the Chamber of Commerce in the city to urge that Negro employees be fired, particularly the maids, who work for \$15-20 a week. This proposed vendetta came before the Natchez Chamber of Commerce whose directors include the following "respectable" businessman: Balmer Hill, jr. - controller of the Sears-dominated Armstrong Rubber Co., who was president of the State Chamber of Commerce until June 1965; R B Forman - president of the Natchez school board since 1959 and partner in the law firm of Laub, Adams, Forman and Truly, one of whose clients is Sears, Robbuck & Co.; and B F Ritchie - official of International Paper Co. and a director of the State Chamber of Commerce.

Sears and Standard are even more important in the state-level politics of Mississippi. An article published in the Congressional Record of September 23, 1963, quotes W C Smith of Standard Oil as saying to the then governor of Mississippi Ross Barnett that "industrialists are looking toward Mississippi in the days of the New Frontier in hopes of finding a way back to the better conditions of yesterday." Mr. Smith presumably refers to the golden years when lynchings were fun and profits were fat. Standard Oil's friend Barnett, from all signs in the newspapers of Mississippi, looks like a good bet as the next governor of Mississippi.

Things are still pretty good for Standard Oil, however, for in 1961 Standard Oil offered to build a \$125 million refinery in Pascagoula if the state legislature would do for them the following things: let them have some 3000 acres of land set aside for school construction and exempt the products of oil refineries from property taxes. Well, Governor Barnett called the Legislature into special session at taxpayers' expense, and they obliged by approving in one day the necessary constitutional amendment, which the voters of the state ratified, and then came back into special session to pass the necessary laws. And so Standard Oil got their way after 78 days, and they built their third largest refinery in the Western Hemisphere in Mississippi.

Standard Oil men have found Mississippi so much to their liking that they have had a film made of the state's scenic features, 28 minutes worth, and presented it to the Mississippi Agricultural & Industrial

Board in the fall of 1965. The film was designed, they said, to "help stimulate travel in Mississippi, and is available to any public group for showing without charge." To stimulate travel in Mississippi, their photographers would have to leave out views of tenant shacks and dying children, which help to stimulate travel away from the state.

Sears men are not to be outdone by Standard in supporting the Mississippi Way of Life. They run what they call a "community improvement contest" each year. In 1964 they gave first prize to a community project in Oxford (home of the Ole Miss riots), where patriotic Mississippians with an eye on the tourist trade set up an "Oxford pilgrimage", a tour through restored old (slave-built) ante-bellum mansions. Good public relations always seem to involve some complicity in local forms of oppression. Yes, the octopus thrives on the misery of black people.

The Sears-Standard octopus sits on the board of directors of the Mississippi Economic Council (MEC), the State Chamber of Commerce, which usually spearheads legislative campaigns, and in fact seems to function as an unofficial legislature itself, with delegates from all counties in the state. Sears' Armstrong Rubber Co. was well-represented in the MEC last year (1964-5) by Armstrong controller Balmer Hill jr., who served as president and spokesman for the group that year and is still a director. An Armstrong attorney, Oliver M Hornsby of Natchez, served as director from 1963 to 1965. B F Ritchie, also of Natchez and an official of the International Paper Co., has served as director of the MEC since at least 1964. The ever-present W B Alexander jr. of Bolivar Co. is a director, representing the state legislature and the Citizens Councils with efficiency. Another International Paper man in the MEC is the group's president, Tally Riddell, attorney from Clarke Co., whose firm represents International Paper, presumably in defense of its vast forest holdings in Mississippi. And two more Allstate Insurance (Sears lawyers on the board of the MEC are Fred Bush of Tupelo and Frank Everett jr. of Vicksburg. R H Busby, president of the Sears-controlled McComb Manufacturing Co., is an MEC director. There are also several oil lawyers and petroleum distributors on the MEC board.

Don't get the impression that Sears has left the oil business to Standard. Allstate Insurance Co. owns at least one oil lease, on a site near McComb, which is renowned for its prolific bombers.

Sears and Standard have obliged the racist politicians of their adopted state by furnishing campaign workers to their ranks. Governors of Mississippi reward their campaign workers with the honorary title of "colonel on the governor's staff". Among the men Johnson so honored when he rode into power in 1964 are at least seven men who work for the octopus. Three are Standard Oil wholesalers, one each is employed by Allstate Insurance, Storkline Corp. (another Sears satellite), Quaker Oats and Johns-Manville Corp. Two of the seven work in Natchez, the octopus' headquarters in Mississippi.

At least four state legislators in Mississippi are employed by the Sears-Standard combine, two of them through their private law firms: J A Thigpen of Bolivar Co. is a distributor for Standard Oil, W G Burgin's Columbus law firm represents Weyerhaeuser (tied to Standard Oil), W M Smith's firm represents Sears in Natchez, and G S Carruth is an employee of the Illinois Central Railroad (tied to International Paper Co.).

When you consider all the insurance and real estate men in the Legislature, however, and all the corporation lawyers and businessmen, along with the Legislatures extremely obliging attitude toward Standard Oil in 1961, it's not hard to imagine that this body is in large part the creature of the Sears and Standard octopus. There are, by the way, at least 33 Citizens Council members serving in the Legislature.

Sears and its insurance company Allstate employ at least 21 prominent lawyers and law firms, according to the Martindale-Hubbell Lawyers Directory (1965 edition). Among these are several with important political connections: Rubel Phillips (of Overstreet, Kuykendall, Perry & Phillips in Jackson), who was the Republican candidate for Governor in 1963; Will A Hickman (of Summers and Hickman in Oxford), who is a member of the Executive Committee of the Mississippi Democratic Party; Douglas Wynn (of Wynn, Harper, Lake and Tindall in Greenville), who was appointed in 1965 to the posts of U.S. Commissioner and Advisor to the Third Army (his job: to "keep the Secretary (of Defense) informed about civilian opinions and reactions in their areas (and)... explain Army policies to residents of their states"); and Will E Ward (of Ward and Ward in Starkville), who has been recently a member of the White Citizens Council Executive Committee in Mississippi. Standard Oil, too, has its lawyers. There are at least three important law firms which represent Standard, among them Wells, Thomas and Wells of Jackson, which also represents Allstate, Continental Casualty Co., Chemical Bank of New York and Storkline Corp., all of which are linked through common directors and stock ownership with Sears. Erskine Wells, a partner in the firm, is a member of the State Insurance Commission, which regulates premium rates.

Standard has no direct employees on the state Oil and Gas Board, which regulates the flow of oil and distribution of royalties and determines the rate at which Mississippi's \$150 million a year oil production. The Board, however, has many links with the circles in which Sears and Standard operate. Byrd Mauldin, one of the five members, is secretary of the Mississippi Democratic Party Executive Committee. Oil and Gas Board Chairman Robert H McFarland of Bay Springs, a center of oil drilling, is a law partner of Joe McFarland, a member of the Democratic Executive Committee. Henry D Burns, a third Board member, is a partner in the firm of Burns and Burns, which distributes oil for American Oil Co. Horace Steele, also on the Board, is a first vice president and director of the Citizens Council-dominated Deposit Guaranty Bank and Trust Co. of Jackson, the largest bank in the state. And Scott Thompson, the fifth member, is an attorney in Greenville, which is politically dominated by big business.

The point to this analysis is that corporations (specifically Sears, Roebuck & Co. and Standard Oil of California) do not simply operate factories and department stores, pay wages and issue dividend checks. It should be obvious that the fact that Sears and Standard Oil have invested money in Mississippi influences the politics of Mississippi. Sears and Standard, as far as we can see, have chosen to support the Mississippi Way of Life, which has degraded and broken so many millions of poor people in the state.

Sears and Standard could have insisted that Barnett and Wynn, Thipen and Paul Johnson, the Natchez Chamber of Commerce and their Mayor John Nosser and the police chiefs and sheriffs govern Mississippi lawfully. Because they control the jobs of one out of every ten factory workers in Mississippi Sears and Standard could insist that the men who run the state enforce the Constitution which they pretend to admire. So far they have gotten away with "doing as the Mississippians do" and in fact helping them do it, and people continue to buy at their stores and service stations.