Acadiana Neuf Meeting Planned

(22 of a series)

By BOB ANGERS Jr.

A special meeting of Acadiana Neuf is scheduled Wednesday to consider an audit of the antipoverty agency that handles Operation Head Start for preschool children. The audit is the outgrowth of a suit filed by Elmo Anderson of Scott against Southern Consumers Education Foundation in which he claimed breach of contract on an agreement to transport children in the program.

Roland Hobert, executive director of Acadiana Neuf, revealed Saturday that Dr. James B. Oliver has called the antipoverty agency into special session at 2 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 8 in the War Memorial Building in Lafayette. Dr. Oliver, who is president of Acadiana Neuf, indicated that a resolution will be considered requesting "... the audit of Southern Consumers Education Foundation, one of our delegate agencies, to determine the financial responsibility of past, present and future programs," according to the letter to board members signed by Hobert.

Both Hobert and Rev. A.J. McKnight, founder of Southern Consumers Cooperative have issued statements to The Daily Advertiser clarifying the responsibilities of the various antipoverty agencies.

Acadiana Neuf and Southern Consumers Cooperative are separate and function independently of each other, Hobert said.

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Father McMillan explained that while Southern Consumers Educational Foundation is a nonprofit corporation acting as a delegate agency handling the Operation Head Start project in the War On Poverty, he added that he welcomes an audit of the educational foundation and points out that the fiscal year for the cooperative ended Sept. 30 and the coop is presently negotiating with an accounting firm to conduct an audit of the parish organization.

Hobert’s Statement

Concerning the call for the special meeting Hobert asserted that the reason for the meeting was to approve the board members of Acadiana Neuf, and that it was a responsibility of accounting on behalf of Southern Consumers Cooperative. Acadiana Neuf had previously been informed of the financial responsibility of Acadiana Neuf’s executive director, he said. He added that Hobert had previously been at the center of the operation for the past year, and the board of directors had approved the appointment of Acadiana Neuf as the agency to handle the financial responsibility.

Questions

Hobert maintained that the agency had been approved by the board of directors and had been in operation for the past year. He added that the agency had been established on May 1, 1966, and that the board of directors had approved the appointment of Acadiana Neuf as the agency to handle the financial responsibility.

The two organizations are separate and independent of each other, Hobert said. Acadiana Neuf and Southern Consumers Cooperative have a separate board of directors. However, Southern Consumers Cooperative has three board members — Dr. James Oliver, Edna E. Hebert, and Roberta A. McKnight — on the board of directors of Acadiana Neuf.

“It is the overlapping of the board of directors that has set the precedent that Southern Consumers Cooperative are the ones who finance Acadiana Neuf,” Hobert said. He added that the two organizations are separate and independent.

The assistant director of Acadiana Neuf, Mr. Peter Valois, on the board of directors of Southern Consumers Cooperative, before Hobert claimed that he has never been invited to sit in on a meeting of the Southern Consumers Cooperative board.

The Acadiana Neuf executive director also stated that his agency had entered into contracts with delegate agencies as required by OEO guidelines. He added that he had received a contract provided by OEO that has been entered into with Southern Consumers Cooperative for the operation of the program at a cost of $290,000. He also contracted with the St. Landry agency for the administration of the program at a cost of $40,000.

The St. Landry agency directed financial resources to other agencies in the parish, Hobert said. He added that the agency had received $500,000 in federal funds and had used that money to finance the program.

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Hobert maintained that the suit brought by Anderson shows that the agency had been approved by the board of directors and had been in operation for the past year. He added that the agency had been established on May 1, 1966, and that the board of directors had approved the appointment of Acadiana Neuf as the agency to handle the financial responsibility.

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