

MERIDIAN COFO WEEKLY REPORT  
SEPTEMBER 7-13 [1964]

The project has just begun to start on its programs again, due to the interruption caused by the Democratic National Convention. We have set up three long-range programs: Voter Registration, Community Center, and a Local Election Program. There is also one project in progress now concerning the integrating of the Meridian public schools. At a staff meeting held Thurs. September 10th. Preston Ponder, project director, appointed Joe Morse to be in charge of the political programs and Gunter Prentz to be in charge of coordinating the school desegregation. The following is a summary of the past week's happenings:

Monday, September 7 - This being Labor Day, no field work was done. Mrs. Chaney and her daughter had a picnic for the staff. On the whole it was a quiet day. Some of the staff prepared reports to take to the Staff Meeting in New Orleans.

Tuesday, September 8 - Two cars left at 3:00AM for the CORE staff meeting in New Orleans. Those attending were: Dr. Erma Gerjuoy, Joe Morse, Sandra Watts, Monte Morgan, Walter Kaufmann, Jim Collier, Jean Wheeler, all staff members and Rev. Barbour, Billie Ray Brown, Roscoe Jones and Alvin Burnside local residents of Meridian and Philadelphia. Freeman Cocroft and Louise Herney were left in charge of the office. Because of the shortage of staff, no political programs were carried on both Tuesday and Wednesday. The office had two incidents that were complicated due to the absence of experienced staff. One incident involved a local woman being beaten up by a local policeman. One of her friends called the COFO office and two of the workers went to investigate what had happened. This was finally cleared up with the police when it was found out that the woman was drinking and had caused a disturbance. Another call was received at the office from a local family. They called to see if our office could get a sick relative to the University hospital in Jackson. Gunter Prentz who took the call agreed to take the woman to Jackson. Other than these two isolated everything in Meridian was quiet both Tuesday and Wednesday.

Wednesday, September 9, 1964 - The people returned to Meridian from New Orleans and a staff meeting was set for Thursday.

Thursday, September 10 - A staff meeting was held in the afternoon. Staff members plus the local workers were present. First of all Preston Ponder went over some of the discipline rules that will be upheld in the office. Next, he outlined a program that the office will work on. Joe Morse was appointed as head of the political programs. Five people were appointed to work on this program. This group will start setting up block captains in each precinct of the city. These people will be used to get news of meetings to the people in their block and to start working on getting Voter Education classes and Voters Registration programs going.

Preston also laid plans for working in the counties. Since the Convention, no work has been done in Jasper, Newton, Clark, or Kemper counties and if workers do not go out there soon, we will lose all of the contacts that were set up during the summer. The biggest problem with working in the counties is a good car. Our project has four cars (all owned by workers) but none of them run well and are not equiped for running out in the counties.

Plans were also discussed about moving the Community Center. Eric and Elaine Weinberger who are in charge of the Center said that it would be foolish to think of moving the center because the new membrial center should be finished by the first of the year. Plans for moving the Center will be put off until it is found out when the new building will be ready.

Preston also talked about the two incidents that happened when the staff was in New Orleans. He told everyone that we cannot be responsible for the local communitye's medical problems and that we will have to be careful in the future about agreeing to take people to Jackson to the hospital because of the serious problems it could cause for the Project.

It was also emphasized that from now on no one would be hanging the office. Everyone would have his assignment to work and would come in in the morning to check out and leave to work.

Friday, September 11, 1964 - A meeting was held at Mrs. Chaney's house, Thursday night. Gunter Prentz and Freddy Watson were in the meeting as representatives of COFO. Five local parents were present and discussed plans for entering Chalk School (a white elementary school). They decided that they would go to the school Monday morning at 8:00AM to try to get their children in the school. They also discussed plans about carrying out this attempt. It was agreed among the parents that they would not attempt a "sit-in" but would rather leave the school if they were asked. Friday morning, all of the Voter Registration workers left at 9:00AM for two precincts to try to set up block captains. These workers worked all day and did get four block captains in the 8th. precinct, plus a list of interested

local people who would be interested in attending political workshops. Plans are now being made to have precinct meetings set up in this precinct that include voter education classes. This will also be carried out in all 13 precincts. The workers also canvassed for Freedom Registration and Voter registration. A list of names was obtained of people who would like to go to the Courthouse and register. Plans for helping these people with the registration forms are now being worked out.

Saturday, September 12, 1964 - The workers went out in the precincts again this morning. Jerry Wilson from Jackson also brought money for three of our workers to go to High School. Doug Smith from Hattiesburg, Lillie Chandler a local girl and Alvin Packer a SNCC worker went to Harris High School to enroll in school. Lillie was accepted, but Alvin and Doug were not accepted until their records come from Hattiesburg.

Sunday, September 13, 1964 - Today, the staff was busy formulating plans for the coming week. There was also a meeting held at Allen Chapel for the Student Union kids who wanted to try to register in the white high school and Jr. High school. Five of the staff members were present at this meeting. Roscoe Jones, the president of the Student Union, outlined the plans for the attempted registration. The students will all go to the schools at 4:00PM. They will be driven by local ministers and parents. No COFO workers will go to the schools or drive cars. The students then filled out lawyer's retainers and decided they would go to the white schools immediately after their regular school was dismissed.

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Plans for the political program are just starting up in Meridian again. As mentioned before, plans are now to get block captains in each precinct and to start on a wide-scale voter education program. This will just be the beginning. We are also planning to start getting candidates to file for elective offices.

The community center, run by the Weinbergers is trying to get the library organized. They are also working with the children on arts and crafts classes. Their plans include some adult literacy classes at night. The Center, in conjunction with the Student Union are also working to distribute clothing to needy people through the various local churches. Mrs. Chaney is in charge of this program.

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