

REPORT OF POLITICAL PROGRAM

Sept. 26 - Oct. 9, 1964

The tempo of political activity in Meridian has stepped up a bit in the past 2 weeks. This is due mostly to the fact that we are better organized and now know exactly what we must do, i.e. make the Freedom Day on October 29th, and the Freedom Election on October 31 - November 2nd, both significant political experiences.

We have been pushing Voter Registration classes to prepare people for registration on Freedom Day. Since the last report, we have had 9 classes; 7 in homes and 2 in churches. A breakdown of classes by precincts is as follows: Precinct 1-2 classes, Precinct 4 - 1 class, Precinct 6 - 2 classes, Precinct 8 - 1 class, Precinct 9 - 3 classes. The number of individuals attending these classes ranged from one to ten persons depending on how much canvassing was done in the surrounding area before the class. These classes were taught by both COFO staff and precinct leaders. In precinct 1, it is done by the leaders of the precinct. In precinct 4 by a staff person (Margie Henderson) and the precinct captain (Mr. Williams). In precinct 6 entirely by the precinct secretary (Mrs. Turner). In precinct 8 by Joe Morse and the precinct captain (Rev. Turnipseed). Precinct 9 is done entirely by staff (Gunter Prentz, Barbara Chaney, Miriam Kerster and Dorothy Knox).

In talking to the local people we have been trying to stress precinct organization, i.e. section captains, and block captains. We have been successful in getting some type of block captain system operating in precincts 1, 4, 6, 8, and 9. Precincts 4, 8, and 9 have just begun this organizing. Precincts 1 and 6 have had a degree of organization for about 3 weeks. We will continue to put emphasis on precinct organization with the hope that in a week or two we will be able to start political education classes in most of the precincts, using the Freedom Primer sent from the Jackson Office. The first covers the Convention Challenge and the Freedom Election, which is very apropos material at this time and should arouse interest.

The Lauderdale County Executive Committee met on October 6th. It was decided at this meeting that 2 churches would be used for the political dinner for Johnson and the Democratic ticket. October 26 was set as the date for this dinner with October 22 being an alternate date. A speaker has not yet been decided upon. The chairman, Mr. Young and Joe Morse were to decide on a speaker. Tickets will be sold by the entire committee as soon as they are printed. The prices will be \$5.00, \$10.00 and \$15.00 a plate. The Committee has been unable to secure an office space for a Johnson campaign headquarters. Unless a truck or trailer can be used for a reasonable price (more reasonable than a Hertz rented truck) it looks as if the Johnson Campaign Headquarters will have to be here in the COFO Office. We have been distributing Johnson bumper stickers and pins for about 2 weeks now together with the Freedom Democrats stickers.

We held a Mass Meeting on Friday, October 2, with about 50 people in attendance. It was the Kick-off Rally for the

October 29th. Freedom Day. We talked a little about the programs COFO has in Meridian and spent the rest of the meeting discussing the Freedom Day and the voting laws in Mississippi. The second Mass Meeting in preparation for Freedom Day was held on Wednesday, October 7th. Mrs. Annie Devine was the featured speaker. She talked very quietly and in terms understood by the people. She seemed to get her message across to the people at the meeting. About 55 local people were in attendance at this meeting. We now have about 30 people definitely committed to go to the Courthouse to register on Freedom Day. It seems that it will take much re-contact to get more people to the Courthouse on the 29th. of October. We have found that for the Mass Meetings, it is better to canvass and be sure of getting about 60 people than to leaflet the entire city and have only 30 persons there. We will make a decided attempt before the next meeting to get car pools from precincts to transport the people to the meeting.

On Sunday September 27, we took a car and a bus to Jackson for a meeting of the Freedom Democratic Party. There were about 25 people from Meridian on the bus and 15 from Philadelphia. The bus left at 10:00AM and arrived back in Meridian at 9:30PM that evening. The meeting gave all those who attended a "shot in the arm" and some new ideas on how to work through the FDP.

We also sent 2 staff people to the 4th. District Rally in Canton on October 3rd. We heard James Farmer and other Civil Rights Leaders in Madison County speak about the struggle in Mississippi and its significance to the nation. Joe Morse met a Mrs. Stewart, a representative of the Woman's International League for Peace and Freedom. She was invited, by Joe, to visit Meridian on Monday. Mrs. Stewart accepted the invitation but could only be in Meridian for a few hours before she caught a bus to Birmingham. She was very interested in the whole project and we may be getting some funds from her organization in the near future.

One thing I would like to suggest is that we get a good car on this project. We have only one car in operation now since the police told me that my car had a faulty muffler. I have decided to junk my car since the transmission also needs work. My tires can be used on another project car which has bad tires. We waste much valuable time waiting around the office for rides. The one car must take care of hauling clothes for the welfare committee, transporting the Freedom School co-ordinator around town, carrying the community center children to and from the park and then it must be used for the full-time job of bringing 6 canvassers to and from different parts of the city. We have wasted up to 2 1/2 hours a day per person waiting for transportation. Cabs are too expensive and the busses often do not run in the right places. Our car situation also makes it impossible to attend any meetings outside of Meridian since none of our cars are in good enough shape to travel out on the highway.

We will try to have political education classes in the individual precincts in the next two weeks.

Joe Morse