

To: CORE Southern Regional Office
From: Canton CORE

Date: February 7, 1965
Re: The Canton Project, January 25-
February 8, 1965

PERSONNEL CHANGES

Charney Bromberg has returned to the east coast to continue his studies at Harvard. Karen Duncan (task force) will not return from California where she was vacationing; she, too, is returning to school.

George Jalbert (volunteer) has decided to leave the project Feb. 15.

Dean Zimmerman (volunteer) will leave the project in about a month to return to school.

Sandra Watts will return from her vacation in the coming week; she is working in Rankin County (task force)

Judy Hampton and Phil Sharp just returned from their vacations (both volunteer)

Gregg Finger will be joining the staff in a week or two, bringing with him a car for Rankin County

Bill Forsyth (volunteer) and JoAnn Oelman (task force) will leave for the north Feb. 8 for about a month of speaking mixed with vacationing.

CANTON FREEDOM HOUSE

Still recuperating from the smash-up he had with his Jeep, and unable to work for more than short stretches in the field, Bill Forsyth has been working in the office on a chronological outline of the project's history; he has the two main sections completed: violence and intimidation; events surrounding voter registration (the first excludes the second). When it is completed and duplicated, copies will be sent to the Southern and New York offices.

A unique visitor has been frequenting the house, one Ida Langford, 27 year old white Canton woman. She is a widow and the mother of two boys, both in elementary school. She claims to be taking a stand for integration and expresses determination to "convert" such people as Billy Noble ("Madge Noble is one of my best friends."). It's difficult at this point to evaluate her. There are good reasons for suspecting that she's an infiltrator; other good ones for believing in her sincerity; and still others for assuming that she's just crazy. We're keeping a conversation by conversation, episode, by episode record of her relations with us and are watching with interest to see ~~XXXX~~ how a wealthy, spoiled, outspoken southern white woman reacts to poor, scruffy, suspicious civil rights workers. She has agreed to testify in the hearings for the congressional challenge; she made a tape for the MFDP lawyers which they are thinking of playing before Congress. For her own protection and because we don't wholly trust her mental soundness at this point, she's not a good object of publicity, even though she seems to have rather thoroughly announced her activities to all her friends and did write an article in one of the enclosed CITIZEN's.

THE CONGRESSIONAL CHALLENGE

Lawyers came to Canton January 20 to begin lining up witnesses and digesting information for the depositions. The first hearing was set for January 26. The city officials had agreed to open the courtroom in the courthouse to us and Foote Campbell, local registrat, was to have been the first witness. On the morning of the 26th the lawyers stopped by to pick up the Negro notary public

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who had agreed to "officialize" the proceedings. He refused to go to the courthouse, saying that Jack Young, Jackson attorney, had advised him not to appear. At the courthouse six attorneys were present for the state, including ex-Governor Coleman. Coleman immediately objected to the absence of Jones and asked the MFDP lawyers why Jones was not present. MFDP refused to give details. Coleman announced, then, that during their 40 days of deposition, "we will take a deposition from H.A. Jones...." Coleman and his fellow lawyers refused to have testimony taken without the notary; the hearings were called off.

A new team of lawyers is in the county now; they have hearings scheduled to begin February 8. This time the opposition has agreed to supply the notary and a local judge, Judge Sandige, will officiate in that position. Friendly witnesses will testify Monday-Wednesday. Thursday and Friday is unfriendly witnesses day. This weekend has been spent in the quite satisfying occupation of serving subpoenas on the white power structure, Gus Noble, President of the Citizens Council; Billy Noble deputy sheriff, High Sheriff Jack Cauthen; chief of police Dan Thompson (George Raymond served that one to the chief as he sat drinking coffee in the Mecca Cafe, a white-only place!). A number of ~~KKKKKK~~ attorneys and businessmen will be examined, too. All-in-all 28 subpoenas were served on Friday and Saturday.

THE ASCS ELECTIONS CHALLENGE

USDA is doing a real slow job on the election irregularities that occurred December 3. Congressman John Lindsay tells us that "In general, they felt that they had made progress this year, that the elections were more equitably run than in past years, and that in many cases election supervisors had leaned over backwards to be fair to Negroes." The department of agriculture also put out a bulletin in which Freeman claims that "A strenuous effort was made to insure that every eligible voter was placed on the rolls in ASC offices and every effort was made to insure that these individuals were informed of the election." In a letter to Congressman Edwards (California) Freeman even took credit for encouraging Negro candidates in the election. Now, Marv Rich knows a little better maybe than the rest of us just how equitably run things were that day he collided with a belt buckle and flying stones. And any energy exerted before then to prevent violence and to insure that all eligible voters could vote and all eligible candidates could run did not come from Washington D.C. If it had come from there the wear and tear on us, our cars and our budget would have been considerably decreased. ~~KKKKKKKKKKKKKK~~ Of course we could assume that USDA did try to administer a fair election and was completely incompetent to do so. This assumption might easily be based on our experience with certain USDA investigators who have been making a pretence at looking into our complaints. Most of them seem reasonably intelligent, but one, a Mr. Crowe, who took up two full days of time and patience asking the same questions over and over again, clearly limited in both preparation and I.Q. not knowing even how to spell such words as "Illinois" and "coordinate" and unable to understand why George Raymond asked to see his doctor in jail ("was it because your doctor had told you not to have your beard shaved off?"), is a sorry indication of how seriously our protests have been taken.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Two communities in the county have rallied rather impressively around local problems lately. Community B (the Madison-Ridgeland area) has decided to do something about the condition of the roads there. Citizens of that community have submitted a petition with 25 signatures to the Beat Supervisor. If he does not respond by February 15 they will have a sit-in in his office. If he doesn't have an office, and they suspect he might not, they'll sit-in the County Supervisor's Office. Two women have committed themselves to sitting there for as long as necessary, to going to jail, and to staying there. In this same community 2 families have ~~KKK~~ decided to add their signatures to the Madison County school desegregation suit. Such actions and decisions are a most impressive step forward in an area where terrorization has held on even after other areas of the state have begun to open up. George Jalbert, who has been working there, ~~KKK~~ was, in fact, threatened twice last week by local "law enforcement officials," and was told to leave town.

Community G has also been the scene of nearly autonomous local activism. A school bus driver there was involved in an accident with a white man. The white man was at fault. But the bus driver was charged with reckless driving; and he was ~~KKK~~ told by the Superintendent of Schools that he would lose his job. His fellow-drivers decided that they would refuse to drive any of the busses if this decision stood. The logical extension of this was that there would be no children at school, and parents and students decided they might as well get the most out of the situation and declare a school boycott. Such a boycott is occurring February 8; the youngsters will attend Freedom School instead and that school will be taught partially by local people.

The newest venture in organization here is into Scott County. Pat Packard moved in there last week, found living quarters and established several good contacts, some of whom George Raymond had set up earlier. Fear is very operative there, however, and it got the best of Pat's hostess so that she's now looking for new living quarters. But she's already met enough friendliness and encouragement there to feel that this is not too dire a set-back.

Madison County is making preparations for a county convention March 27. It will be planned and organized solely by local people and its main object will be to define what direction the movement here feels itself moving in and to evaluate the hows and whys of its moving. Delegates from each county and from the several sections of Canton will be elected to the meetings. This offers a good chance for local leadership to rally and replenish itself. Sentiment seems to be growing here for testing public accommodations. A meeting to discuss that Title of the Civil Rights Bill has been called for the evening of the 8th. It could be pretty good preliminary indication of the nature and strength of the support for testing the Bill.

If anything of special note occurs between now and the next formal report we'll let you hear of it.

Freedom.