

[N.D., 1964₃]

Memorandum

To: Mississippi Staff and **community leaders**

Re: Freedom Registration

Freedom Registration presents the COFO staff with a huge job; that of organizing communities well enough to get 300,000 people on the books by the November election. Additional pressure comes from the fact that COFO's whole political program depends greatly on the success of the Freedom Registration campaign.

Some important facts about Freedom Registration:

- 1) Freedom Registration is for both registered and non-registered voters. (Everyone over 21)
- 2) Only those registered on the Freedom Registration books will be eligible to;
 - a) vote in the November Freedom Election,
 - b) or to attend either the Precinct meetings, or County, District, State or National Conventions.
- 3) Part of the job of the Freedom Registration Campaign is to "show the state officials" how they can get hundreds of thousands of Negroes on the registration books in just seven months.
- 4) The Freedom Registration Campaign demonstrates what we think to be the only necessary requirements for voting. People do not have to be able to read or write in order to register on the Freedom Registration books. Registrars will fill out forms for illiterate registrants. Such people will sign with "X's" in the presence of signed witnesses.

The following is a plan for the organization of the campaign which is mostly a product of COFO conventions and staff meetings.

Registrar:

- 1) There will be 82 registrars; 1 in each county.
- 2) The registrar will be responsible for-
 - a) organizing the county seat; making sure that every eligible person there is registered on our books. In some areas such as Hattiesburg and Greenwood they have found that the best way to organize on the city level is with a " Block Captain " system.
 - b) organizing the entire county by keeping in constant contact with the deputy registrars in his county. The registrar should hold frequent meetings with the deputy registrars; getting continuous reports from them as to how many people they have registered.
 - c) having a complete record of all the registered freedom voters in his county. This means that the Deputy Registrars have to turn in their forms to the Registrar when they have been filled out. The registrar will then section his book off according to the towns in his county; so that when the books are handed in to the State office we will be able to see exactly how many people have registered in each area.
 - d) calling in frequently to his local COFO office and the state office in Jackson to report the number of people registered.

Deputy Registrar:

- 1) There should be as many deputy registrars as we can possibly get. Hopefully we will have one in every town in a given county, with the exception of the county seat.
 - 2) Deputy Registrars should keep in close contact with the registrars in their counties; keeping them informed of the
- the number of people registered

the number of people they have registered.

- 3) Deputy registrars will probably find it helpful to organize their towns into sections with section leaders and block captains.

COFO staff:

At this stage the staff will have the job of organizing on the district level and generally getting the Freedom Registration Campaign off the ground.

The staff will be

- 1) finding registrars in every county in the district-who will be based in the county seat.
- 2) finding deputy registrars in every town other than the county seat, who will be directly responsible to the registrar in that county.
- 3) setting up meetings where either the local staff person or someone from the Jackson office can come and explain Freedom Registration. Such meetings also provide good opportunities for getting people registered.
- 4) keeping in constant contact with Jackson by phone in order to avoid duplication since many registrars will be set up via the WATS line.

When the initial stages of the campaign are over and it is well underway, we hope that the campaign in each county will be in the hands of the local registrar there. The Freedom Registration campaign is a unique opportunity for us to build strong local leadership.

Materials:

- 1) Each registrar should be equipped with
 - a) registration book(s) with forms and

b) Freedom Registration Brochures. (People cannot fill out the forms in these brochures themselves and send them to Jackson. They must be filled out in the presence of the registrar, who will then sign his name and keep the completed form.)

2) Freedom Registration books can be obtained, only after the name of the registrar has been turned in, by calling Jackson collect and requesting them. They will be sent out as soon as possible.

3) As progress is made and more books are needed, registrars should call the Jackson office with a request for them.

There will be a chart set up in the Jackson office and monthly memos will be sent to all registrars, deputy registrars and COFO staff members, to keep everyone informed of how the Freedom Registration Campaign is progressing.