

MINUTES COFO MEETING DEC. 14, 1963--Masonic Temple, Jackson, Miss.

The meeting was called to order at about 11:30 by COFO chairman, Dr. Aaron Henry. Dr. Henry gave the background of COFO and explained his position of chairman.

Hunter Morey read the proposed by-laws and constitution of COFO. Dr. Henry stated that although we probably could vote and pass the rules as a whole, in order that we all understand what we're agreeing to we will go through the by-laws by sections.

Sect. 1: Wm Ware asked that staff be defined.

Dr. Henry suggested that staff be defined as all salaried persons in the four civil rights organizations of COFO. Dave Dennis suggested that staff should be defined as all compensated persons thus including those with expenses payed in the field the without salaries. The motion was made that we define staff as all compensated persons. Seconded. Motion Passed, unanimously. First section passed.

Dr. Porter suggested that we get the by-laws of participating organizations before we can make by-laws for COFO. Dr. Henry stated that they tried to draw up these by-laws with the other groups in mind.

Motion to accept section 2-passed.

Section 3 was read. Guyot asked that the finance committee not be confined to raising funds within the state? Mrs. Pige supported Guyot. Wm Ware moved that they strike out of the proposed by-laws "in the state". Seconded. Hunter explained the reasoning for the original wording. In the past there has been some difficulties with money coming from out of state and it was thought that each civil rights organization could handle

out of state funds. Dr. Porter hopes that we don't spread ourselves too thin and suggest that "in the state" remain in the by-laws. Discussion followed. The previous question was moved and passed. The motion to strike "in the state" was passed.

Rev. Merrill Lyndsey referring to the Welfare committee asked suggested that "according to the ability of the organization to provide" be inserted. Accepted by the by-laws committee and thus becomes a part of the by-laws.

Ammel Ponder asked whether voter registration comes under the political action standing committee. Voter Registration was added as letter "a" under political action committee.

Section 3 passed.

Section 4 was read. Dr. Porter suggested that the COFO conventions be held in different places throughout the state, by ~~invitation~~ invitation from the host city. Frank Smith asked whether the 3 meetings prescribed means that the executive committee can not call meetings. Dr. Henry explained that this by-law would mean "at least" 3 meetings a year.

Section 4 passed.

Section 5 --district committees. Passed.

Section 6. There was discussion as to who should select the program director. ^{Young} Mr. Chas. suggested that the program director be elected by the staff convention with recommendations from the staff. Mat Suarez explained that the program director needs to be someone who is really active, not merely a prominent person. He needs to know what is happening and the staff needs to be able to have confidence in him. Discussion followed.

Section 6 passed as originally written--i.e. the staff selects the program director and assistant program director.

Section 7. Amendments can be made to the by-laws by a majority vote at a state convention in which the suggested amendment has been announced in the previous state-wide meeting. Section passed.

Dr. Henry announced the staff selection of Bob Moses for program director and Dave Dennis for assistant program director

The session was adjourned for lunch. The people met during lunch by districts to elect their district representative to COFO.

Their representatives from the congressional districts are: First district--Rev. Merrill Lindsey; Second district will elect their representatives at their district meeting; Third --temporary representatives; Fourth--Dr. Porter; Fifth--temporary representative, 2 to serve at a time; Victoria Gray, Peggy Connor, Mrs. Lewis.

Dave Dennis presented the staff's recommendations for programs. Emphasized from Dec. 16 to Feb 28 to be on a state-wide mass voter registration campaign. The goal--20,000 Voter registration attempts. Poll tax payment drive. Out of state fund raising for poll tax payment. All these efforts are in preparation for the March freedom registration campaign. It is proposed that district, area, and staff workers work to set up offices, with our own qualifications to register 300,000 people by August. These registrations to be taken to Washington and the Democratic convention. Mr. Dennis pointed out that we've had staff in the field with not enough progress. We need local support.

Hunter Morey brought up the question of running candidates

for senator. Dr. Porter asked how we were to decide who COFO will endorse? Dave Dennis suggested that we're a close knit organization and will be able to work that out informally. Mike Sayer suggested that one of the purposes of COFO is to increase participation. We should have a mechanism, e.g. a nominating convention to encourage new people to consider running for office.

Dr. Henry put forth a quota system for registration attempts in the next weeks. District 2--6,000. District 3--6,000. District 1--2,000 and 4&6--3,000.

Annel Ponder brought a suggestion that came up in a first district meeting--that the Justice Dept be requested to send a man to record the questions asked of Negro and white voter applicants. Also suggested that the national offices of the 4 civil rights groups make this request from the Justice Department. Rev. Lindsey suggested that we submit this to our legal department before acting on it.

Discussion was opened on when the next COFO meeting would be. The second Sunday in Feb. was suggested. Gyt suggested the 1st Sunday in Feb. because of the fact that the second ~~meeting~~ Sunday conflicts with church meetings. Second Sunday was passed. All districts were directed to hold organizational meetings before the February meeting of COFO. The next meeting will be in Jackson invitations for the following meetings will be ^{in other cities} in order then.

Dave Dennis explained that the Jackson office now has a new telephone system ~~which covers~~ --the watts line. He explained how to call the office.

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Dr. Henry gave a few remarks on our relationships with Gov. Johnson. He stated that we should take the first steps in communicating with him. Dr. Henry read a letter to be sent to the governor asking for a conference with him during the first three weeks in January--i.e. before he takes office. People will be asked to sign this letter and its hoped that as many signatures as possible will be secured.

Dr. Henry told of the two prisoners who testified to police beating COFO staff in Winona. It was passed that we send a minister to try to see Mr. Pope who is still in jail. Rev. Lindsey volunteered. Joanne Bowman suggested we request surveillance from the FBI and the Justice Department.

A representative of the Free Press announced that there were free subscriptions available and asked people to take back application blanks to get names of people who would like to receive these free subscriptions.

Dr. Henry announced the standing committee appointments.
 Welfare and Relief--Annel Ponder, Vera Pige
 Political programs--L. Guyot, Mike Sayer
 Finance Committee--Rev. Smith
 Federal Programs--Jessie Morris

Mrs. Hammer led us in "This Little Light of Mine". Rev. Lindsey gave the benediction. The meeting was adjourned at 3:05.