

CLINIC ON NON-VIOLENCE

Ebony Hotel

February 8, 1964

Plaquemine, Louisiana

10:00 A.M.

The following parishes were represented: East Feliciana, West Feliciana, St. Helena, and Iberville. There were, off and on, 65 persons in attendance.

After roll call and the opening freedom songs, Ronnie Moore delivered remarks on the philosophy of non-violence. He stressed that non-violence is an attitude as well as a way of action, and traced the history of non-violent thinking from Christ through Gandhi. He then pointed out that in the movement non-violence can be a way of life or just a tactic. In discussion afterwards, several of the young people questioned their own feelings about non-violence in various situations of tension.

In a talk on the history and structure of CORE, Mike Lesser compared CORE with SNCC and the NAACP. He explained that local CORE chapters have two distinctive characteristics, that they must believe in direct action, and that they have a large degree of local autonomy. He then noted that there were different types of membership in CORE. A brief history of CORE since its founding followed.

Ronnie Moore presented CORE's plan to promote chapter development throughout the 6th Congressional District. He called on each parish represented to list targets in its communities.

West Feliciana: nothing is desegregated. Segregated facilities include lunch counters and the public library

East Feliciana: the courtroom has been informally desegregated. Still segregated are the library, lunch counters, and parking lot

St. Helena: there has been an unsuccessful attempt to use the public library, and another attempt will be made. Lunch counters are still segregated

The group then split up into the following workshops, which reported in the general session afterwards:

1. Voter registration: Canvassing is a very effective technique of arousing interest in voter registration. There was discussion on how to deal with the various excuses people use to avoid trying to register, and a brief discussion on VR procedures. It was announced that March is to be Voter Registration Month, and the last two weeks of February are to be Voter Registration Training Weeks.

2. Picketing, selective buying, and negotiations: The group discussed types of picketing and relevant rules and laws.

The question was raised on how to negotiate, and it was pointed out that we should always be willing to negotiate when the merchants are ready to do so together. Ronnie Moore pointed out that before picketing, there must be a boycott to picket for, and before the boycott, there must be attempts to negotiate. Check local ordinances before beginning any picket action.

3. Group discipline and jail discipline: It was pointed out that it is absolutely necessary to follow instructions from the group leader, even if you think it is wrong. Also, nothing should be done unless the whole group decides to do it. The pros and cons of going limp versus going with the police voluntarily. Jail conditions were described, and it was emphasized that the group should stay in jail and not bond out right away. Ronnie noted the importance of establishing a schedule, and remembering that you are in jail for a purpose.

In remarks on violence in the face of violence, Ronnie Moore stimulated the group to think of how they would react in various situations of violence, both on a demonstration and in private life.

Mary Hamilton lead a discussion on the general techniques of non-violence, then conducted a demonstration of methods of self-protection.

Ronnie Moore then led a session on future action. Three projects were suggested: going back to the communities and setting up negotiations with merchants, then picketing if necessary; working on voter registration; and working on coordinated action against the library. It was agreed that there would be a tri-parish sit-in at the libraries on March 7, and that in preparation each group would have non-violent training sessions. All participants agreed to spend at least 20 days in jail, with no bail. In any case, everyone agreed not to accept cash bond. Each parish chose a representative to help carry out these suggestions, and to get in touch with young people in his parish for the next clinic, to be held in late March. The representatives are: W. Feliciana: Alvin Cloy; E. Feliciana: Marshall Flowers; Iberville: Kenny Johnson; St. Helena: David Howard.

After dinner, the group was given instructions on how to picket, then split up into couples to picket. Picket lines were established at Food Town, West Bros., the Court House, Town Hall, and along Railroad Avenue. The experience turned out to be very valuable for everyone, and the general reaction was that picketing wasn't as easy as it seemed, but that it was enjoyable nonetheless. There was some white heckling, and the police stopped all the picketers to explain picketing rules to them. A Post photographer was present to take pictures. In all cases, picketers maintained their cool.

The clinic adjourned at 6:00 P.M.