

July 3, 1964

PROGRAM FOR VOTER REGISTRATION IN CANTON, MISSISSIPPI -- TOM FONER

I have been working with a steady group of about five people on voter registration in the city of Canton. We have met with a growing degree of success and we have had people down at the court house every day so far. We have averaged about six people a day, but next week we will have many more than that. We have also had several people working with us on a day to day basis. Other than myself we have only one other volunteer worker (he arrived today), the other workers are youths of Canton.

I have been attempting to get more people to work on canvassing on a day to day basis. I spoke at a Mississippi Student Union meeting requesting their aid in the voter registration drive. I have also been in contact with the president of the local branch of the Medgar Evers Youth Council, and he has agreed to call a special meeting of his group at the local Freedom House to get them to work on canvassing. I have also obtained the names and addresses of all the members of the Mississippi Student Union in Canton and we plan to get in touch with them all individually and convince them of the importance of their assistance.

We have divided the Negro sections of Canton into eighteen districts. We have people as of now in six or seven districts per day, every day. As of next week we will have people in every district. We have typed up a card on each of the people that we have contacted. The card contains the name, address, and phone number of each person on one side. On the other side is the reaction of the person to the idea of going to register. Each time the person is contacted a new comment is put on the card. We have the names filed in the file for the district they live in. But furthermore we categorize them by their reactions. Each district has three card groupings: 1) Wants to register 2)

Undecided 3) Doesn't want to register. We work on an incentive basis. Each day the least successful group has to buy sodas for the most successful group. Our major problem is our inability as of now to have set up a car-pool. We are working on this problem and I believe we will solve it soon.

We have put special emphasis on trying to get the local high school teachers to come to the court house and register. On this coming Wednesday (July 8) eight High School teachers will come to register. We have even gotten them to organize their own car pool.

We have had some success but we will not really be successful until we meet the goal that we have set for ourselves of fifty people down at the court house each day.