

8 July

Yesterday morning, Gene, Charlie, myself saw Mr. Starcks, Mr. Cruse (Seafood Workers Union), attempting to get Cruse to utilize us. Mr. Cruse hesitant - also depressed and disheartened, expressing his consternation/frustration that the workers, having received a pay raise since the NWU (AFL-CIO) granted them a union charter, are no longer interested in active union participation. He says that the companies may (perhaps next month) lower prices back down; but until that happens, he feels defeated. Had a good dialogue, among us, including a Mr. Wade, about integration, COFO, etc. Starcks was pleased and welcomed the discussion, saying that the men in the local already know his views - he wanted them to see that he wasn't alone. Mr. Wade was surprised, but not really antagonistic - at least he had to change his attitude concerning "outside agitators."

9 July

Yesterday morning, in contrast with the day before, Charlie and I had another dialogue in Mr. Stark's office, with two local carpenters - there was no dialogue, just antagonism, resulting in the two carpenters walking out, leaving the three of us. Starcks remained confident and cheerful, saying that they couldn't get rid of him for another year, that he had his own trade, that he wouldn't be living much longer - that he could not compromise on moral questions - that he was preparing his way for the next life. (He is Catholic) But we have resolved to try not to involve him as much as possible from now on. We must not forget that we are dealing with people.

10 July

Went to Gulfport to Carpenter's Local 1518. Charlie quickly started talking with Claude Ramsey (state president AFL-CIO), then went off to talk to "Brother Weeks" - as Starcks said later, the only man who might have raised a fuss about our being there. Good, old Charlie! We were entered in the minutes, the three of us recognized as being from COFO. Ramsey talked about the campaign in which Labor's candidate had lost, I think last spring. He stressed the necessity of union members voting for the union candidate against the state machine which is anti-labor as strongly as they are anti-Negro. He stressed the necessity of a Negro-Labor political coalition, the "150,000 Negro votes will put us over the top." He spoke against the state's intention of closing schools, that this is anti-labor, that "they are spending your money and you're not getting a thing for it." Finally, he spoke about the weird political atmosphere in the state - the influence of the Councils, the Birchers - and how, after they had failed to block his re-election last spring, they began to infiltrate, insinuate themselves into locals - 2 already have pulled out and he is going to talk to a local in Moss Point because they seem shaky. (They voted, subsequently, to continue their national affiliation) Finally, summing up, "I am very much disturbed - these people (the state govt., reactionaries, etc) have lost their minds."

The three of us spoke briefly, Charlie talking about COPE in Texas, the need of coalition - Gene talking about previous coalitions, like Populism - I stressed that our project was in the white community.

This lit another fire under Ramsey, and he proceeded to read a talk which he had delivered in Connecticut ("They let you into Connecticut?") last June 9th before the Connecticut Human Relations Council. He of course is primarily interested in the welfare of unions, but this makes him just as concerned with the possibilities of coalition. He is a strong "fellow traveler" with respect to the Movement. "Future political success for the Labor move-

ment is largely dependent upon what happens in "the Closed Society". Over 40% of the state's population is Negro, yet less than 5% of these people of voting age are permitted to use the ballot. It is a foregone conclusion that Labor will not attain its political goals as long as the Negro is systematically denied the right to vote."

"The political powers of the state fully realize that Labor and the Negro are natural political allies." Etc. A strong statement. We have a copy.

The rest of the meeting was routine. The chairman, Mr. Necaise, invited us to come to the next one, in August, to report our activities, and was friendly.

Ramsey drove me back to Niloxi. "It is not the racists who bother me. It is the general apathy toward them." "We are in a battle for our lives." He suggested that we work with the Negro union locals, to bring them firmly into the white local structure - that would be the biggest help for him. He stressed that the majority of Mississippians want law and order if there is a choice between that and open violence.

One thing which came out of our talk in the "Ship Ahoy" was that the drive this summer concerning the Freedom Democratic Party might really be just the thing that the state politicians want - that they want to be unseated at the Democratic Convention so they can keep their electors unpledged and join the Wallace machine. Another thing was the recognition that although Labor and the Negro Movement and sympathetic to each other, there is a real lack of communication between. Ramsey knows Aaron Henry, but has yet to meet Moses or Forman.

Whitman