

COMMUNICATIONS

I. STAFF

There are currently four people working within communications. Bob Weil and Bill Light have devoted the past several weeks to compiling information for suits and civil rights hearings. Mary King co-ordinates with Atlanta SNCC, orients new press correspondents, and deals with reporters who are down here for a limited period of time for intensive research into one part of the program. Ilene Streitz keeps in close touch with the WATS operator for incidents and feature material that gets phoned in from the field, and then phones out press releases to the wire services, networks, and correspondents stationed in Jackson for the summer, as well as to the local media--who never write any of it down. The press person also publishes an incident sheet each day, and works throughout the summer on detailed reports on various general portions of the program--such as Freedom Schools and Community Centers--for the use of the press and of visiting tourists who are usually also fund-raisers in the North. Francis Mitchell has been in the Jackson office at times throughout most of the summer, but will not be back until approximately September 1. Margaret Rose was assigned to communications from the start of the summer, but had to work the WATS line for most of her stay here, before leaving for Holmes County in late July. Emmie Schraeder has taken care of communications work for the Freedom Democratic Party.

II. PUBLICATIONS

a) Daily Incident Summaries: Bob Beyers ran off the first eight pages of these and made a mailing of them to projects and to press. He made a run of 400 shortly before he left in mid-July. Initially the day to day summaries after he left were run off in quantities of 150, but they must be replenished frequently; by the end of the summer a minimum of 500 copies of each will have been distributed. These have proven the single most valuable--or at least most requested--piece of material for new press people as well as those who have been here from the start of the summer, and for the many people who come through the office each week asking for written material. They are also sent out to projects. The daily summaries have been cited in several magazine articles and newspaper features, so that requests coming in for them by mail are numerous; often these requests are accompanied by \$2 to \$5 checks to cover postage. Jackson communications is not currently equipped to handle this type of mailing, and in essence these letters--many from Friends and Parents groups, newspapers and magazines, universities and high schools, staffs of state attorney generals, and civil rights groups--get sporadically answered or ignored. They have been ignored for lack of manpower to service them. By the end of the summer there will be approximately 50 pages of incident summaries, the last 40 pages of which are relatively detailed. There is a good chance that Bob Beyers can reproduce these by offset press at Stanford, with us paying for the paper. Even in this instance, when manpower problems can be solved, there is a question of whether we can afford postage and organization for mailing, and if we actually want to mail these out.

b) Legal Research: The number of thermofax copies of affidavits and news clips--at 5 to 7½ cents a sheet--that Bill Light and Bob Weil have had to make for use in hearings and suits is beyond calculation--many thousands. Many stencils have been made for the same purpose. This is possibly our single most expensive operation.

c) General Reports: At the end of the first Freedom School session, a 9-page report on the Freedom School program was issued for communications purposes. Five

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hundred copies were made. These were sent out to educational publications and education editors throughout the nation. They are beginning to produce some solid features, and letters starting to come in indicate that professional interest is beginning to be aroused. This report, like incident summaries, is requested both by people coming in the office and by mail. Our supply is just about exhausted. The same type of report is in the process on community centers.

d) MASS MAILINGS: In addition to mailings to projects of everything we put out, and the Freedom School mailing, several hundred news releases and "Freedom Democratic Party" fact sheets (see below) have been sent out to home town newspapers and radio stations to announce the return of volunteers rallying support for the FDP; these, unlike any of our other mailings, were sent air mail.

e) FACT SHEETS: Five hundred Summer Project fact sheets (one sentence summaries of all programs, statistics, in White America schedules, etc.) and an equal number of FDP fact sheets have been reproduced; the latter were sent out with the news release about returning volunteers.

f) PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS: There is a constant need for copies of previous detailed COFO reports; once again the question comes up of who should assume maintenance responsibility, if anyone. Supplies of these have not been maintained in Jackson.

THE PRESS

Throughout the summer we have been in contact two to three times a day with Associated Press, United Press International, NBC, ABC, CBS. For at least a month and in most cases all summer, correspondents have been stationed in Jackson from the New York Times, the Boston Globe, the Washington Post, the New York Herald Tribune, and Time Magazine. For periods throughout the summer, there have been correspondents from Scripps-Ioward, the Los Angeles Times, the St. Louis Post Dispatch, radio stations, home town papers, and innumerable free-lancers--as well as Bert Schorr from the Wall Street Journal. Between 15 and 25 out-of-state papers will call for lengthy long distance conversations each week, usually for details on specific feature topics. The correspondents stationed here spend approximately 3 hours each in the office each week, in addition to the daily phone contact.

The press has come to trust and respect us as sources of news and feature tips in a way that one can observe increasing from week to week. To a lesser and lesser degree they ask "were any volunteers beaten or arrested today," and to an ever-increasing degree they will respond to our descriptions of such things as a McCobb Freedom Registration picnic, the Shaw School boycott, the Harmony Community Center. Many of them have come to identify with us, keep us informed about news throughout the South, etc. Our better correspondents are changing from doubters and observers to understanding educators. The red-baiter and the beat-baiter are increasingly rare, and are usually products of 3-day whirlwind tours of the state aimed at making the definitive impressionistic report.

IV. FALL

Even if the Clarion-Ledger is wrong, the state will indeed be "abandoned" by most of our correspondents and special network people. This will mean that as far as live news reporting, Jackson's role--without a national WATS--is hazy. The need for written materials coming out of Mississippi is placed in a new perspective. Questions consistently raised over the summer indicate that lengthy reports of certain types will be extensively picked up by the national media if they were to be mailed to them. For one thing, if COFO feels it worthwhile, we are in great

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need of a legal chronology of the summer, ie, arrests each day, trials each day, bond each day, fines each day, etc., as well as statistical totals (total bond spent, total arrests made, total convictions of our people, total convictions of assailants of our people as compared to total number of attacks, etc.).

In light of the presumed continuing massive legal research, and a 2-3 week interlude after the summer correspondents depart when the national press will be considering finding a way of keeping in close touch with Mississippi, one view of what staff organization to use in communications after the summer ends would involve a) methods of continuing daily phone contact with major papers (we can't rely on the regulars of the wire service staffs here) once they no longer have correspondents here full-time, and b) the writing of detailed reports on general areas and establishing the philosophy of their circulation.

A report of this nature attempted by a summer volunteer can only be parochial. I have no doubt but that its gaps are greater than its inclusions, its perceptions and projection non-existent, and its attempted summary limited at best. Francis Mitchell or Robert Weil the people who must be turned to for this information.

Ilene Strelitz