

PROBLEMS FACING COFO

Below are listed a number of areas in which there are questions or problems presently facing COFO. Please read the questions and see if you can think of other questions which need answering. Write down your additions to this list and turn it in to Dobbie Bernstein. Next weekend (October 31) a revised and extended list of questions will be circulated throughout the state with suggestions to discuss and try to come up with some answers before the staff meeting which is presently scheduled to take place in early December.

Where is COFO headed?

- Does COFO remain primarily oriented towards voter registration? If so, do we try new techniques for increasing registration? Do we seek more government involvement? Do we make use of contacts established in the north this summer? Simultaneous demonstrations in Mississippi and throughout the north. Should the lawyers working with us take on more voting suits, pushing voting as a primary goal?
- Should COFO concentrate just in areas of Negro majority voting population? Should COFO work to really get Negroes elected to office? Is work in white majority areas too long range for much benefit? Are bourgeois Negroes or "Toms" the ones who really benefit from the voter registration work COFO does?
- If COFO does more than just voter registration, what else should it do? Quiet, long range programs such as Freedom Schools, Community Centers, Federal Programs? Action-oriented programs such as sit-ins, boycotts, picketing over specific issues?
- How do we determine what direction we move in? Talking with local people? Talking amongst ourselves? Project directors or state-wide meeting decision?
- If there are more activities than just voter registration, how are the activities related? Does the staff decide which to emphasize? Does the local project? Will the emphasis be changed locally? Will the emphasis be changed from time to time? Must the programs all tie together? Can the Freedom Schools run without tying in to the political program? Can federal programs be undertaken which seem initially to have nothing to do with politics? Is everything really political, and is there really any distinction?
- Should COFO have its own economic outlook? Should COFO work with the unions? Should COFO work to integrate Negroes into the existing economic institutions or should Negroes set up their own stores, their own businesses, their own farms, etc?
- Should COFO expand its white community program, tying in work with the moderate community? Should Human Relations Commission contacts be increased?
- In terms of the COFO structure, how do the programs get carried out? Do we have state-wide staff coordinators? If so, how independent are they? Can they institute new programs on their own? Do they decide who will work on their programs at the local level? Can they institute action on their own, or must they tie in with other programs and activities? How much can the state-wide coordinators alter the local programs? How much must the state-wide coordinators listen to the other program directors or to the state executive committee?
- How does COFO tie in with other organizations? National Council of Churches? National Sharecropper's Fund? Health Education and Welfare Department? Labor Department? United States government?

Decision-making

At the project level

Are decisions made by staff? By volunteers? Are volunteers staff?

Do local people enter in? How?

At the state level

Is there an executive committee? If so, what is its make-up?

Project directors? Other project representatives?

Program directors?

Local people?

Do outside organizations have a voice at the project or state level?

How does the Jackson office relate to the field?

Should people from Jackson travel to field often?

Should field rotate through office and take office jobs?

Should there be increased written communication between office and field?

Personnel

Do we want more volunteers? If so, what should be their qualifications?

Do we seek more specific abilities? Like social work or teaching background. If so, what skills? Who decides what skills or qualifications we are looking for? Who decides when these change?

If there is a question of money, do we put on local people as volunteers or do we just put on outsiders? Are requirements different for outsiders and for local people? If so, which direction do we point in?

How should difficulties with the volunteers be resolved? Who has the final say? Project director? Project staff? State-wide staff? Personnel Committee?

What determines when a person should be asked to be moved to another project?

When should a person be asked to leave the state? Who determines this?

How is a project head chosen? By project staff? By local people? By state staff? By executive committee?

How are leaders to be developed? Should a volunteer with certain skills be preferred to a local person? If the local person is to be preferred, is there any guideline to be followed?

What is the distinction between black and white, staff and volunteer, if any?

Is there one way to deal with staff, another to deal with volunteers?

What does COFO have to say about people from other organizations who want to work with COFO?

Finances

How should SNCC, CORE, and SCLC funds tie in to COFO?

Should COFO actively seek to raise its own money?

Who decides how COFO funds are to be handed out?

Executive committee? Staff? Local people? Financial coordinator?

How much of the financial affairs of COFO are to be told to the staff?

How much to the public?

Staff Training

Does staff training need to be increased? If so, in what direction does it go?

Toward programs? Toward historical background? Toward new areas of Mississippi? Towards further community organization?

How is the training to be run? Local institutes? Out of state? Nightly or weekly project discussions? Staff meetings? Outside experts visiting?

Civil Liberties

Should COFO continue to work with all groups who will work with COFO under COFO's structure? Regardless of political affiliation? Are there any limitations on controversial groups?

Legal

Should we refuse to work with legal groups who refuse to work with other COFO legal groups or lawyers?

Do we want any single lawyer actively in charge of our legal affairs or do we want some civil rights worker actively running them?

How important to COFO are traffic cases, and how should they be handled? Particularly since we have so few lawyers working with us now.

Is it important for COFO to have its own legal office even if it costs about \$2,500 a month, or is it all right to basically rely on other groups to supply us with lawyers?

Should we stop paying out traffic and other fines and spend the time in jail as a protest and to save money?

Are there suits and other legal activities we need to start but haven't?

Should SNCC or CORE start some actions themselves or should COFO or just individuals sue?