

Overview of the Freedom Schools -- II

The purpose of the Freedom Schools is to create an educational experience for students which will make it possible for them to challenge the myths of our society, to perceive more clearly its realities, and to find alternatives--ultimately new directions for action.

The Freedom Schools will consist of from 5 to 15 teachers and 35 to 50 students. They will be informal day schools, meeting in churches store fronts, homes, etc. They will avoid the "academic" classroom atmosphere which characterizes their regular schools, but the Freedom Schools will present an intensive curriculum designed to meet several different needs:

I. An academic curriculum which will, insofar as possible in 6 short weeks, sharpen the students' abilities to read, write, work mathematical problems, etc., but will concentrate more on stimulating a student's interest in learning, finding his special abilities, so that when he returns to the state schools in the fall he can take maximum advantage of the public education which is offered to him.

II. The Citizenship curriculum which will concentrate on a study of the social institutions which affect the students, and the background of the social system which has produced us all at this time. The various sections will be: the Negro in Mississippi, the Negro in the North, Myths about the Negro, the Power Structure, the Poor Negro and the Poor White, Material Things versus Soul Things, and the Movement. In these sections, the student will be encouraged to form opinions about the various social phenomena which touch him, to learn about his own particular heritage as a Negro, and to explore possible avenues for his future. Special attention at the end of the unit will be devoted to the civil rights Movement--the historical development to this point, the philosophical assumptions underlying pressure for social change, and the issues which are currently before the civil rights Movement.

III. Recreational and cultural curriculum, which will be a large part of the day will try to provide the students with relaxation from their more intensive studies and also an opportunity to express themselves in new ways. The program will include dancing and sports, arts and crafts, dramatics, music, etc.

The schools will run for six weeks, with a short break in the middle for orderly staff turnover and some student changes. The school day will concentrate on the morning and afternoon; in the evening the students will be free, and will be encouraged to join the local COFO project, helping with the Freedom Registration, voter registration, the precinct meetings, etc. The Freedom School teachers, too, will participate in these programs as far as their academic responsibilities allow them to. The Freedom School teachers and the COFO voter registration workers should meet to plan together the most useful participation of the Freedom School students, so that the total program will contribute both intensive intellectual development and practical experience to make them better potential leaders of the community.