

First Congressional District

1. Lowdnes County

a. Columbus is the county seat. There has been relatively little activity there. Police harrassment has been minimal, but probably will increase as workers become more active. Negro leadership seems to be somewhat reticent to the COFO programs and the local community is somewhat afraid of us. However, the fear is not so intense that it cannot be broken with persistent effort. There are several strong students (high school).

The situation in most of the key cities in this part of the state are quite similar to that of Columbus.

Second Congressional District

1. Leflore County

a. Greenwood is the county seat, and SNCC maintains a two story office there, manned by approximately five people. Leflore County is generally considered a hard core resistance area. The two years of activity there has resulted in hundreds of registration attempts by Negroes, with less than 30 actually getting registered. Voter registration activity in Leflore County has been documented with shootings, beatings, bombings, arrests, and at least one incident of lynch-mob violence.

b. Itta Bena is about 15 miles west of Greenwood. The effort there was first met with bombings (tear gas) of the church where meetings were being held. In June of 1963, harrassment culminated with the arrest of 45 local people as they marched in protest of the lack of police protection. In spite of this there has been persistent activity there; but the results in terms of people actually getting registered has been negligible.

2. Sunflower County

a. Ruleville is the focal point of activity, some 23 miles from the courthouse in Indianola the county seat (which is the birthplace of the white citizens council), Senator J. Eastland maintains an office in downtown Ruleville, and has a plantation in nearby Doddsville. Ruleville also is considered to be a rural hard core resistance area, and activity there has been dotted with shootings, jailings, economic reprisal, and police harrassment and intimidation. Probably it will be one of the centers of resistance to the summer project. Local people are strong however and will stand up with the workers.

3. Holmes County

a. Mileston is about 12 miles from Lexington, the county seat. We have a core of good people in the Mileston area. The county has resisted actually registering Negroes, and early in the vote drive the home of one of the key local leaders was shot into and set afire with Molotov cocktails. Lately, harrassment has been minimal, but could increase with a real hard vote drive in the county.

4. Bolivar County

a. Cleveland is one of the county seats (the other being Rosedale). Activity there is comparatively recent, but it is the feeling of workers there that with increased activity there will be increased resistance, in terms of economic and physical reprisals. Cleveland has a history of police violence. Rosedale is a river town (Mississippi river) in the traditional rough and rowdy, depressed and violent sense.

b. Shaw is about 15 miles ~~west~~^{south} of Cleveland and our activity there has been met with little resistance. It's a depressing little town physically, with virtually every Negro living in shacks. There has been a very good response to our programs. The town can be gotten to move.

Mound Bayou is an all Negro town about ten miles north of Cleveland. The Negro leadership there is conservative, and the town itself is generally hostile to whites. However in terms of programs, the leadership can be circumvented and the local people reached.

5. Washington County

a. Greenville is the county seat, and the center of our operations in the county. It is considered a liberal city. The editor of the local newspaper supports the voter registration effort. All city officials can be talked to at various levels. The Negro leadership is generally conservative (Greenville is the stronghold of black republicanism) and tends to articulate the white power structure line about "only the qualified" Negroes trying to vote. There has been some direct action (e.g. sit-ins, marches, pickets) in Greenville, and more is likely to occur this summer. Psychologically, Greenville is a difficult town to work (apathy as well as fear) but certainly there is plenty of mobility to work.

6. Issaquena County

a. Mayersville is the county seat (pop. 187) and no Negroes are registered to vote. In 1961 they weren't accepting poll taxes. There is a core of strong people in this very rural county (slightly over 3000 people). Activity has been sporadic in this county and as yet we have met with virtually no resistance.

7. Sharkey County

a. Rolling Fork is the County seat and when we have had activity there, we have met strong resistance from the local authorities. Fear is intense and at this point persons working the county will have to live outside of it. There are 3 Negroes registered. Workers should expect strong resistance from local whites.

8. Tallahatchie County

a. Charleston is one of the county seats (the other is Sumner) and there is a core of strong people ready to move. Workers should expect active resistance from local white and local authorities. The sheriff of this county is notorious for his violence to Negroes.

b. Swan Lake is a rural settlement a few miles southeast of Sumner.¹⁹ Recently it has been the scene of mob violence and beatings apparently not connected to voter registration since we have had no project there. However in investigating this violence we have established some good contacts and are able to house workers there. Workers should expect constant harrassment and intimidation and personal violence.

9. Humphries County

a. Belzoni is the county seat and the scene of violence directed towards persons engaged in voter registration activities in the early fifties. A confederate flag flies before the county courthouse. There is intense fear in the adult Negro community, but a core of teenagers who can be mobilized. Persons working there should expect constant and extreme harrassment.

10. Marshall County

a. Holly Springs is the county seat, a relatively moderate city. There is a strong core of college students who are actively involved with COFO.

11. Panola County

a. Batesville and Sardis are the county seats. This is probably one of the most important counties in the state right now. The circuit clerk has been directed by court order to eliminate the use of the literacy test, aid all people attempting to register, and hire deputy registrars if necessary, over a one year period. This means that virtually every Negro who tries can actually get registered. There is a potential of 7000 new Negro voters within a year. There is strong local adult leadership, and a number of interested students who want to get actively involved. Harrassment so far has been minimal but could increase in light of the court order and our increased activity there. There has been one shooting into one of the churches used for meetings. One important thing about the local leadership is that it takes the initiative (e.g. sponsored their own freedom vote, and drew up their own petitions to send to the justice department).

Note: These eleven listed counties are all Delta counties, located in northwestern Mississippi. All of them are well over 50% Negro in population. It is also the area where we have met the most resistance to Negroes registering and voting -- the birthplace and stronghold of the white citizens council, dominated by the huge plantations. All of the delta counties have not been listed, but from areas such as Greenwood and Greenville, you can expect to operate also in adjacent counties.

Third Congressional District

1. Adams County

a. Natchez is the county seat, located on the Mississippi river. Our efforts there have been met with violence on the part of local whites (Natchez is one of the strongholds of the Klu Klux Klan) and harrassment by local officials. Workers can expect this to be constant during the summer.

2. Pike County

a. McComb is just a few miles from the county seat located in Magnolia. Some of SNCC's earliest work was begun in McComb, where student demonstrations were sparked. Here too workers can expect active resistance from local whites. Workers can also expect to be met with suspicion by local Negroes as they feel that SNCC deserted them in 1961.

3. Amite County

a. Liberty is the county seat. The county is rural and a stronghold for the Klan and a group called the Association for the Preservation of White Supremacy. SNCC also has historical roots in this county. Workers have been beaten and arrested. One local contact was shot and killed, and the witness to the killing has more recently been killed. At this point, Negroes are being systematically driven from the country, and white businesses are being forced to fire Negroes. Workers can expect extreme resistance to their activities at all levels. We have, however, a core of good strong contacts.

Note: These last three counties are located in southwestern Mississippi, at this point, probably the most dangerous area in the state. Workers can expect organized violence, harassment and intimidation directed towards them.

4. Warren County

a. Vicksburg is the county seat; comparatively urban and moderate in attitude. Workers can expect a degree of mobility. Harassment so far has been minimal. Local leadership tends to be conservative. With persistent work, however, a good strong project can be developed.

5. Hinds County

a. Jackson is the county seat and state capital. The leadership is conservative and dominated by the NAACP. Work in Jackson will have to be done within the context of building a community base to circumvent the established leadership after the summer. Workers should expect harassment from the police, and to a lesser degree, from the local whites. There will also be an undercurrent of resistance from the NAACP and local leadership which can be somewhat dealt with by developing a kind of political relationship with them. Expect frustrations.

Fourth Congressional District

1. Madison County

a. Canton is the county seat, an extremely strong Citizens Council town. Harassment is particularly intense from law enforcement (?) officials seemingly directed mostly at local citizens. There has been consistent use of economic reprisals; very severe. Strong local leadership has begun to emerge. Also there are very strong and very active young people.

2. Lauderdale County

a. Meridian is the county seat, second largest city in the state. It is a comparatively moderate city in terms of resistance to COFO programs. The community center there has been operating for 4 or 5

months, with no resistance from the local authorities. There were some arrests in connection with a boycott on one of the stores. However, the store gave in and hired a Negro, and now the workers are thinking of expanding the boycott. Meridian is also the base for operations in about five adjacent counties. Local leadership tends to be conservative and has generally ignored the project. There is a bi-racial committee (in existence for about 14 years) that is slow moving and has accomplished virtually nothing.

3. Leake County

a. Carthage is the county seat. A school desegregation suit is underway there, and there is strong and enthusiastic local leadership. Can be a swinging project.

Fifth Congressional District

1. Forest County

a. Hattiesburg is the county seat. The circuit clerk is under court order to cease discriminating against Negro applicants. Almost continually since January 22nd, local Negroes have been picketing the county courthouse. There have been arrests on a variety of charges. Intensity of police harrassment seems dependent on the amount of activity taking place. There is a strong core of local leadership of both adults and students. The power structure seems to be keeping local white violence down. Workers should expect to operate in adjacent counties also. The community seems enthusiastic about the program. We expect Hattiesburg to be one of the key centers of activity this summer. Across the summer there should be mounting pressure focused at the circuit clerk who has failed to cease discriminating, and at the federal government for failing to take action against the circuit clerk (he should be in jail for civil and criminal contempt of court).

2. Jones County

a. Laurel is the county seat. It is one of the more moderate areas in the state, and harrassment should be minimal. The city has a conservative Negro leadership and receptiveness to the COFO program has varied from lukewarm to cold. Two years ago there was a Laurel Nonviolent Movement affiliated with SNCC. Most of the students involved have since left or ceased to be involved. Community involvement will probably be slow at first, but can be built up across the summer.

3. The Gulf Coast

Harrison county is the key county, with Gulfport and Biloxi being the key cities. Gulfport is the county seat. Harrassment will be minimal and workers can expect mobility. These cities are located on the gulf of Mexico where there are beautiful segregated beaches. Here, alcohol is sold freely, in a still prohibition state, and gambling is extensive. The Negro community forms a smaller percentage of the population than it does in other parts of the state. On the other hand, there has been more organization in this area (in the form of NAACP chapters) and as a result a high percentage of the Negro population is registered (somewhat better than 15%) Local citizens have been conducting wade-ins for a number of years, and probably there will be more this summer. These wade-ins have been punctuated with violence. Most violence on the coast

has come from local whites. There have been a couple of bombings. Assuming direct action takes place on the coast, workers can expect some violence from local whites to be directed at them. For the most part, however, the area is considered "liberal". Harrassment will be minimal and workers can expect mobility.

1. Harrison County

a. Gulfport is the county seat. Here, as in other coastal cities, the NAACP is strong and local leadership is generally conservative. But the summer program has won support and workers can expect a good response from the local community.

b. Biloxi has been the scene of considerable direct action in recent years (mostly at the beaches) and is now involved in a suit to desegregate the schools. The young people are anxious to engage in a broad assault on segregated public facilities, but local leadership is extremely cautious. Response to the summer project has been lukewarm and it is possible that only a limited program will be undertaken in this city.

2. Jackson County

a. Pascagoula - Moss Point are actually two cities, though they are only separated by a bridge. There is one NAACP chapter which serves for both cities. Moss Point community tends to be the more active of the two. The leadership has been extremely receptive to the summer program and have made extensive preparation to house people and to find facilities for Freedom Schools and Community Centers. Workers can expect excellent co-operation on every level.

Actually, Mississippi is oppressive everywhere, and when we speak of moderate or liberal (as in Greenville) we are talking about a lesser degree of oppressiveness. Any one of these areas is liable to tighten up and become a terror hole at any given time. It must be understood that the state is determined to perpetuate itself in its present form at all costs, and will use any method - no matter how extreme - it deems necessary.