

Memorandum

To: Field Staff of CORE

From: Mississippi Field Staff

Subject: the Mississippi Council of Federated Organizations

What is COFO?

The Mississippi Council of Federated Organizations is a federation of all the national civil rights organizations active in Mississippi, local political and action groups and some fraternal and social organizations. Anyone active under any of these groupings is entitled to attend COFO conventions and participate in policy-making decisions of the organization. The COFO staff, consisting of anyone working full time with any civil rights organization in Mississippi, implements the decisions of the COFO conventions, and prepares recommendations for the consideration of the COFO convention. Below the level of the statewide COFO convention, there are district organizations corresponding to the five Congressional districts. These district organizations are presently in the planning stages for practical purposes. The staff, however, is broken down into Congressional districts, with five district directors; this organization structure actually functions. The state organization has four standing committees: Welfare and Relief, Political Action, Finance, and Federal Programs. The district organizations have, or will have, similar standing committees. Dr. Aaron E. Henry of Clarksdale, State President of the NAACP, is President of the Council of Federated Organizations. Robert Moses, Field Secretary and Miss. Project Director for SNCC is the Program Director, who supervises the Mississippi staff and is elected by it. David Dennis, Mississippi Field Secretary for CORE, is Assistant Program Director, and is similarly elected.

How is COFO financed?

The expenses for COFO's projects are paid by direct grants from national civil rights groups as these groups volunteer to contribute. This accounts for nearly all of COFO's income. Expenses of staff workers are paid by the national civil rights groups also, the arrangements varying with the group. At present, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee supports COFO projects in the First, Second, Third and Fifth Congressional Districts as well as the state COFO office in Jackson. The Congress of Racial Equality assumes responsibility, on a direct-to-the-project basis, for the Fourth Congressional District. COFO does not solicit funds for itself, by agreement with the civil rights organizations which support it, for it is felt that it would thus compete with the supporting groups. Negligible amounts are sent directly to COFO, however, and these moneys are not credited to any national civil rights organization. Usually such small donations are earmarked for particular projects, such as the book drive or welfare relief ("Food for Freedom") funds, and are dispensed according to the direction of the donor.

What is COFO's relationship to National Civil Rights Organizations?

COFO represents the effort of all civil rights workers in Mississippi to coordinate their efforts in one direction for maximum efficiency. Staff members, however, are paid by separate organizations and do not lose the organizational identity or their affiliation with the national office of whatever organization they work for. SNCC and CORE workers work together on joint "COFO" projects, and thus must make all plans and decisions in