

FEBRUARY, 1965

The summer of '64 led us into 20 counties and 5060 square miles of 2nd Congressional District, with the purpose of supporting CB King's candidacy as a vehicle to increase the political awareness and voting potential of the Negro populace in Southwest Georgia.

Despite harassment, a lack of funds and personnel, that staff of dedicated young people (Kandy Battle, Joyce Barrett, Phil Davis, Pete delissovoy, Ernie McMillan, John Perdew, Robert Wanta, George Bess, John Washington, Herman Kitchen, Roy Shields, Jr., Tom Brown, Isaac Simpkins, Gwin Brown, Amanda B. Perdew, Willie Ricks; directed by Donald Harris) succeeded, in two weeks of the King for Congress campaign, in registering an estimated 2500 Negroes and increasing the 2nd District's Negro voting potential to 20% of total vote (white and Negro vote combined) (there are of course many more Negroes still to be registered). In the middle of King's campaign, the President signed the Civil Rights Act, which drew us into organizing public accommodations testing. As a result of our tireless and dedicated efforts, we had succeeded in building a political machine, COPA (2nd District Comm. on Political Action), and a greater awareness and feeling of unity. Regrettably, the King for Congress Campaign and the recently-signed Civil Rights Bill left the worst and most frustrating problems unsolved. The problems are discrimination in employment, underemployment, and poor educational facilities.

"The central problem is that we have not gone deeply enough into the communities we are working in....we haven't helped to create any autonomous institutions which will give meaning to the shout for freedom," said John Perdew. We haven't as yet put into the hands of the black masses of SWGa. any institutional way of articulating their hopes, needs, pains, desires, frustrations or grievances. In this regard we've failed.

However, this failure is and shall be, for sometime to come, complicated by the fact that the populace is transitory and there is a great exodus of Negro youth from the county to the country village to the large Northern urban ghettos. In this regard it is difficult to build within the Southern community, especially in Southwest Georgia, a permanent institutional machine capable of giving meaning to the battle cry "Freedom Now."

After giving our souls, hearts, minds, and bodies to the King campaign and public accommodations, seemingly without appreciable success (even the most facilities, in Albany, at least, desegregated, people still can't afford to use them; and none of the underlying reasons for this have been corrected), the SGA staff was almost completely demoralized and shortly thereafter began to leave the state.

And then came the enormously electrifying jolt of Don Harris' leaving for Africa. We rationalized it off by saying to ourselves, "He'll come back and we'll raise hell again. By this time the SGA staff had declined to seven: Ernie McMillan*, George Bess*, Roy Shields*, Herman Kitchen, Amanda Bowens Perdue, Joyce Barrett, Gwin Brown, Tom Brown, John Perdue, Isaac Simpkins. (* means working at that time in Mississippi).

"After the years in Southwest Georgia, we feel the responsibility for deepening our project." --Joyce Barrett.

Although there was a desire to deepen the existing project at this point the remaining staff was completely demoralized, immobile, and disgusted, and thereby felt that their effort was in vain. I, personally, feel that this period was the most painfully frustrating in the history of SNCC in Southwest Georgia.

After Don Harris' return he unified the splintered staff and then announced that he "had resigned and was returning to school (in New York) to study law." This seems to have meant the destruction of SNCC in Georgia. The job he has done made him a living legend and his tremendous strength and leadership ability also projected him as a unique, indispensable character

of our staff. THERE IS A GAP*** and its void will be hard as hell to fill.

"At times, the enormity of man's inhumanity crashes in on us. Even people of good will through periods of feeling terribly ~~alone~~ because society can't bear to hear the truth about itself. As we reach into communities paralyzed by fear we say, "We're not alone; many people care. But many times too many of our co-workers are indifferent."--Joyce Barrett.

This attitude is expressed in a phone conversation Don Harris had with some SNCC people in Mississippi, which I overheard:

voice on the other end: Hello!'

Don: Hello, may I speak with John Lewis?

voice: He's outside.

Don: Would you call him to the phone, please?

voice: Bullets are flying, and I don't have time.

Another in a series of incidents: I called Atlanta; after trying to contact Ruby Doris Smith via the wats operator, needless to say without success, I then called direct and the voice answered very cynically, "This is Freedom, blow it out."

ALBANY: Jim Parry - Roy Shields, Jr.

As I have previously stated the S ga. was demoralize, immobile and disgusted. And thereby unable to function effectively in their respective area. Therefore I felt it my responsible to cleavate this problem that caused this condition and in doing I found myself spending more time in the project areas. And trying to help Jim Parry coordinate field activities from the Albany office. We have contributed time and materials to the Albany movement i.e., voter registration, the community center, pilot program for southern Nursery School and Community Library.

AMERICUS: Sammy Mahone

Sammy Mahone has been working in Sumter Co. since the inception of the Sumter Co. Movement. Most of his time is being spent on "community organizing" i.e. block level, geared to register more Negro and thereby giving them an institutional way of changing their adverse social condition. Sammy's

main emphasis is the establishing an autonomous that is capable of sustaining itself and the powers that be.

CUTBERT: Randy Battle - Grady Little

Randy and Grady are working on community mobilization and are using schools, streets and etc. around which to rally the people of Randolph Co.. As we envision it this would not only activate a group, but also discussions which would theoretical result in act. and hopefully explore the political structure of the city, county, state, nation and the world. and its historical roots eg how slavery developed into Jim Crow, Segregation, why Cutbert is economically depressed.

CORDELE: Romona Cockett - Ruth Howard - Rev. Blysses Fullwood - Judy Richardson

The main emphasis has been building adult involvement and organizing on "grass root level" the registered and unregistered Negroes of Crisp Co. into effective political, economic and social action group.

"Adults have slowly begun to filter into the Crisp Co. movement as a result of the determination shown by Judy Richardson." --Don Harris

MCINTIRE: Herman Kitchen - Isaac Simpkins

For the past months, Herman and Isaac have been working to organize the community. People wouldn't work with them. In talking to the kids, they discovered that what they wanted was some action to improve the Negro High School, Bryant High (It has lost its accreditation, several of its buildings are condemned or substandard, it's overcrowded, there aren't enough desks or books or teachers, the campus is a sea of mud, among other things); they talked about a boycott. On Wed., Feb. 3., the kids spontaneously started a sit-in in the halls. By Thursday, it had developed into a full-fledged boycott, and later into a protest march to the courthouse. When the kids returned to the school, the police were called, and 60 kids went to jail. That night, the adults got together and organized a Progressive Movement, to ne-

gotiate with the people in power. Negotiations have gone on since. The school board refuses to make more than token concessions, and the promises they've made in the past have never been carried out. The kids are far more militant than the parents, and they have refused to go back to school. The Superintendent of Schools has as of now (Wed., Feb. 10.) threatened to have all parents of kids who stay out of school arrested.

There are three lines of approach now open, the acceptance of the School Board's "concessions" (the leaders of the Progressive Movement are getting scared and might try this); the march and fill the jails approach (Rev. Smith from Albany, who has become unofficial chairman, supports this); and the send the kids back to school and go through the courts and the state Bd. of Eduo. approach (a few of the SNCC staff support this). Most of the SNCC staff feels unable to make a decision one way or the other, and so the consensus was to present the arguments for staying in the boycott or returning to school to the kids and parents today and letting them make up their own minds. It was felt that there had been too much appeal to emotion by all sides, and not enough to reason. In any case, C. J. Kin has agreed to represent the participants.

Some of the toms felt that SNCC was corrupting the kids, and so should leave. In a vote of confidence last night, we won. There are now around eight to ten staff in Moultrie while the crisis continues. At least, the people are now concerned and want to act. Direction is needed.

OCILLA - John Washington - Willie Ricks

After talking to leaders and mass meetings, and after conferences with the semi-active NAACP youth group, it was decided that what the people wanted was public accommodations testing, since most of Ocilla's facilities still haven't desegregated. The first target was the one laundromat in town. Police were present but offered no protection when local whites beat the kids. Interest in the community has increased as people have gone to jail. People

seem receptive to continued and increased testing. Adults have tested the laundromat on their own, too. Other targets have been the segregated library and hospital. It seems that the main activity will continue to be testing for awhile, since there is more interest in this than anything else.

If Southwest Georgia is to maintain even its present state of limited effectiveness, certain things are going to be needed. For one thing, our supply of money has been erratic and scanty at best. When three of our offices are lacking one or another of the three utilities, or a phone, it is apparent that some-thing is necessary. There are twenty counties in the 2nd Congressional District, and another thirteen Black Belt counties in the adjoining 3rd District. We just cannot handle more than a token number of these with a dozen people, one car that runs (and one in Atlanta that's wrecked and not repaired and another one that Randy Battle is still trying to get so that it runs without people having to get out and push-start it every time it stalls), a sporadic subsistence (at least three of the projects have been existing almost entirely on the good-will of the communities, because they haven't been getting subsistence. In several others, subsistence checks have had to be used to keep the offices limping along).

The enclosed budget gives an idea of our minimum needs to maintain our foothold in the area. We have contacts in about a dozen counties other than the ones we are working in, but we just don't have the resources, either physical or human, to work in them on more than a hit and run basis. We need more people, trained organizers and people who can listen to local people learn the needs, and tailor programs to fit.

There are areas in Southwest Ga. that are as tough as any in Miss. or Alabama, but there are also others that represent problems that SNCC is going to have to deal with increasingly often: areas where voting is relatively easy, and facilities are ostensibly integrated, but where the poor jobs-

poor education-poor conditions cycle remains unbroken. It doesn't seem that we of SNCC have really concentrated enough time on these problems yet to have come up with many workable approaches, not to even speak of solutions (which probably don't exist at all yet). S.Ga. can be a test case for our work and attempts to work on these problems.

We will continue to work in the areas we have, and if we should have the resources we will expand into other Black Belt counties. We will continue to work in the classical pattern of attempting to organize community organization of public accommodations and schools, boycotts of one kind or another. But we need new ideas.

Grady and Randy are going to start trying to bring in such things as ASCS, FH., and War on Poverty material, all of which are new for us. But we need more.

In fact, considering the present disposition of SNCC resources, and particularly the portion of them that we've got, it's more realistic for us to try to think of things we don't need, rather than those we do. We haven't thought of anything yet that fits in such a category.

ESTIMATED MONTHLY BUDGET FOR SOUTHWEST GEORGIA, IN ORDER TO EXIST IN TERMS OF MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO.?

RENT

Albany office and Southwest Georgia Freedom House, combined

Albany	\$100	
Cuthbert	40	
Cordele	30	
Ocilla	30	
Moultrie	35	
Americus	40	
		Total \$275

PHONE

Albany	\$100	
Americus	35	
Cuthbert	35	
Cordele	20	
Ocilla	35	
Moultrie	35	
		Total \$260

UTILITIES

Albany	\$25	
Americus	15	
Cuthbert	25	
Cordele	15	
Coilla	20	
Moultrie	15	
	<u>15</u>	Total \$115

OFFICE SUPPLIES

Albany	\$35	
Americus	15	
Cuthbert	15	
Cordele	15	
Coilla	15	
Moultrie	15	
	<u>15</u>	Total \$110

OFFICE MAINTENANCE

Albany	\$25	
Americus	10	
Cuthbert	10	
Cordele	10	
Coilla	10	
Moultrie	10	
	<u>10</u>	Total \$75

MEDICAL BILLS COMBINED

	<u>\$60</u>	Total \$60
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Gas, OIL, MAINTENANCE, & PROJECTED REPAIRS ON CARS

Three cars	<u>\$550</u>	Total \$550
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TRAVEL OUTSIDE OF DISTRICT

	<u>\$45</u>	Total \$45
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MISCELLANEOUS, & EMERGENCY EXPENSES

	<u>\$35</u>	Total \$35
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EMERGENCY BAIL

	<u>\$100</u>	Total \$100
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Total per month \$1625

ESTIMATED COSTS FOR PROJECT EXPANSION, IF EXPANSION OCCURS COST PER MONTH PER PROJECT

Rent	\$45	
Phone	35	
Utilities	35	
Office Supplies	15	
Maintenance	10	
Medical	10	
Bail	25	
Miscellaneous	10	
	<u>10</u>	Total \$265

PRESSING BILLS NOT INCLUDED IN THE BUDGET BECAUSE ALREADY INCURRED

Food for S.W.Ga. staff meeting	\$15.39
Heat for the Albany office	25.00
Light for Moultrie office	15.00
Water for Cuthbert Office	20.00

(all the above three have been turned off, so most of the staff is now cold, in the dark, or dry).

Albany office rent due	65.00
Gas bill due in Albany	25.00

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TOTAL 165.39