

NORTH FLORIDA PROJECT HISTORY

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Southern Regional Office

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The north Florida projects of CORE are among the most successful in voter registration anywhere in the South. In Gadsden County, the base of the north Florida project, there were 492 Negroes registered in January, 1964. By October 3, when the books were closed for the Presidential election, more than 4,500 Negroes were on the rolls, and over 3,500 voted - the first time in their lives for nearly all of them. Gains in other counties were equally significant, though the numbers not as large.

The gains have not come easily. Gadsden County is one of the major U.S. sources of shade-grown tobacco and the county has 15 white millionaires. The whites are, however, the minority racial group in the county - 41% - and they could not be expected to allow Negroes, many of whom are tenant farmers and day laborers on their plantations, to become a voting majority. The other counties did not have Negro majorities, but that did not make the work any easier. We must remember that the whole of northern Florida borders on Georgia and Alabama. Almost all the areas in which CORE is working are within 20 miles of the Georgia border and conditions resemble those of that state rather than the more liberal areas of Florida. In the course of their work, the CORE Task Force and volunteer workers weekly, if not daily, endure arrests, beatings, cross burnings, shootings and other forms of harassment and intimidation.

The original staff person in northern Florida was Patricia Stephens Due,

who was a leader of the sit-ins in Tallahassee in 1960 and has been active in CORE ever since. Late in 1963, Judy Benninger, a white University of Florida student (Gainesville), joined the Task Force and together they conducted a voter registration project in Tallahassee. In the beginning of 1964, Pat and Judy began to scout in areas surrounding Tallahassee; there was little if any civil rights work being done in these areas, but the need was greater. In largely small-town and rural areas, Negro registration is almost universally low and a combination of fear and apathy is sure to keep it low without the encouragement and catalyst of the CORE staff.

The Florida summer project was to include four counties, but in Jefferson the registration books were closed until the last week of the project and only 167 people were added to the rolls there. A staff of eleven, about half of which was native to Florida of both races, worked the remaining three counties. When the two workers arrived in Madison, county seat of Madison County, they found that the books were closed; the registrar, who had held this position for 28 years, was sick, and his wife, the deputy registrar, had broken her arm. The books were just closed, not as a racist plot, but the ordinary way of life in a north Florida town of 3,000. Of course, the arrival of the CORE workers did not hasten the opening of the books - the registrar was suddenly "out of town" and no one, including his son, knew where he was or when he would return. The CORE workers enlisted the aid of a local white man, but he could learn nothing either. The problem was complicated by the fact that only the governor or the registrar can appoint a deputy registrar, so an LCDC attorney let the county officials know that he would file suit if the books were not opened within a

week. The books were promptly opened, but the project had lost three weeks while they had been closed.

Even under normal conditions, the books were only open on Fridays from 9-12 and 2-5. Half of the Negroes eligible were already registered at the start of the project, but by the end nearly 70% (almost 500 new registrants in two months) were on the rolls. Negroes made up 47% of the population, so full registration would make a great difference in the lives of every Negro in the county. Work in those two months was difficult - and dangerous. The 1964 summer project was the first serious voter registration campaign the county had ever seen, and there was strong resistance from law enforcement agencies. As time went on, this subsided, but "private" intimidation continued. One day a firebomb was rolled under Mike Geison's car, but fortunately it did not go off. One evening the workers found that their car had been shot five times; the next day they got a call: "That five was a miss - the next five won't be - get out of town." A restaurant owner who had served an integrated group (after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act) was followed out of town by nearly a hundred whites, who forced his car off the road and gave him a beating. He escaped serious injury only because he held them at bay with a gun.

But the CORE workers and local Negroes did not get off so easily in some cases, though some places served them. Nine people were arrested while waiting for service at one restaurant; a law student from New York was beaten by whites while attempting to investigate another public accommodations case; Mike Geison, a white Task Force worker from Miami, was questioned at the police station for two hours, then released without being

charged with anything (he filed a \$100,000 damage suit for false arrest in federal district court in Jacksonville).

Two workers were placed in Live Oak, seat of Suwannee County. They experienced less harrassment from the whites than those in Madison County, but had to overcome greater reluctance to register on the part of the Negroes. After their first night in the area, the Negro woman they were staying with told them they would have to leave because she felt it was dangerous for her to have them. The project was the first serious voter registration effort here, too, and the staff (bypassing the established Negro leadership) canvassed in bars, cafes, on tobacco farms and in rural churches, in addition to door-to-door in the town. On every registration day more people were waiting to register than time would allow them to be processed.

In a sheaf of typewritten progress reports from Suwannee, there is a handwritten one which says "Sheriff went to Mr. Baily. Now Mr. Wilson won't let us use his typewriter" (not actual names). The same report tells of the registrar's arbitrarily closing his office 45 minutes early, with six people waiting to register. The registrar called the sheriff and the police chief and had the six people and the CORE staff ordered out of the office.

An LCDC lawyer visited the registrar and county officials and got an agreement that the books would not be closed early any more. He also persuaded them to hire additional staff for the registrar's office and to put in more chairs for people who are waiting to register.

Harassment was frequent, but not as serious as in other counties. On numerous occasions, workers were followed by police, and sometimes stopped and questioned. They also heard rumors that whites were organizing to run them out of town, though no such attempt was made. One evening a shot was fired at Elinor Lerner in front of the house where she was staying; the following day, she and Doris Rutledge were threatened downtown. Negroes participating in the drive were threatened with physical harm and economic reprisals. During the 8-week project, despite all the obstacles, the portion of eligible Negroes actually registered rose from 48% to 73%, a net increase of over 500 new registrants.

Gadsden County, with a Negro majority of 59%, had six workers assigned to it because of the large number of unregistered Negroes. In the six previous months, before the summer project began, Judy Benninger and Pat Due had registered a thousand new voters, raising the total from 450 to over 1,400 - but 38% of eligible Negroes were still unregistered; 10,800 remained to get on the rolls.

A full range of intimidations hampered the process of erasing the effects of the past century. Pat reported canvassing on tobacco farms "where conditions are identical to slavery". The workers were followed by police and other whites, arrested from time to time, had the air let out of the tires of their car, and threatening phone calls became routine. Two Task Force workers were arrested while trying to be served in a drive-in restaurant. During the orientation period at the beginning of the project, one of the new volunteers was attacked by a white man in another restaurant; when he tried to have the man arrested for assault, the police said he had already

been convicted and fined \$35, though LGDC lawyers could find no record of this. In a similar case, Steve McVey did not fare that well - he was beaten by several whites in front of the registration office in the presence of a deputy sheriff and a city police officer; when he tried to have the man arrested, he was told that if he pressed charges he would be arrested also, and his fine would be twice that of the men who beat him. Steve's cousin, Scott McVey, was beaten around the head with the butt of a rifle by a white man who first threatened to shoot him. For attempting to use a "white" rest room, Johnny Watson was attacked and beaten by a white service station attendant. Stuart Wechsler, a Task Force worker from New York, had the dubious distinction of participating in a "first" among the horrors to which CORE's Southern staff is subjected: he was kidnapped while canvassing on one of the large tobacco plantations. Three men told him to leave, and as he was doing so, one struck him across the back with a heavy walking cane; they chased and caught him again, threw him into their car, and took him to one of the farmers' houses; a deputy sheriff arrived to arrest Wechsler, but the men asked the officer to leave so they could "finish him off"; Stu was finally taken to jail, after the three men gave him another beating with the canes.

The registration office was open only one day a week. LGDC attorneys persuaded the registrar to open every day - but that would not go into effect until September, when most of the staff and volunteers would have left. The registration office in Quincy, the county seat, was in the office of the Gadsden County Times and the editor of the paper, who frequently attacked CORE and the registration project in his paper, was the registrar. During the latter part of the summer, the registration office

was plastered with Goldwater signs.

One day there was a particularly large line at the registration office, which caused a crowd of whites and police to gather at the fire station. As a uniformed police officer began taking motion pictures of the people in line, Stu stood between the camera and the group of people. He demanded that the officer stop intimidating the people waiting to register, and was promptly arrested; he was released later that day without being charged. Another day the office closed at the legal hour of 5 PM with 75 people standing in line. The St. Petersburg Times of July 28 reported:

Quincy (AP). The Congress of Racial Equality said 350 Negroes in Gadsden County registered yesterday in its massive drive to qualify more Negroes as voters. The CORE spokesman, Judy Bonninger of Gainesville, said Supervisor of Registration J.L. Hutchinson closed his office doors at 5 PM in the face of some 75 Negroes waiting in line to register. She said the office would remain closed until Monday. Hutchinson, who keeps the voter registration books in the office of his newspaper, the Gadsden County Times, was unavailable for comment. Earlier he said he opened the office once a week because of the lack of business.

There was widespread community cooperation. Every registration day the local people had arranged at least ten cars and drivers to bring their fellows to the registration office. The local registration steering committee decided it would raise money to hire a local person. As in all the counties, they provided housing and often food for the workers, and a good deal of manpower for canvassing and other work. The Quincy chapter of CORE decided to take direct action at the registrar's office if other methods did not succeed in opening the books more than one day a week. The local people shared in the harassment by whites. Crosses were burned at

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some of their homes, and on two occasions Negroes were shot at near their houses. They also received the usual threatening phone calls and other minor intimidations by whites. In spite of it all, however, by the end of the two month project, over 1500 more Negroes had been added to the rolls, making $\frac{1}{2}$ of the eligible Negroes registered, a total of just under 3,000.

On August 1, the first issue of the Gadsden County Free Press was published. After four issues, the name of the paper was changed to the Florida Free Press and was circulated in all the project areas. The newsletter carried both freedom news and social and community news; it quickly became one of the most valuable tools of the northern Florida project. After the first two months in Gadsden County, the Free Press had a circulation of 5,000 and the staff estimated that it reached over 90% of the 25,000 Negroes in the county. Scott McVey reported going into homes and seeing school children reading it to their illiterate parents. In an early issue they ran a request for various materials and were almost flooded with donations. The first issue carried a story about that week's registration, including:

At about 2:45 a car from Chattahoochee arrived. Bystanders watched as a lady 109 years old was lifted from the car. Born in slavery, she told CORE workers that it was about time she got to vote. When asked what party she wished to affiliate with, she said "Just put me down for Johnson." Upon returning home, she told her neighbors that there was nothing to it. Her daughter, 80 years old, plans to register this Monday.

That day, 165 people registered and the next registration day, 204 were added to the rolls.

The Free Press enabled the CORE workers to carry on a non-violent battle

with Hutchinson (registrar and editor of Gadsden County Times). The following is from the Free Press August 22 issue:

REGISTRAR HUTCHINSON READS THE GADSDEN COUNTY FREE PRESS

If you read "Bits and Pieces" in this Thursday's Times, written by the registrar of this county, you will soon note that he must read carefully the freedom newsletter. We are glad to learn this, because we know that all men need their freedom and want to hear the gospel. We are also happy, although surprised, to learn of the great love that Hutchinson has for the Negro people. He tells of his strong ties to Negroes and of the many contributions he has made to Negro efforts. Hutchinson seems to think that the good white people of Gadsden County (and he says there are hundreds like himself) will now refuse to aid the Negroes because CORE workers are in town urging people to register to vote. Get this Editor Hutchinson: Give the Negro a fair break, an equal break, and he won't need a hand-out from his "great white fathers" any more. If Hutchinson is really so concerned about Negroes, why hasn't he made it convenient to Negroes to register in this county instead of keeping the books open 6 hours a week???

Headlines from other stories can give a further impression of the Free Press:

FIRST MASS MEETING HELD IN CHATTAHOOCHEE

2 CORE WORKERS RELEASED FROM JAIL

PATRONIZE BUSINESSES WHERE YOU ARE TREATED LIKE A FIRST CLASS CITIZEN

TEACH YOUR NEIGHBOR TO WRITE "JEWEL DIXIE"

216 REGISTER LAST MONDAY

JEWEL DIXIE TO RUN FOR SHERIFF

CORE WORKER GOES TO WASHINGTON

MRS. CRUTCHER RECEIVES HER M.A.

REV. JONES' CHURCH WANTS FREEDOM

WORKER TO LIVE IN HAVANA

NEGRO SCHOOLS REOPEN

The summer project ended on September 7 when most of the students had to return to school. More than 2½ thousand persons had been added to the registration rolls in four counties. Perhaps more important, the four

counties had gone through a solid and successful civil rights summer. All four established permanent steering committees of local people to carry on registration work and prepare for the November election; not that the staff was pulling out - on the contrary - one of the project's goals had been to have local people carry on projects with their own organizations. It was probably this kind of orientation that led the people to contribute \$2,000 (raised partly from the raffle of a 200 lb. hog) to support the project and actually hire a local person as a full time staff worker. This orientation also showed its effectiveness in that every registration day in each of the four counties brought more people to the lines than could be accommodated. The closing of the registration door, by this time regarded as the gateway to freedom, in their faces made them more determined than ever to register, rather than discouraged them.

Long before the summer project ended, the staff saw that there was a need to continue the project on a permanent basis and expand it. Almost a month remained to register people, a month in which the books would be open five days a week. Then, after the books closed, it was vital to conduct a get-out-the-vote campaign to have the newly registered people vote - for the first time in their lives - on November 3rd. It was vital that a large number of people vote, both for its effect on the white community and for the development of the Negro community.

At the end of the summer, Judy Bonninger had to leave the project to return to school and Pat Due had to leave to have some serious operations. The Task Force carried on by itself for several weeks, until Rev. B. Elton Cox came to supervise the project on a temporary basis until Spiver Gordon could c

came to take permanent direction of the project.

Registration continued during September up until October 3 when the books closed prior to the election. The Free Press reported the 3,000th Negro was registered at 3 PM on September 9; by the end of the week, the total passed 3,100 as prospective Negro registrants huddled under the awning of the Madison County Lines office, braving the beginning wind and rain of Hurricane Dora. The Free Press also reported an aged, nearly crippled Negro woman who struggled to the registration line one afternoon; seeing that each step was an ordeal for her, both whites and Negroes waiting in the line stepped aside and let her go to the head of them. A woman then came out of the registrar's office and yelled at her to go to the end of the line, and slapped the doct in her face.

Every issue of the Free Press carried an article about the campaign of Jewel J. Dixie, Negro write-in candidate for sheriff, and sometimes included paid political advertisements. The Lines ran an article, in response to a Free Press story about the low pay and poor conditions of the tobacco workers, which explained that the tobacco farm owners could not pay their labor more because each year they had to take a gamble on weather and other conditions which could ruin their whole crop. The Free Press answered by pointing out that the laborers had nothing to fall back on from their \$20 a week salary during hard times, unlike the farm owners, many of whom are quite wealthy. The Free Press suggested that a profit-sharing plan be instituted so that the laborer's income would vary with the owner, thereby relieving the owners of that burden. The Free Press also carried the following one-line story:

THANKS TO MR. HUTCHINSON

We wish to thank Registrar Hutchinson for correcting the registration irregularities which he had denied existed.

By the middle of September, Rev. Cox had arrived and the registration figure for Gadsden County reached 3,600. Helen Anderson, a new Task Force worker and native of Quincy, wrote an article for the Free Press:

I WANT TO BE FREE

I, Helen Henderson, was born and reared in this country. For 33 years and 8 months I was lost. I didn't know what I wanted, or what I wanted to be. But now I know that I want to be free so I can have a decent job, a decent home and the dignity I deserve as a human being. Do you know the meaning of freedom? I do. It means no more being a second class citizen. It means...

The Free Press also carried a report on the death of Mrs. Louise Herring, of Havana. Mrs. Herring died giving birth to her 14th child. All her previous children were delivered in her home and without trouble, but this time her family knew that she should be in a hospital, or at least have a doctor conduct the delivery. Mrs. Herring could not afford to go into the hospital and the local doctor had not been accepting maternity cases for five years, since he had a heart attack. A doctor came in from Calvary, Georgia, but arrived too late to save her life.

At the end of the registration period approached, the project began citizenship classes to train all newly registered people the proper mechanics of voting and to discuss the issues and candidates in the campaign. The first week there were four classes in Gadsden County, and as the election came closer, there were as many as eight classes a week.

The election was not the only issue before the people. In Suwanee County,

the Voters League appointed a committee to meet with the Superintendent of Public Instruction to find out why no Negroes were appointed to a 15-man committee to investigate the county's schools. In Madison County, a delegation of 63 students and 5 parents went to the school board to discuss their demands for improving the educational system. Their demands included the addition of foreign languages to the curriculum, new and additional textbooks, more athletic equipment and the integration of the schools. The board said it would consider the requests.

The north Florida project carried on a battle in their respective newspapers not only with Hutchinson but with a Times columnist who writes under the name of "Suber". The articles below, from the Free Press, are examples of the constant verbal war:

HI THERE AGAIN, SUBER...

Well, once again we lock horns with Suber. Never let it be said that we hold back from shedding a little light on the darkness of ignorance. Yes, Suber, the income of a Negro family might be substantial when all its members work, but have you ever asked yourself if five year old children might not be happier playing with each other, rather than priming tobacco together under a hot July sun? Have you ever asked yourself whether a sixteen year old boy might spend his time more profitably in school preparing for his future, rather than in the fields farming another man's tobacco? Have you ever asked yourself what a little child goes through because throughout the day his mother is laboring in a packing house to get him some food to eat and cannot furnish the constant attention and love all infants need? Have you ever asked yourself if you would be happy with the lot of a tenant farmer? And don't say you would work yourself up. Not at these odds, mister. Not when you have to struggle 24 hours a day to survive! (September 26, 1964)

MAYBE SUBER WILL SOMEDAY SEE THE LIGHT...

Well, Suber, as they say, "If ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." Yet we won't give up - we will try to wake you from your blissful slumber. Yes, it is true that

the segregated schools that the Negroes attend are out during the peak of the tobacco season. The good white folks have seen to it that the Negro children won't have their tobacco pruning interfered with by something as trivial as education. Instead they can start school one month earlier than the white children, so that while the hot August sun is high in the sky these lucky Negroes can shelter in school... (October 3, 1964)

The battle continued with Hutchinson, as well, who did not limit himself to civil rights issues, as the following indicates:

DEAR HUTCH:

We would like to answer the question posed by your good friend Brig. Gen. Louis Vadsorth. You want to know where we were during the hurricane. First, we will relate a few facts that you did not bother to ascertain in your head-long rush to heap abuse upon the CGK Task Force.

At the time of the storm the whole Gadsden County staff volunteered themselves and their cars to both the Gadsden County and Tallahassee Red Cross. We also let the local CD headquarters know we were available for rescue duty. Although we were not called by either of those organizations we spent the whole afternoon helping people secure their homes and taking them out of areas that might be threatened with flooding. The staff members in Madison and Hertford spent their time taking people to shelters. In Suwannee County the staff consists of only one woman, who had no car. Despite this obstacle, she did what she could in her community.

You ask where was CGK and the NAACP? Neither of these organizations is involved with rescue work, unless you want to call leading America out of the flood of hate and prejudice a rescue mission. If you think civil rights organizations should engage in a rescue operation why did you not ask where was the Republican Party and Barry Goldwater where was the Ku Klux Klan and the White Citizens' Council?

Now we would like to ask you a question. Did the Red Cross volunteer to send aid to Mississippi, an area that we have designated a disaster area? Mr. Hutchinson and Gen. Vadsorth, do you feel any need to question these actions of the Red Cross in Madison when Dave Dukes sought shelter from the raging storm and was sent back into the wind-driven rain with the words, "Your shelter is at the Negro High School?"

You type us as "totally ineptile". Is this because we are

stupid enough to still believe that the Great American Dream of equal justice for all men is still possible? Is it because we still expect that when our country is fighting a war thousands of miles away to make a country safe for democracy, that a man won't be sent away from the safety of a shelter, back into the teeth of a raging storm because he has black or brown skin?

The Free Press also continued with its local community news, such as the following:

Thanks to the school principal who anonymously donated an alarm clock, a mop, Drano, floor wax and a towel rack. We hope to have your support in the future.

As the election moved closer, the Quincy chapter of CORE reported that the town library had integrated quietly and without even a test by the chapter. When the registration books closed October 3, there were 4,700 Negroes on the rolls eligible to vote. The problem the project then faced was to have as many as possible actually vote. The Free Press carried sample ballots, campaign material from Jewel Dixie; November 3 was called "Jubilee Day" by the CORE workers and the Negroes of Gadsden County, and the get-out-the-vote campaign was carried on in the citizenship classes where people were also trained in the mechanics of voting, both by paper ballot and machine. A drive was started to have a car pool to take people to the polls as part of the Negro community's organization for Jubilee Day.

The Free Press received and printed a courteous letter from a local white citizen urging moderation in the Negroes' drive. The paper answered it, disagreeing but praising the writer for the maturity of his thinking.

The Free Press also printed a list of the polling places, in every issue for

a month preceding the election. Of course, all the polling places were in "white" parts of town and, as polls everywhere, they are localized. Any Negro voting could easily be seen and recognized by whites in his community. This fact alone serves as a deterrent to Negro voting in a Deep South area, particularly voting for the first time in his life.

Similar campaigns were carried on in the other counties of the project, although Gadsden was given priority due to the very large Negro population. In Jefferson County, where the books were not opened until almost the end of the summer project, Task Force worker Sidney Daniels worked alone on voter registration from the end of August until October 3. When he started there were 638 Negroes registered; 5 weeks later when the books closed, there were about 900 additions. Negro registration had been more than doubled, and rose from less than $\frac{1}{2}$ to over $\frac{1}{2}$ of its potential of 2,600.

On Jubilee Day in Gadsden County, over 3,500 Negroes went to the polls and voted for the candidate of their choice. A car pool of over 100 cars helped many hundreds of Negroes get to and from the polls. Election officials conducted the election fairly, but city police and sheriff's deputies used every method in their power to discourage Negroes from voting, such as stopping the cars in the car pool, searching them and threatening the drivers with arrest. Jewel Dixie received 1,529 votes; his opponent, Othe Edwards (the only candidate listed on the ballot) received 6,300 votes. Dixie said, "We lost, and won, for this is only a beginning." Although the state went for Johnson, the county went for Goldwater with 5,207 votes, to Johnson's 4,556 - a total of 9,763 votes cast. In 1960 (when the state went for Nixon) Gadsden County went for Kennedy with 4,353 votes cast. 124%

more people voted, then, in 1964 than in 1960.

Results of the Negro vote were immediately apparent in Gadsden County. There had been a ten-year grossly unsuccessful campaign in Quincy to have street lights installed in the Negro community. In just a few weeks, 136 street lights were being installed. A step-up in the completion dates of two new Negro schools was announced, along with plans for paving several dirt roads in the rural part of the county. In Jefferson, there were no such material benefits, but the Negro community - the 900 who registered between August and October, in particular - were overjoyed when they realized that their votes were the ones that carried the county for Johnson. In November, after the election, another hundred registered, but in December the registration became very slow, as it did in all of north Florida. The Voters League began regular once-a-week classes in voter education. Some public accommodations testing was done and initial organizing for a CORE chapter. The following is an excerpt from a field report of Sidney Daniels, the lone Jefferson County worker:

Economic affairs. The civilian labor force in Jefferson County is composed of 2,250 workers, over half of them are Negroes. Over half of the total labor force is employed in agricultural work. Negroes who farm independently own their own spreads as a whole, have federal assistance, good machinery and are doing considerably well. Whereas, the remaining segment of the labor force is split among manufacturing, construction and other jobs. Wages are very low and as a result many Negro families are living in homes owned by whites, which are unfit for people to live in and should be condemned.

Public education. The public schools in Jefferson County are attended by a total of 850 whites and over 1400 Negroes along the old line of separate but equal. The white schools are accredited by the state and national organizations because they have enough facilities and staff to meet the requirements. The Negro schools, on the other hand, have never received accreditation from the state because they fail

to meet the requirements. The state requires that a teacher teach no more than 6 classes a day and that her classes not exceed 30 pupils during each session. However, at the Negro schools most teachers teach as many as eight classes a day with more than 40 pupils in attendance at each session.

In spite of the fact that there are more Negro taxpayers in Jefferson County and that the county buys three new school buses annually, the Negro school children are given only two buses and most often these are hand-me-down buses from whites. Many Negroes are transported as far as 20 miles to school, while passing a white school only a few miles away...

After the election, an additional 250 persons were registered in Madison County before the pace slackened in December. Task Force worker Sadie Jones and David Dukes attended two meetings of the school board and presented the demands which the steering committee had drawn up. They were also involved, as was the whole North Florida project, in a reshaping of their program, following the big election push. Also, Spiver Gordon arrived shortly after the election to take permanent charge of the project. The period it took him to familiarize himself with the staff, programs and people probably prevented him from immediately taking up the post-election slack.

In Chattahoochee a Progressive Club was formed to raise money for the operation of a community center and to help plan and carry out the program. In November they raised enough money to support the center for two months and by the installation of a juice bar and pinball machine, an additional \$107 was raised the first month. Soda pop, potato chips, candy, etc. are also sold by the teenagers in the center to raise money for its operation. One of the first projects of the Progressive Club was a series of fund-raising

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events for the "heater project"; they scheduled a talent show, square dance, hoedown and formal dance, all of which would have an admission fee. Stu Wechsler met with employees of the Florida State Hospital (the state's largest mental hospital) to see if anything could be done about patient and employment conditions there (example: one Negro ward with 354 patients must manage on 9 bars of soap a week).

In Havana the staff tried to find out how many Negroes were registered to vote in city elections. They had trouble finding out, and prospects of improving the situation were not good anyway because the city registration books are only open 6 days a year. The CIG (Civic Interest Group) started to expand its program from Quincy to include Havana with its citizenship classes and community improvement program. The staff also worked on a community survey to see if there was interest in having a freedom school and community center. The staff reported that there were no recreation facilities for Negroes anywhere in Havana.

When trying to eat at the Havana Bus Terminal restaurant, two of four Negro testers were trapped in a phone booth by the manager, who had picked up and loaded a shotgun. A white female observer outside was knocked down and had her camera ripped from her neck. The four testers were then taken to a gas station nearby, where they were threatened for an hour before they were released. The manager told them "If any nigger ever comes to my place, someone will go to hell. As long as I can pull a trigger, no nigger will ever use the front door of my place". The following day, Richard Williams, a white volunteer, was arrested on a traffic charge and during his 2-day

stay in the county jail, white prisoners were released from their cells to beat him.

Gadsden County had 130 Negroes register in November after the election. Among a number of their public accommodations tests was one at the B&B restaurant where a Negro couple was charged \$7.11 for a ham sandwich. Negotiations by Quincy CORE failed to resolve the situation and several days later 15 people participated in an "eat-in" which turned out to be a "shut-out", because the restaurant owner closed rather than serve them. Some days later they received a letter from a representative of the management saying "The management would rather have a bunch of hogs eat there than you and your kind". At Clark's Motor Court four Negroes were chased out with a chair by the manager, while another man threatened them with a knife. The radio and TV classes continued in freedom hall and a freedom library was opened with 1,000 books and a selection of records.

A community survey called "Operation Dialogue" was begun. Its purpose was to poll a section of the Negro community about what they felt their most important problems were. The following is a tabulation made during the project before all the results were in; still, three concerns seemed to be much more important than the others:

Better schools....182	Better recreation facilities....27
Better jobs.....181	Better housing.....26
Better roads.....174	Better medical facilities.....14
Better police..... 37	Mail delivered to house..... 9

On December 8, an arsonist set six fires in the CORE office in Quincy. The police department said they received an anonymous phone tip about the fires

at 3:30 AM; the fire department did come and put the fires out. They were started with rubbish soaked in kerosene and did some damage to the floors and furnishings. Reports and records in the files appeared to have been deliberately destroyed by the arsonist. The CORE workers were roused from bed at 4 AM and rushed to the office. Viewing the damage after the fires had been put out, Spiver said, "Florida at one time had the reputation of being one of the better of the Southern states, but this proves that the haters in Florida have come out of the same rotten barrel as those in Mississippi and Alabama." He said that the project had duplicates of all the records which were destroyed and stated that the arsonist "did not scare us and he did not inconvenience us; he wasted his time."

About 75 people went down to the Liberty County courthouse in Bristol on Saturday, December 12, only to find that the registrar had decided to take that day off - the day the registration office is usually open. Liberty County had no Negroes on the rolls and was widely known in north Florida to both whites and Negroes as one of the toughest counties to crack. The Negroes in Gadsden County advised CORE workers not to go into the county because conditions were so bad. In 1956 twelve Negroes managed to register, but the whites gave them such a hard time that they all went back and removed their names from the rolls, and some even left the county. (See attached clipping). On Wednesday, December 16, the registrar announced the office would be open. In an atmosphere of peaceful quiet, 62 Negroes went to the courthouse and 62 Negroes registered to vote. The all-white voters list in Liberty County became a thing of the past; these 62 are believed to be, in effect, the first Negroes registered there in the 20th century.

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In January, cartons of materials began pouring into the office for the beginning of a community center in Quincy. The Free Press ran an article saying that CORE would help get the center started--but that the money, staff, building and programming would have to come from the community.

A few days later, the owner of the local Jitney-Jungle donated materials to the project's First Emancipation Program on January 22. And in February, James Dennis Harmeling, grad students in psychology and ex-Task Force worker, announced his running for student body president at the University of Florida, in the Freedom Party; this produced the first integrated slate of student candidates.

Said Stuart Wechsler: "North Florida is on the road to Freedom. All we need is the car fare."