

Staff Discussions, Canton COFO Office, April 2, 1965

Staff Education

The voting bill has changed things over night. We're faced with a need for immediate political education. We have to learn the political set up of the areas in which we work-- how the school board is selected; how to get appropriate road supervisors elected; how sewers get put in etc. We have to appreciate the differences between areas, as those between Canton and Brandon; Brandon and Carthage, etc. We have to learn about the factions in the white community and how to use them to our advantage. One means of educating ourselves is the Mississippi Blue Book; another is reading county and city newspapers and keeping files from them on what's happening in our areas. As for receiving help from "educators", we agreed we'd rather have individuals travelling around the district for workshops, discussions, dispensing of information etc. than have gatherings at central places fairly frequently. How to decide who these educators could be is a delicate problem. Bringing in outside experts could be an invitation to exploitation. Maybe we shouldn't even have people come in; perhaps local people should go out, spending periods of time with various kinds of experts in other parts of the county. We don't necessarily need people who know everything; we want people who are willing to learn along with the community.

Future Direction of the Movement

FIF proposals, COFO demands etc. are no longer radical now that the promise of the vote is almost fulfilled. What we've been fighting for will now come just as a part of the natural political processes of the nation. Which leaves us with the question of what are we trying to accomplish; are we trying to basically change the existing structure or are we willing to become a part of and work within that structure. Jewitt suggested, on the one hand, that we'll probably try using the vote for a number of years, and if that doesn't bear good fruits we'll look for a new approach. On the other hand George Raymond argued that the "whole country is illegal; now we go along with some parts; other parts we don't; somewhere along the line we're going to have to decide whether we can really go along with the country or not." A related problem was defined by Jewitt: "Now we can talk to a lot of people when they can't vote. But as soon as they get the vote we won't be able to talk to as many." George and others emphasized the need to do something about the fact that 3 or 4 people are making decisions for all people as things stand now.

Reorganization of Fourth District

Using his workshops--lead to programs--lead to communication--lead to more workshops-- diagram Jewitt sketched out plans for trying to strengthen the programs and communication sections of our set up. A key factor in these plans is the establishment of a district office, most likely in Philadelphia, which would put out a district news letter with reports, a calendar, stories etc. Also special mailings on specific programs (school lunch program, voting bill etc.) would go out from this office. The office would be a central library for the district, too. Richard Tinsley has agreed to be district communications man, travelling around with camera, etc., taking care of publicity, too. The question of what this reorganization means for Madison County (since it includes the spreading out of staff into all counties in the district) was raised. No decisions were made about replacement of staff, since not all staff were present. But there was general agreement that the people presently

concentrated in the Madison County vicinity would move out to cover Scot, Smith, Simpson, Lake and Rankin as well.

Things to Discuss in Mattiesburg

1. The voting bill, its contents and what it implies for our work.
2. Are we revolutionaries or now trying to become part of the national political scene.
3. Martin Luther King and his relationship to "the real movement."
4. Reports from each project.
5. Staff education.

Everyone agreed to wanting small discussions instead of just all mass meeting situations.