

FIFTH DISTRICT COFO STAFF MEETING, APRIL 14-17, 1965,
WAVELAND, MISSISSIPPI

The Fifth District Staff, very despondent and concerned over the little progress made at the State Staff meeting, decided that we were going to meet and concentrate on the work that we are engaged in instead of our personal and personell problems. And believe it or not WE DID IT!

We planned periods for play, periods for rest, periods for bull sessions and times for serious probings into the problems that the Movement is now faced with. And we played, rested and probed. We present you with the results of our probings, its hopes that it will stimulate more thought and action.

These minutes were compiled from notes taken by Phyllis Cunningham and Nancy Sours, and from tape recordings. They were compiled by Corneila Mack, Gwen Robinson and Marion Davidson. The attempt was to record the main ideas which emerged from the meeting, and to get across the spirit of the meeting. Where specific people are shown as having said something, they are sometimes directly quoted, sometimes not. One significant session is not included in the minutes. That was an evening we sang with a troop of boy scouts from Picayune who happened to be at Waveland--we led freedom songs and they led other songs and newly-learned freedom songs.

FDP

Much discussion on FDP. See letter to FDP, which includes the main points of the discussion. Other specific suggestion: 1) keep records of people who are active. 2) conduct business by letter as much as possible, so have records. 3) request radio time in writing, and send a copy to FCC. 4) may be possible to get radio time as an educational service through a different organization than MFDP; then part of the time might be paid for under tax exemption donations. But must be careful about contents of program if we would want tax exemptions.

There was some talk about the amount of FDP work being done outside the state and the lack of organizing going being in the state. Why is there an FDP office in Washington? And why is all activity centered around it?

Some additional comments--Foreman--FDP office was set up in Washington, D.C. because of lobbying necessary for Congressional Challenge. What has happened is that in the state there is every little program. For the Challenge to succeed, FDP must be viable in Mississippi. SNCC staff who are from Mississippi have right to take active part in FDP. SNCC has tried not to exert pressure and control. Hope Mississippi staff would work on FDP. Trying let FDP independent--e.g. we support FDP summer project, though a lot of people are unhappy about it. SNCC has been contributing money to help get FDP off the ground. Distinction between FDP and COFO is not clear. FDP applies political pressure, COFO deals with social and economic problems in communities. Some people wear two hats--could take off FDP hats for non-political problems and put on COFO garb.

Questions asked: Why is it that COFO really isn't selling in our area? Why won't people organize?

Doug Smith: FDP is given to people on a silver platter. People don't make decisions because they don't feel need for decisions to be made. We should help people to understand how decisions are made and get them to see how they should be involved in decisions. People in Mississippi have never participated in political party. Let people make mistakes and let them grow from mistakes.

Waveland, Mississippi
April 14-16, 1965

To the Freedom Democratic Party:

At this Program Planning Meeting of the 5th Congressional District COFO Staff, many topics were discussed. Due to the fact that we believe that the FDP is so very important in the Movement and because so much of our concern is to support the FDP, most of our discussion was related to the FDP. We have some questions, criticisms, and some suggestions for action which the FDP may find useful. We have decided to submit these to you for your consideration:

Has the principle upon which the FDP was founded, the right of all individuals to have a voice in making decisions which affect their lives, been forgotten? It seems to us that many of the decisions of the FDP are not made on the "grass-roots" level but are imposed on communities by the FDP "power structure".

We realize that the FDP is a political party and works within the established political system but, we ask that the FDP be cautious in order not to compromise its principles and "take-on" bad values of that system.

It is these questions as well as our concern about FDP that have led us to suggest certain things the FDP consider doing. We would also like to ask the FDP to suggest to us ways we can work to help the FDP. We would like to know what mistakes we have made in attempting to support the FDP in the past.

Suggestions:

- A. Greater political activity on the local and precinct level.
 - 1. Weekly precinct meetings
 - 2. Political education program
 - a. Discussion of local, state and federal government and politics
 - b. Use of various teaching aids, such as charts showing structure of city, county, state and national government.
 - 3. More decision making on the local rather than the state level.
 - 4. Greater involvement in political activity on the local level
 - a. running of candidates
 - b. writing of platforms taking stands on local issues
- B. A member of each COFO project staff to work specifically with the FDP.
This person would share responsibility for developing a political program
- C. A greater effort by state officers to communicate with local FDP people.
Some persons feel that vital information often gets no further than the Jackson Office, which prevents much decision making on a local level.
 - 1. Increased number of mailings
 - 2. Purchase of radio time
- D. A clearer definition of the FDP structure, spelling out the responsibilities of each office holder at the precinct levels, also county and district & state.
- E. Greater support for the Congressional Challenge and for free elections in 1965 on the local, district and state levels which would involve direction by FDP members. For example: demonstrations, sit-ins, etc.
- F. Crash programs to survey all Mississippi Counties, to take place within a given period of time, in order to make known economic facts and conditions of life in those counties and to do ground-work for FDP expansion.
- G. An active program of expansion
 - 1. Into counties which are not being worked.
 - 2. To actively involve more people in the FDP

We pledge our support and hope that we can work effectively together.
Fifth District COFO Staff

C. Martin: Do you go along with anything, even if you know someone is making a mistake? What about if the mistake is going to reflect on other people?

Gwen Robinson: We set out to organize. We believe that given information, people can make decisions. We want to see change now or soon. We see people we say we have faith in not doing what we want done, Guyot and others' feeling is that can't wait on them, so act.

Forman: Gwen put her finger on something. People can get frustrated if don't realize it is a long-term struggle. Can't fool ourselves. I won't see the end of discrimination in my lifetime. We have short-range objectives--e. g. the Challenge will be over by summer.

Mary Larsen: FDP is functioning better in rural than urban areas. If you find an issue urban people care about, and get people involved, then maybe involve FDP and help FDP function better. We're trying to find basic needs in urban areas.

Johnnie Mae Walker: Most people in FDP are saying people organized last summer. It wasn't based on the poor man. That's why we must reorganize, we organized the wrong people.

Doug: I disagree. Didn't organize wrong people, organized who was available. May have to organize against who organized.

Forman: Need to make chairman responsible to membership and made membership recognize that it's just as strong as anybody else. In reorganizing, need to broaden base. When first organize, you organize what is available, then you broaden base. In this district, I'm sure there are people who are very good people that we have not gotten out there.

Charles Glenn: I think one of our purposes in the state is to get people aware of politics.

Johnnie Mae: I think that the Movement before it developed a political party was the greatest thing that ever happened, 'cause you wasn't conservative, you were thinking about human lives and how to deal with human lives. But now, somewhere on the way, all us done got chopped away from that 'cause we're thinking political like. I think we're going to have to get right back to that starting point if we intend to even attempt to make politics work for people, because you got to understand the basic need of people and people got to understand their own needs. And you can't do that thinking political like. Politics isn't my freedom. Politics is my justice. My freedom is this thing that's in me, that makes me want to live and want to make me relate myself to other people and understand people's lives....We're not reaching out for those people that this thing is really concerning, plain people. How many people have taken the time to go and let those people know that Challenge is for them? And how it's supposed to work for them? And talk to these people it really should consist of, these little people, these uneducated people. That guy in the pool hall, drinking that wine///People's lives is constantly being destroyed every day. And we is so pure, we love everybody. But we think we so damn good we can't go in a pool room and we can't talk to those folks. I say if we talk to enough people, get people to understand what they're up against and what they have to do, don't none of us have to organize shit. But they'll do it themselves.

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Forman: nothing I said is meant to criticize any particular operation of the FDP. Let's talk about what we want to see done.

REPORTS FROM LAUREL AND BILOXI AND DISCUSSION OF UNION ORGANIZING

Gwen Robinson: Masonite plant is typical example of labor union falling into pattern of the area in which it operates. Didn't allow Negroes a chance to gain seniority. Did this through Bracket seniority, where whites accumulate bracket seniority but Negroes couldn't. Right after 1962 when the Unions got together (white and Negro sublocals combined), Negroes were given step-ups, crosses were burned at their homes, etc. and they usually refused to take their step-ups. 400 Negro men signed powers of attorney for Ben Smith to represent them in a suit against their local. They are asking for backpay and also asking to be put in the places they should be according to seniority. This is of course if they are able to carry out the job.

Originally Negro men were held for the lowest jobs. A bracket means a kind of job that gets the same pay, and generally does the same kind of thing. A Negro who starts at the lowest bracket will have to get to the top of this bracket before he can get into the next bracket, whereas a whiteman might be hired to start at the say third bracket from the bottom so he would naturally go up much faster than the Negro. brackets are more according to the wages than the type of work, but the wage reflects the type of work. According to some of the guys this is illegal according to union rules. There are plenty of cases where a Negro man was never asked if he wanted to step up.

Many Negro women work in schools at 50¢ an hour. On the average people working in hotels and coffee shops--cooking, washing dishes, etc. make 37¢ an hour. I talked to some of them about trying to organize a restaurant workers and hotel workers union. I went to Atlanta and talked to some men who had been involved in the Dobbs House strike in Atlanta, Ga. That strike failed miserably. It seems that in Mississippi, which has the right to work law, it's almost impossible to organize a union. Georgia has a right to work law too. The men in Atlanta said if you don't get the teamsters involved so that they would refuse to ship food into the hotel, you could forget it. In Atlanta, they had the teamsters with them, but hotels hired trucks and Negroes to scab. I'm sure the same thing will happen in Miss.. In Mississippi the law against picketing makes things still harder. These guys who were labor guys felt that really the best thing to do--and they said this to me in all sincerity--is to start poisoning the food in restaurants, not deadly poison but stuff that will induce ptomaine poisoning. The only way it could work is if you really had your community organized. Preachers would have to preach begging Negroes not to scab and urging Negroes not to run trucks for the management of the place that was having a strike. You really got to have the teamsters on your side, plus the ptomaine. If you have these things, you might have a successful strike. So these union officials felt that anybody who would attack organizing maids or restaurant and hotel workers had really taken something on. And then they said, "But you should try it."

Phyllis: How seriously do you take that about poisoning food?

Gwen: I thought the man kidding. He really was serious.

Phyllis: They would find out who was doing it and then there would really be a mess.

Gwen: This is the way he felt--organizing labor unions is a dirty business. But the ends justify the means...There is a register of labor unions that tells county by county what unions there are...Walter Tillow in the Atlanta research office is eager to help any group that wants to organize anything to do with labor. He has many contacts. I talked with him about trying to organize women who work at the poultry factory. He got in touch with a union official in New Orleans who said as soon as we got the people together he was ready to come in organize. We don't know how to do this kind of stuff...There are pushes being made in various sections of the country for a coalition between labor and civil rights. Labor is feeling badly about their not contributing more to civil rights. Some of them want to get back into some action.

Marion Davidson: I wonder whether we should discuss the feasibility of union organizing--whether we have the resources, maybe our nonviolence make it impossible for us to do this. I don't feel that we can do very much.

Paul Shanahan: I think we are just expected to be contacts.

Susie Clippinger: Does there have to be violence?

Phyllis: If we call a union in, you know there is going to be violence.

Linda Wilson: I don't think we would be the ones to organize unions. I think we are too timid for that. And anyway, we're nonviolent. It's a guy at Highlander Folk School said he would be willing to come down and help organize a union.

Paul: It's much easier for people to accept the fact a person has a right to vote, but they won't as easily accept the fact that you have the right to a job. They say that's something you have to fight for yourself. They think everybody should be independent.

Bob Moss: The Negro getting the right to vote in Miss. hasn't been that direct a threat to the white man, but the Negro organizing and getting jobs which the white man might get otherwise is more of a threat.

Dickie Flowers: I disagree with you. Voting is a threat...

Johnnie Mae: If voting wasn't a threat, we wouldn't have the problem we get now. Anything you try to organize in Mississippi you're going to have trouble with...

Dickie: The main places where people work in Biloxi are Keesler Air Force Base, Veterans Administration, hotels like Sun and Sands, Broadwater, Burna Vista, Etc.

Sam Walker and John Else: Edgewater, another hotel in Biloxi was foreclosed by a big Texas bank. We've heard it's controlled by LBJ. Have sent to SNCC research to look into it. Also true of the Markham and the Sun and Sands. The bank also owns the whole Edgewater Plaza now, too.

Sam: I talked with the employer out at Keesler Air Force Base. They need janitors, kitchen help, and general laborers. Lowest pay, \$1.76 an hour.

Doug: We should talk about how we can get people that are unemployed to apply for those jobs. What are the procedures?

Sam: The jobs will be no more than 90 days. Preference is to be given to veterans. There is no test to take... You simply fill out an application. You have to be 18 or have a high school diploma. There is an employment office on the base.

Doug: I think we should get people that are unemployed and march them down to the employment office.

Peter Nemenyi: I think we should do a lot of that. We should explore the number of Negro postal clerks. There shouldn't be any difficulty getting post office jobs because if there is any difficulty locally, we can get that cracked from Washington pretty easily.

ORGANIZING MAIDS

Peter: We ought to take part in massive campaign for legislation, on amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Minimum Wage Law. It should be amended to include a lot of people. Try to get the amendment to cover maids, who are 50% of the employed Negro females in Miss. and Alabama, and farm laborers...In connection with alliance with the labor movement, the Taft Hartley Act has in it anti-labor provisions, including the allowing the states to make their own anti-labor laws. thus you get the so-called right to work laws, which make it hard to organize. There has been effort to amend the T. H. Law and take this section out. We should find about that and get behind it.

Henry Ahlgren: Does Congress have the right to place domestics under the minimum wage law? I thought interstate commerce had to be involved.

Peter: Could find out from a labor organization.

Gwen: I talked with some people who had tried to organize maids in Albany, Ga. The situation in Albany and that in Laurel are similiar in that there are so many people who need jobs that if the maids walk out, there are other Negroes ready to replace them. They felt the maids would take a year before they would be able to do anything. They would have to start a savings club where they put aside \$1.50 a week for a year, so when they did strike they would have this fund to live on. Because there are so many Negro women with 5 or 6 children and no husband and this is the only money coming in. If you can't show these people a way their kids can still eat, they're just not going to walk off their \$3.00 a day jobs.

Cornelia Mack: In Hattiesburg, maids have been talking about forming a union. Have looked into this and gotten discouraging replies.

Mary Lu: What are our attitudes and responsibilities toward people who lose jobs as a result of your organization of them?.....no answers.....

Cornelia: What we've been told is that organizing maids is essentially hopeless unless you could get nearly everybody, to avoid the probelm of scabbing. The impetus of the civil rights movement might do it, where it is strong. Another possibility is that there might be a union organized which included restaurant workers and people who work in schools.

Sadie: Maybe instead of trying to organizing maids, we could push the poverty bill to spend more money in creating new jobs.

Charles Glenn: I don't know if I would want to even attempt to do that. I don't feel that people should be maids. What I'm concerned about is getting black women in some of these factories where Miss. Ann is working, and letting them make some money like Miss. Ann. Miss Ann can stay at home and take care of her own kids. I think it's a poor start to start talking about how to organize more people to be Toms. I'd be all for sending people out to these factories. We've been thinking how to apply pressure to make them hire Negroes. Friends of SNCC groups can arrange demonstrations against chains such as Continental Can if Negroes aren't hired.

Doug: I think the only way we can eliminate the problem of Negroes receiving less pay than whites is that first you got to eliminate your maids and ditch diggers and your real low people. I think it's time to start taking maids out of the kitchen and start taking them down to places like Reliance Factory and having those people apply for those jobs, which means that if we apply enough pressure the manufacturer will have to hire people who have some skill and not just white people. In the Reliance Factory in Hattiesburg, 2/3 of the people who work there are white girls who came out of the hills--don't have much education.

Johnnie Mae: In the Pine Bros. Packing Co. in Hattiesburg, when the minimum wage came, they eliminated the Negro women and sent them into the kitchen and put all white women there.

Peter: I agree with what you have said, but there will be for quite a long time maids. Should it be allowed that they work for 30¢ an hour? We have to cope with that problem.

Doug: I think I see the picture here. The question of maids is not to be eliminated but there should be fair wages.

Paul: Right. We are guaranteed these other jobs. All we have to do is get them. We work with maids and we work for jobs. Work to improve the conditions for the maids and not to eliminate this form of employment.

Dave Edmonton: Won't get maids unionized and improve conditions until we don't have so many women who want jobs as maids--because of scabbing when we get maids organized. Suggest get more women in other jobs. Then we can demand higher wages for maids.

Doug: I'm going to speak for organizing maids. If you organize maids to where Miss. Ann would have to pay her maid \$40 a week and she's making \$65 a week she's only making \$25 a week after she pays her maid. She has to either pay her maid or come off that job. If she comes off the job, there's another opening for a maid you organized.

Charles: There're a lot of unemployed white people too. Will get the jobs. Can afford to put kids in nursery.

PETER: OKAY, OVER.

Dickie: Lots of discrimination at the employment office. Whites will be looking for jobs too. Employment agencies will give them to white people.

Phyllis: To talk about alternatives to being maids, must organize maids to talk about things.

Susie: If give maids a tiny bit, a little raise satisfies people enough to put off the revolution.

Doug: How can maids apply pressure to the federal government?

Mary: Write many letters, from various communities. k FDP. Groups up north. March of maids on Washington.

Peter: Work toward training programs. In discussion, emphasis should be on getting into kinds of jobs that have more dignity. Discrimination by employment agencies can be fought by pressure on US Depart. of Labor which finances them. Emphasis: breaking into available jobs, creating new jobs.

Charles: Sympathy demonstration in other parts of the country can help create jobs.

Phyllis: In Hattiesburg we've heard that when a maid is hired through the employment office, which is federally supported, the family that hired the maid is told what to pay the maid. They are strongly encouraged not to pay over the sum that the employment office sets up. In a sense the employment office is setting wages for maids. If we can find out if this is really true, and the same thing is happening in other places, we could apply pressure through the federal government on the employment office. Might demonstrate around the employment offices in the south that set wage scales for Negroes.

Doug: If a person is fired can appeal that to the employment office. If fired, will receive social security probably or may get job back. To apply pressure for maids, need crash program. Maids can send letters, telegrams, protest at social security office.

Peter: Most state employment agencies supported by federal government. Write to Department of Labor, giving details on discrimination. Send copies to congressional committees dealing with labor. If get no answer, write again and send copies to committees. Covered by title 6 of Civil Right law..... I think that we should among other things concentrate on employment, and use that to organize around. You can get people to register and vote once they see the connection between that and the jobs should be getting or why aren't getting them....We talked about the pros and cons of organizing maids. I think everybody agreed that we should work very hard on the alternatives, on finding other work for them, on Federal Programs. See what (if anything) can be done under the poverty program. Research committee comes in here. Find out all information on available jobs, and get lots of applications in for them. There are a good many jobs now available and would take qualified Negroes--and the word qualified isn't even used as an excuse to keep them out--if they only applied or pushed a little bit. It's lack of information about these jobs which is keeping Negroes out of them. A larger number of jobs are available and can be opened by using a good deal of pressure--civil rights law, provisions for companies with federal contracts. Research needed here too. Also job training is very important. Can work on discrimination by similar methods in hospitals, public health, welfare administration. Suggest at least one person on a project be in charge of this sort of stuff. Not instead of voter registration, organization, etc. because it can be used as a way to organize people. Use this both for what it produces and because that's one way to get people together around the things they are interested in. Sometimes the government doesn't do what it's supposed to and you can tell them, if you could elect officials, they would be doing a better job--so you get back to political activity.

CO-OPS

Talk on co-ops....Peter Nemenyi asked to explain Peter N.: Consumers cooperatives--everyone has one vote, the profits are divided. Producers cooperative is on same general idea. Business is owned by those who work there. Since is non-profit should be tax exempt (thinks this is true in some states) but in Mississippi only tax-exempt co-ops are agricultural. Cooperative League of the U. S. holds workshops. Jesse Morris, Judi Nusbaum, James Mays (National Sharecroppers Fund) know about them. They often fail. They are businesses and need efficient management. For references (on co-ops and many other matters) see notes, "use of information to gain rights". There are lots of all-white co-ops that Negroes have a right to get into. Lots of farmers, rural electrical co-ops. In Selma working on sewing co-op. Main differences between co-ops and usual corporations: 1) shareholders have to do with the business itself, as producers or consumers. 2) one man-one vote rather than vote according to amount of stock owned. For selling--see National Cooperatives, Inc. Buy wholesale and save middleman. Eric Weinberger has been working on a saddle-making co-op in Meridian. Ruleville ladies are making quilts. In Canton are setting up shirt-making co-op. See George Raymond about that.

Cornelia: A trouble--have difficulty getting into regular markets.

Marion: We should discuss whether to go into all these areas. Maybe we should organize a political party and forget about co-ops and federal programs. We have limited time.

Mary: We're here because of problems of organizing in urban areas. We're here to try to find ways to function better in urban areas.

Bob Beech: Richard Dowdy, with the Office of Economic Opportunity came to talk with me and Rev. Crimmett in Hattiesburg. Rev. Johnson of Pratt St. Church in Jackson was taking him around. Evidently expression of Washington's awareness that state and local governments serve as bottlenecks rather than channels for the Negro Community. He was spreading the word on Project Headstart.

Cornelia: Could set up training programs--e. g. secretarial training--under community action (anti poverty) program.

Dickie: There are training programs on the coast. Go to employment office. Take a test there. Don't need to be unemployed. Mainly take people who are married. Job is guaranteed.

Phyllis: Be critical of training programs. Some are swindles.

Curtis Styles: Are training courses at Keesler. Open to civilians.

RESEARCH

See notes by Peter Nemenyi, "Use of information to gain rights". Reports by counties of Overall Economic Development Plan (Program). In Mississippi these contain information as of late 1962 or early 1963. Mississippi Manufacturers Directory--get from Mississippi Research and Development Center, Jackson. Costs \$4.00 without binder, \$5.00 with binder. Students for Democratic Society, 1100 E. Washington St., Ann Arbor, Michigan. They have pamphlets. One deals specifically with research. Can get information from CORE office in New Orleans. Coast Area Mississippi Monitor has statistics on the whole Mississippi Coast. Get it from Chamber of Commerce.

DISTRICT OFFICE

The group decided to set up a district office in Hattiesburg. Five people are to work out of the office: two on research, one on FDP (to be a bridge between the district and Jackson and Washington), a communications person, a youth coordinator (MSU). All of the members of the district staff, except the communications person are to be mobile.

Forman: suggestions for person in district office in communications--press contact, legal coordinator, preparing affidavits, collector of information. Get people from communities to do communications, FDP research. Youth coordinator--that involves making contacts with a lot of high school students in the district and developing programs, parties, picnics, etc.

Phyllis: Suggestion for youth work--aim also at these not attracted to MSU--those in bars, pool halls, dropouts. Also what about work on the Young Democratic.

FDP person--political education, hold workshops. Except for communications person, people be mobile--spend considerable time on other working projects.

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Doug: hopes the five officers in the proposal would be reflected on the projects.

Have people working in projects on MSU, research, communications, FDP. ^{Person} from district office would serve as an aid to the person working on MSU, etc.

Forman hopes something similar would be established on a state level. One of big problems--no way for program information to get down to projects without people having to go there themselves.

EXPANSION

Doug: In the 5th District, we are working in only five of a possible 16 counties.... There are around 40 of us bunched up on five projects....We talk about expansion program all of the time but we haven't done anything.

Gwen: We are tied to our projects....You know we talk about being 'organizers' who blow into an area, talk, walk, organize and are on our way.... We're working ourselves out of a job supposedly....but we can't tell the people that from the "git" anymore.

Doug: I propose that there be a team of six men whose function will be to go into new counties in the 5th District, organizing people around the FDP. I suggest that the staff for this team be Charles Glenn, Charles Hartfield, Arthur Jacobs, Lonnie Johnson, James Bass, and Everett McKeller. That this team would start functioning as soon as necessities were available....Charles Glenn unofficially leads the Rovers....I propose that the group work in Lamar, Marion and Jeff Davis County. Doug has over 100 contacts there...people worked on Freedom Vote. In Bassville...a church where people from the three counties go, meet second and forth Sundays of each month; can start to organize through this church. Pearl River County....Picayune controlled by a drove of brothers; no city elections whatsoever--much fear--Mack Parker lynched--is isolated; Bogulusa, La. near by--not too many Negroes there, at least in town few jobs; federal government has jobs--but they are worked by people from surrounding counties. Can start job opportunities program there if someone is willing to go in and stick it out....Some veterans have registered to vote....Some veterans have registered to vote....In Picayune some people are making a lot of money and are not dependent on the guys who have been running the town....Hancock County....Bay St. Louis is now 6,000. Is expected by 1970 to be 75,000 due to NASA; maybe we ought to be doing some ground work....Many coming into county very soon to work for G.E. will be very skilled people, especially engineers.... Marion County....very rural; middle class, independent farmers, few factories; J. B. Fobbs logging company only place that hired many Negroes; about 100 Negroes, 4 whites (they are foreman)...recently court order....registrar under injunction not to discriminate against Negroes, anyone 21 by general election should be able to file an application

Doug: understands Negroes in Marion County haven't had trouble registering to vote until 1964; now the president of the NAACP in Columbia makes all the recommendations to the registrar as to who is registered.

LONG DISCUSSION ON FIANCES

Suggestions that projects pool money, then money be taken out of pool to go to projects and district office. Suggestion that projects be self-supporting. Suggestion that give contacts to each project and let them draw on these contacts. Reasons--a lot of money wouldn't come if it did not come to a specific project that donor had touch with.

Forman: (history of COFO fund raising): COFO didn't do outside fund raising, because it would get involved with the civil rights organizations. For a long time

FINANCES CON'T AND A BIT ON GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

was supported by the Voter Education Project. In November 1963, they decided to discontinue funds. SNCC felt the operation in Miss. and the idea of Cofo was so important that we had to try and pick up that budget. In early 1964, we tried to get other organizations that were part of COFO to try to meet some of that central budget in Jackson. CORE contributed \$500 to the central budget. But they wanted the forth distirct as ^{son} a sort of territorial focus for CORE in the state. With the advent of the summer, money started coming into the office in COFO and then with the summer volunteers came the problem for one, how can you have central administration of those funds and it was felt that it was just impossible. to do that but we said that projects should not engage in indepent fundraising. But if friends of people wanted to send some money to them, we wouldn't try to discourage that. What happened was that people developed allegiances to the projects where they were working and raised money for them. The policy was that the staff itself would not engage in external fund-raising but some of the staff began to do that too. At the moment there is no clear-cut policy on that. I would be concerned that whatever we establish can be established on a uniform basis within the state.

.....I think we ought to discuss the subject of really trying to get people back into school. I think that a lot of people in the movement have tremendous potentialities for future leadership within the state. Try to get them into school. With formal training they can be more of an asset to the movement. The movement is at the point now where some people can go back to school in order to further their education and then come back out again. I think that all of us should be thinking about that.

FREEDOM SCHOOLS

(Joint Meeting with 3rd District.)

12

Jessie Harris...Thinks that direct action should talk about the system.

Sam Walker--White freedom school teachers ineffective. Just talk. Show no relationship between freedom school and daily experiences. Charlie Cobb in his Freedom School proposal says students should canvass half a day, discuss experiences the rest of the day Get education through direct action--eg. In march in Gulfport, students found out something about power structure and "Toms".

Lorne--Questions whether a white can teach--some things have to be said by blacks to blacks.

Forman--Right that in freedom school proposal the emphasis was supposed to be on the students getting out in the afternoon doing work in their community and reevaluating those experiences and supplementing them in the morning in the freedom schools. What happened is important to us. That is that the original idea of something, the way that you want to put it into practice, can be altered if you don't pay attention to it. My criticism is not of the freedom school teachers but of the SNCC staff, which includes myself, because we actually did not pay close attention to what the curriculum was and also what was going on in those freedom schools and we didn't have evaluations of the freedom schools and we didn't have evaluations of the freedom school teachers and what was being taught during the summer. On projects, staff was out doing voter registration and they just let the freedom schools sit over there and the staff didn't visit the freedom schools. On the other hand, I support what Jesse is talking about in terms of who are freedom school teachers. I think it's a very important question, because a person's background and experience is going to determine a lot of what he is going to teach. I push for the staff to be freedom school teachers. What we did with the boy scouts last night was not irrelevant. Suppose you had those kids for two to three weeks, talking to them about what you've been doing and so forth...

Joyce Brown--In the summer when freedom school started, you had things like Negro History, math, chemistry, French. I thought the whole concept was to draw in students to really make them become involved, to realize what was going on. Things like ~~this was never~~ really discussed in class. So when fall came, the kids went back to those same subjects. So why come to freedom school for the same stuff you get five days a week?

Lorne--I don't know whether a lot of people even though they've been here almost a year can teach in a freedom school, because of some of the things that I think have to be said in the freedom schools. Unfortunately what I'm talking about has to do with being black and white. It seems to me that the only reason for talking about Negro history in the freedom schools is not so that Negroes know that there were some Negroes who did something some time ago, but so that it has some meaning in an individual's life right here and now. And I think that perhaps that has not been dealt with. That Negro history has sort of like just been French and Spanish, in a sense. And I don't think the people really need that, like that, but they need it another way. And I think that until people are really willing to deal with that.

And I'm not saying that I can, because maybe I grew up almost trying to be white or something like that...I think white people don't usually talk to black people like they're black people. And they don't do that because they don't know how. It's not their fault. It's because we live in a kind of bad horrible world. And we don't know very much about each other. If black kids are going to change or have anything to do with changing the world, then they've got to understand what being black is. The only way to begin to do that is to begin to talk about it. I think most black people have gone through some changes in order to be free.

Doug...I tend to agree with Lorne. The whole idea of ^{white northern} freedom school teachers really frightens the hell out of me. In Hattiesburg this summer I was talking with some of the freedom school teachers, and the cats couldn't even communicate with me on a level that we were sitting down and trying to talk to one another and really try to understand one another. And I was trying to get some idea of what he was teaching freedom schools and they was accepting everything that this person was saying and I got the feeling that this was first because this white person had always been a superior race and Negroes have always looked up to whites and the whole idea of whites coming down from the North to free the Negroes in the South is something that the Negroes looked up to and anything that a white kid can come into a freedom school and say, the Negro community accepts that. In one freedom school class I heard a guy say, "You should try to straighten your hair like mine". And all the kids, said, "How can we do that"? that really frightens me. To me a freedom school is nothing but a discussion group that's trying to understand some of the problems not only in Mississippi but the United States. I feel what happened last summer is that teachers talked to kids and there was no basis for discussions. And that frightens me.

The book Students
Jesse Harris.... on the Left tells of people who have attacked the system. The people involved in this whole book were Negroes, whites and Puerto Ricans. These people had some radical idea how to force somebody to do them right. These are the people who can teach in freedom school...people who are concerned with some type of action and who understand the importance of applying some force in this country to change. I don't care if the people be white, black or yellow or orange. I think if you're involved in something like this, I think you can be a freedom school teacher. What I'm saying is this, the whole idea of freedom schools to me is the people who want action and who understand, who've been involved..and I can't see a cat coming down from Yale University with a PhD in law coming down to teach in f.s.

Lorne...I think that what Jesse said is part of the problem. But I think that what I'm saying is another part. I think that radical change and stuff like that is great, but I think that for people who've been stifled and put upon all their lives, some other things are relevant because sometimes some of this has to do with how you begin to be able to feel that you are a person who can do some of those things.

Jesse...I think COFO should concern itself with teachers in the f.s. the type of background they come from. A person who lives in the slum who disagrees with the power structure who will be willing to teach in a freedom school..I think he's more qualified to teach in f.s. than a Ph.D.... I think he's more qualified because he has suffered. The same thing about this communications with Negroes. I think anybody can communicate with another person who lives in the same situation, who

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who have the same background and the same thoughts about the power structure.... Food drive was an approach to a way to communicate to be confronted with the problem they have. The stuff that was sent.... I don't go out in the community and just start distributing food and clothes... just giving them to people. I'd say take the box of food to a person's house and set the box right down on the floor and say, "Look, I'm giving you this food, but before I give it to you I want to talk. And I want you to say something back. I want to have a conversation with you around this whole box of food. I can't give you enough food and clothes to last you. The only way I can give it to you is you accept this and be willing to fight for more" I can see that as an approach using this in communication. But I don't think it would work if a person don't understand, or don't come from the same, ^{background} in terms of putting on the power structure. Take some of the guys in the freedom core. I know they carry a knife, I know they hang on the block, I know they quit school, and I know they come from real poor families, and I know that these people is willing to do something. These are the people that I can trust to go out in the community and teach in a freedom school. I think they'd be the best teachers in the freedom school in terms of attacking the administration and the structure.

Forman.. I think that the first problem is, what's the program of the freedom schools. That even has to be talked about before you talk about who's going to teach it. If the program of f.s. is going to be around building a feeling of dignity in the people who are in the school, and mobilizing them or educating them for action.. I think everybody ought to get an education so they can act, so they can equip themselves with some understanding of how to move. If that's the case then a lot of people can't teach in f.s. If you talk about building a sense of dignity within people, then you have to understand the backgrounds from which they came. And if in fact you're willing to get out in the shacks and try to learn the language of the people so that you can understand what they mean when they say something.. 'cause what they say is not what you take it usually. If you're willing to spend a lot of time to understand, and to really try to suffer along with the people before you start talking about teaching people, then that's a different thing. This summer, people came down to teach who had not these experiences.... Lorne, "If I were white and I had to go into a freedom school, the first thing I would say is "I'm white, and you see the color of my skin; it is white, and you know what white folks have done in this country. Let's talk about that." Then people would begin to talk about what it means to be white and black and you'd get over that.... and you could go onto something else. You have to face the fact that there is a difference and it means a lot. But a lot of people suppress that, you see, and they don't understand the experience of a lot of people, because, one, they haven't been through these experiences themselves... and that's what Jesse is talking about... If you want to talk about a sense of dignity, some Negroes cannot teach other Negroes, 'cause they don't know what's happening. I mean they really don't understand the experiences of a lot of people who've been involved in the struggle have some understanding of what it means to be poor, what it means to suffer. It seems to me you're going to have to have somebody like that to teach.... I think that the aim of a freedom school ought to be to get people in motion, to get them in positions of wanting to take a lot of action against the things that are around them in a sense.

Joyce Brown... I knew that there was a problem. But it took me a long long time to realize that I was a Negro. Many people still don't rea-

ize that fact. I don't think until people really know that you are a Negro that you can really become involved. Until you feel like you're black, until you really know what it means to be black, you just aren't until you finally realize the fact that you're black.

Forman.. I think it's important that Negroes do have to find themselves. They do have to come to grips with the fact that they're black, but not so much with the fact that they're black, but not so much with the fact that they're black, but, what do you do about the blackness? What do you do about the fact that some people because of your color have put these shackles around us? In order to do something about that, you have to have a sense of dignity about your own worth as a human being. That's why I think that what happens in demonstrations and what happens in a lot of these towns that we go into, that for the first time people discover that just being black does not mean that they can't have a dignity and that they can get that dignity through action. sense of

TOWARDS A BETTER COMMUNICATION:

Forman.. I think what's involved here is a question of language and of feelings, and a question of these two things being compounded by experiences in the past. What you have here is a very diverse group. A lot of words that people use are really not understood because that's really not what they're trying to say, and then you have people with different cultural backgrounds. I think that everybody has to be sensitive to that, especially working in Mississippi or in any rural area, where these diverse backgrounds meet. You can't talk about that kind of a problem when people get very defensive about it. I think it should be talked about. I am convinced that a lot of people have come into rural areas in these black belt counties and don't understand the customs and the habits of the people they have to work with, and that produces certain frustrations.

Doug.. The thing that frightens me the most is silent people. It frightens me that people tell me, "I'm afraid to speak before that group because certain people try to cut you down with their education."

Foreman.. You have to be sensitive to the people with whom you work. Let's raise the question, "Why am I in the movement?" and "What does the movement mean to me?"

Bennie Jackson.. I can't exactly say why I'm in the movement because it's different from what it was when I first come into the movement. Before the summer volunteers we didn't have these kind of hangups. Now I sit back because I don't understand what's going on.

Lonnie Johnson.. I told Doug I don't like to talk. I told Doug I want to be part of this movement and somebody get up and cut me down.

(laughter)

Doug.. See that's not funny. See that's the Goddamn problem! People laugh when people say stuff like that....

Foreman.. Go ahead Lonnie, talk about what you were saying. You say you get up in a meeting and somebody cut you down. How do they cut you down?

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Lonnie.. Throwing all them big words at my face and all that stuff. Although I have finished high school, some of them big words they say, man, I just don't know the meaning of them.

Arthur L. Jacob (Jake).. I think what he means is that with the vocabulary that a lot of people use around here, if you don't understand the meaning of it, how can you speak to what people have to say? I don't think he really means that they cut him down but he just don't know what to say to contribute to the discussion that usually go on at a meeting. I think that's what he's trying to say.

Dickie Flowers.. In Atlanta a lot of people cut a lot of people down.

Jake.. It is true ain't nobody like to be made like a fool when he come to contribute something.

Lonnie.. And I ain't gonna look like a fool, neither. I'm gonna keep my mouth shut.

Paul.. I don't think it shows any ignorance to ask what a person means, it shows interest, and you shouldn't be afraid to ask what a person means. Cutting down shows ignorance on the part of the person who's cutting you down. Maybe he's afraid of what he's talking about. Maybe he can't go into it deeper himself, and can't explain it better.

John Henry Davis.. I just didn't have anything to say, not that I was afraid of being cut down. And another reason why I didn't say nothing was because a lot of things that were said I didn't understand. I didn't ask because I didn't want to stop the discussion.

Bennie.. Maybe that's part of our trouble at these staff meetings we had in Jackson and Hattiesburg. You had the same people getting up and cutting down everybody got up to say something, and they didn't try to understand what the rest of the people were speaking about.

Phyllis.. I've seen quite a few people cut down other people at meetings and I think that sometimes people knew what was heppening and sometimes they didn't. They couldn't be sure. But I know sometimes when people want to railroad things through they'll use big words and they'll intimidate people who try to question or try to propose something different. I think all of us have felt that at one time or another. I think that certainly stops a person from trying to talk, because you don't really know what's happening because you can't really cope with what people are saying, so you don't say anything. I haven't been aware of any of this here, but I know it has happened in the past and that might be one of the reasons why people wouldn't talk.

James Bass.. I don't think it's so much being afraid of being cut down. There's a reason why the people don't want to talk. My reason is because I don't feel important on the project. I feel like I'm just a dummy, just used for sit-ins or a march or something like that. I come in handy then. Anything else like going out trying to get something over to the peoples in the community, especially with my background in Moss Point, people just don't listen to me.

Foreman.. Why is it that you feel that with that background people won't give you certain responsibilities?

...long talk on people's backgrounds and how the backgrounds affect

their work. Some people feel that in their hometowns people who knew them before they joined the Movement remember what they were before they joined the movement--fighting, stealing, drinking--and because of that won't listen to them. Several spoke of how they had changed since they joined the movement...talk about respect...

Foreman.. When whites go to Negro churches wearing blue jeans, Negroes say the whites don't respect the church..What's behind that, what's beneath that?

Moses Jackson.. White people go to Negro churches any way, the colored people don't say nothing...White people think they got the advantage over Negroes because they can go any way and Negroes can't.

John Else.. During the summer the response of some of the community people in Gulfport was that the way the people dressed continually, not just to go to church, was offensive mainly because they felt that these people were dressing down in order to try to look like them and they weren't being themselves. And that if they were in their own home town they wouldn't be dressing like that. I think this is something of what Moses was saying about the church situation.

Sam Walker (?).. How were things before the summer volunteers came? How have they changed?

Doug.. The people in Hattiesburg had known each other for years, in some sense understood each other. Similar backgrounds. When summer came, people who had been running the project before had nothing to say about that office. They had nothing to say about decision-making for Hattiesburg. The people in Hattiesburg got the impression, we're too ignorant to work in that movement. People were not recruited from Mississippi to work in that program. Also people from Hattiesburg went to other places, were split up...it's hard to adjust to the new movement. The old movement was primarily all Negroes and quite a few of the old movementers were from Mississippi and in a sense they understood what the problems were in Mississippi and how they could cope with that problem.

Foreman.. From one point of view, summer volunteers really helped to open up the state. In a sense, we won the right to organize in the state. There was a tremendous concern about the lives of the people who were here. You didn't have the time to have the kinds of meetings we're having now. Then look at what happened to the people who were involved. The differences in background led to a feeling of isolation.

We know that we can't isolate people. We cannot have a situation where in a fifth district meeting you got 12 or 15 Negroes and the rest of the people around are white from the outside. I'm not against outsiders. But that brings in a certain isolation for people in a sense. And that isolation cuts off their ability to work. I mean it really does. It frustrates people in a sense. I, you don't think that there's anybody who shares your values, or whom you can talk to and he understands what you're saying, you become isolated and you become frustrated and you're unable to work.

And then there was a new element introduced. And I don't know how this got introduced. There was this talk about who makes decisions. The whole role of organization itself became a question in the state. The whole question some people began, what's freedom? I say that the movement doesn't have the time or the resources to deal with some of

those questions. And I may be wrong, and some people do think I'm wrong and I'm ready to discuss it. But that got introduced and that's one of the frustrating things now. Some people felt that SNCC should be the better society or is SNCC just an instrument to bring about the better society? These problems have helped to keep the isolation. I think it can be overcome. And the way that it can be overcome is that there has to be the kinds of meetings that we're having now. I think also that there has to be an interested and sympathetic person involved who can also help draw out some of those issues in terms of trying to understand what people are trying to say and maybe trying to get people to discuss those things. I would say that the movement didn't go downward in terms of getting the right to organize and organizing certain things which are going to be of long-range benefit. What happened was that the movement changed in terms of the personal relationships that people had with one another. I think that that's part of what Bennie was trying to say when he says, "after the summer project..." That raises some interesting questions. Within SNCC itself we've been grappling with them and I think we've come up with some general ideas. We're convinced that we've got to get more Negroes into the movement. We just have to, for a lot of reasons. One of the reasons is that Negroes in the movement, especially southern Negroes, are in need of people who will live, we hope for the rest of their lives with different sets of problems but also because of the fact that they live in the south there is a feeling that well we've got to deal with these problems and that we're going to be the people of tomorrow who must grapple with some of these problems and we have to begin now. The time of commitment made and that they really can't escape. A lot of people can go back and this can become an experience for them. It's a one-year experience. But for the Negroes it's been an experience all their lives, and what we have to do try to do is to take that experience and put it into creative channels.

But then you see I think that the movement is in a new phase where it's going to require a lot of technical information and that information cannot be given in large groups. It has to be given in very small groups and people have to really grasp. More meetings of this nature have to occur right within the fifth district. People have to think of it on a district basis as I see it, more so than on a project basis.

Now having won the right to organize, then the question comes, what do you do? You have the right to organize in the state of Mississippi and you didn't have that right a year ago. I mean you really didn't. A lot of the frustration comes about because of the technical material, which we can't deny. A lot of people just don't understand what's written on those papers. I mean they really don't. I don't understand some of it myself. I like to think of the staff in two phases. I think that for the first three years you had groundbreaking experience. A lot of people can really break ground. There are certain things you need to do to break ground. You've got to be able to sing, you've got to be able to mobilize a lot of people, you've got to overcome their fear. And we were really struggling to overcome people's fears, and to get them in motion and to be willing to face the man. That was an important aspect. That job still hasn't been done completely.

I think that the discussion that went on tonight was a very good discussion because here people who have in a sense found a new direction for their lives through the movement.