

SUMMER PARISH SCOUTING REPORT

ST. TAMMANY PARISH

St. Tammany
#6 1969, May?
64

Key Towns: Covington (parish seat), Slidell

Statistics: Total popn: 38,643 ; Negro v.a.p.: 5,038
White v.a.p.: 16,032 ; Total v.a.p.: 21,070
Negroes regd: 2,642 ; whites regd: 16,327
Total regd: 18,969

(NOTE: Total whites registered exceeds the figure for whites of voting age!!)

Contacts:

1. Willis Reed
Box 282
Covington
892-2157 (phone under wife's name)
Phone him for directions to home. He lives out in the country.
2. Rev. Atkins
810 Lee Road
892-2870
Phone for directions. We didn't go to his house.
3. Mr. Owens
Covington-Rosenwald School
Covington.

Conferences:

1. Mr. Reed is president of the Citizens Improvement Association, which is apparently a relatively new organization. We found him after two fruitless days of searching. He is a salesman, and likely to be home only in the evenings. His wife teaches, but seems to have nothing to do with his voter registration and political activities. He is not very well informed about either the political structure or voter potential in his area. He is a difficult person to work with, and seems at best to be an opportunist. He has been accused of taking political bribes in the last election, and we have little reason to doubt this. He is new in the community and by his own admission has little, if any, mass support. He feels that he is able to handle the situation without the assistance of other outside groups.
2. Rev. Atkins is local head of the NAACP Chapter. He is as scared a Tom as we have found in a long time. He resents violently the loss of his position as community leader to Mr. Reed, and consequently he now refuses to do anything. He, too, has been accused of taking bribes, and we again have little reason to doubt this. He will not work with CORE.
3. Mr. Owens is Assistant Principal of the Covington-Rosenwald School, and was interviewed at the school. He is very shaky, and probably would be no help to any voter registration drive in the community.

Economic life:

We were unable to get much information in this area from any of our contacts.

Political life:

Political structure: All-white elected officials, none of whom seem to be particularly sympathetic and at most seem ready to grant only separate-but-equal facilities. There seems to be a good deal of political corruption.

Evaluation of Negro community:

The Negro community seemed to us is fragmented and apathetic. This may be due in part to the lack of honest, dynamic leadership.

Voter registration, past and present:

There have been voters leagues in operation for some time, but their drives seemed to have lacked mass community involvement. Galway Kinnell, CORE task force worker, assisted Mr. Willis Reed in setting up a voter registration drive this fall, providing him with advice and material. Mr. Reed, however, requested that CORE not come into the parish at that time.

Federal action, etc.:

None that we know of.

Feasibility of summer project:

We would not recommend St. Tammany for the summer project. The fragmentation in the Negro community, the lack of any outstanding leaders, and the probable corruption in existing leaders make this an impossible parish to work. Moreover, the community is probably too sophisticated for a freedom registration campaign. Because of all these factors, we did not lay any groundwork for summer work.

Progress toward desegregation:

No appreciable progress has been made.

Community attitudes toward CORE:

The white community is afraid of CORE, as in most areas. The Negro community is, as best as we can tell, not ready for CORE, and the Negro leaders seem to view CORE as a threat.

Submitted by,

Loria Davis, Mimi Feingold, and
Howard Messing