

CORE SUMMER PROJECTS, 1965

The primary fields of concentration for CORE's efforts this coming summer are Louisiana, South Carolina and northern Florida. Plans for a program in Mississippi are being made on the community level, with COFO, and are still being worked out.

LOUISIANA: The intent of the Louisiana Summer Project is to build local interest around local problems, as the beginning of a state-wide Negro structure. The project emphasizes the value of community organization to deal with these problems both during the summer and afterwards, when there will be a smaller Task Force on hand.

So far, most Movement activity has been centered around urban areas, and there is a great need for expansion into the rural. Work is being done in five of eight Congressional Districts, so solid groundwork has been laid for further, more significant efforts.

Voter registration will continue to be the focal point of CORE's program in the state. Since the national elections, we have moved into other areas that political education--there are the beginnings of several freedom schools and libraries, rural organization and federal programs work, desegregation of public facilities and accommodations, and through the Summer Project we hope to develop full community center programs. However, all of this requires staff, money and equipment greater than we have had thus far to work with. The Summer Project is aimed at providing these essential tools for these programs to be put into effective operation.

SOUTH CAROLINA: The Summer Project in South Carolina is designed to give Negroes the greatest possible voice in the Congressional, Senatorial and gubernatorial elections in 1966--in an attempt to defeat Strom Thurmond and his machine. To accomplish this, Negro registration must be increased tremendously and political organization strengthened.

There is much enthusiasm in the state for rural organization and implementation of federal programs; these will be included in the Summer Project wherever feasible.

NORTHERN FLORIDA: The CORE projects in northern Florida have been among the most successful in voter registration in the South. In one county last year Negro registration rose from 452 to 4500! Work has also been done helping the Civic Interest Group that holds classes in citizenship, and developing local CORE chapters.

Here, too, the Summer Project is aimed at expanding program to develop freedom schools, community centers, strong local organization, and working on local needs, such as employment, desegregation or trash collection.

NEED FOR VOLUNTEERS: Because of our stringent--almost desperate--financial situation, we are mainly interested in volunteers who can be self-supporting. \$15-\$25 a week can pretty well cover living expenses on the average project. Many volunteers draw this minimal support from church or civic groups in their hometowns, some from personal savings, and others are "adopted" by individuals or groups who take on the responsibility of providing this amount for a given period of time. Groups might spend the time between now and summer raising money specifically for this purpose, to support summer freedom workers.

CORE will be hiring a few additional Task Force people, but hiring preference will be given to the residents of project areas; we urge you to make other subsistence arrangements if at all possible. If you can be self-supporting, please note this on your application.

Return all completed applications to:

Debbie Bernstein
CORE Southern Regional Office
2209 Dryades Street
New Orleans, Louisiana

THE PROJECTS: WHAT AND WHY

The Congress of Racial Equality is sponsoring summer projects in Louisiana, South Carolina and northern Florida, in order to establish footholds in areas as yet untouched by the Movement and build a sound base in the South for political action during the next few vital years. The success of the 1965 summer projects will mean the establishment of meaningful, long-range programs through community organization and the development of local leadership, which will serve to provide a vehicle for the implementation of constructive, lasting approaches to the many problems facing the Negro community in the South.

We have come to realize that voter registration and desegregation of public accommodations and facilities are not enough if we are to truly change the social, political and educational structures that are based and thrive upon the premiss that Negroes are inferior, unintelligent animals. The problems are deeper than lack of the vote and legislated segregation, and many aspects must be tackled at the same time if the whole is to emerge sound and sensible.

CORE, through its upcoming summer projects, is trying to expand and develop an effective program that not only reaches more areas more effectively, but establishes a wider range of activity on many more levels of concern.

In a recent meeting of CORE's National Action Council, the decision was made to assign top priority to the 1965 Louisiana Summer Project. The decision was a result of the realization of Louisiana's importance not only in the political arena of the nation at this time, but in the progress that can be made, considering the current atmosphere of the state, in the field of human relations in the South if successful emphasis is placed upon the area immediately. Recent events in Jonesboro and Bogalusa have made it imperative that massive, positive steps be taken now to open the way for social progress in Louisiana. The summer project will enable those presently working in the state to take constructive advantage of the political and emotional momentum now present, to mobilize the Negro community and aid in setting up the programs the community feels are important.

Freedom school and community center programs will vary as need, interest and facilities vary from community to community, including the development of libraries, adult education, literacy and medical programs. Louisiana has the highest illiteracy rate in the country, naturally involving a tremendously disproportionate number of Negroes. Situations exist, such as in Plaquemines Parish, where Leander Perez, head of the Parish Council, ordered all libraries closed and the removal of all books dealing with FDR, the UN, or "any book with a liberal viewpoint". Only by developing community libraries and carrying on extensive literacy programs can we hope to prepare individuals for participation in a sound structure for political and social change.

New projects will be established, partly in order to implement a coordinated state-wide effort to register Negroes on a massive scale, as groundwork for an attempt to break down the political machinery now present in the state. Only by this kind of full-scale operation can we hope to deflate the power of such notorious figures as Leander Perez, and enable those residing in his "empire" in Southern Louisiana to have a voice in what happens to them daily. There are also national implications of the success of this aspect of the project--the whips of both House and Senate are "duly elected" officials of Louisiana, and both integral parts of the aforementioned political machinery (as well as staunch segregationists with vested interest in the survival of The System).

Work will also be done in the area of federal programs, where possible, and in organizing farmers leagues and cooperatives in an effort to achieve economic independence for the Negro farmers. Even the Negro small-farmer who owns his own land is solely dependent upon the white-given credit, white-owned gins and markets, white-held mortgages, etc. They will never be in a position to use their rightful political influence without suffering severe economic reprisals. Work will be done, for instance, to have Negroes nominated for positions on local ASCS committees, where they have never before had representation.

In order to lessen the fear and actuality of economic reprisals, not only against Negro farmers, but against any Negroes who attempt to register or participate in civil rights activity, CORE will initiate a food-and-clothing-distribution program. This will involve receiving shipments of food and clothing, distributing them to project areas, then having the program administered by committees of local people.

There are currently projects in Shreveport, Jonesboro, Alexandria, St. Francisville, Baton Rouge, Clinton, Bogalusa, Monroe, Plaquemine and New Orleans. In order to carry out the proposed program, more base projects, as previously mentioned, will be set up to more adequately cover the state, and additional staff brought in. About 200 volunteers will work in the various project communities to develop programs and train local people so that activity will continue to grow and strengthen long after the summer is over and the workers have gone.

This same concept is the basis for activity in the other summer project areas, also. Although not as extensive, the 1965 South Carolina Summer Project will have as meaningful and lasting a program. The main objective here is to create an opposing force to Strom Thurmond and his machine in 1966. To accomplish this, Negro registration must be increased tremendously and political organization must be made considerably stronger. A political challenge means a good deal of work must be done in the next year and a half, and the summer project will serve to develop preliminary community organization that can then carry on massive voter registration and political education programs.

The Negro population of South Carolina has the potential for a good chunk of political power, and this potential is ripe for realization. The state contains 46 counties, 24 of which have a Negro population of 40% or more. 20 of those counties are located in the 1st, 2nd and 6th Congressional Districts, which will be the areas of concentration for the project workers this summer.

Apart from this emphasis on political organization, project workers will be organizing Community Action Projects under the Anti-Poverty Act. This will involve organizing local people around projects that would qualify for Anti-Poverty aid. Information Centers will also be set up to provide material on the 1965 Civil Rights Act, and, where possible, Freedom Libraries will be established concentrating on Negro History. Negro students from nearby colleges will be encouraged to participate in all of these programs.

Since the summer of 1964, CORE has been engaged in a voter registration drive in the north Florida area. Centered in Gadsden County, famous for both its lucrative crop of shade-grown tobacco and high percentage of millionaires (white), the project has achieved a high degree of success in its efforts to spur Negro voter registration. In Gadsden County, where Negroes comprise 59% of the population, only 400 of the county's 12,000 qualified Negroes were registered in July, 1964. By the time the books were closed for the 1964 elections, this figure had been pushed to 4,447, close to 40% of the potential.

This success was duplicated in all of the counties worked by CORE in the summer of 1964. Registration soared to 58% in the small, rural county of Jefferson. This was the only county that Johnson carried in the north Florida area. In other counties, the increased Negro registration forced the GOP into desperate campaign measures to garner enough votes to carry Goldwater, the "white hope" of '64.

The 1964 elections are indicative of what can be done in 1966 if registration continues at its present pace. The Negro vote will make the difference in the '66 gubernatorial election. In the primaries, Florida voters will have their choice of Scott Kelly, an outright segregationist, the present governor, Haydon Burns, a moderate (segregationist who knows he can't win without the Negro vote) and Robert King High, the liberal mayor of Miami. This election is without doubt one of the most important in Florida history--at stake is whether or not Florida will continue as a Deep South state with its record of segregation and discrimination going unabated, or strike out in a new liberal direction with a progressive governor at its head.

In addition to voter registration, the CORE project has been witness to great success in community organization. Project policy has been that CORE workers should aid in the organization of groups to achieve results rather than do the actual work themselves. As a result of this policy, strong community groups have sprung up throughout the project area. In Gadsden County, a Civic Interest Group was formed, and has engaged itself in voter registration, voter education, formation of Community Action Plans under the Anti-Poverty Act, has run candidates for the first time in both county and city elections, and has begun the formation of block associations to aid in the improvement of conditions in Quincy, the county seat.

In other counties voters leagues have been formed for the specific purpose of voter registration and education; other groups have been formed to implement the Anti-Poverty Program. In one of the towns in Gadsden County, a community center has been established by the community with CORE's aid. It has an adult supervisory body and a youth group which has engaged in sit-ins and testing, in addition to developing a center program which includes a nursery school, literacy classes, hygiene programs, homemaking and other subjects which people have expressed an interest in.

The summer project will include the continuation and expansion of the previous program. Work will be done in the 13 counties of the 9th Congressional District, local groups will be encouraged to continue voter education with an aim towards unseating the present Congressman Don Fuqua, a rabid segregationist. Anti-Poverty programs will be stressed, along with local community improvement projects.

CORE's Southern summer program, then, for 1965, is designed to fit the needs of each community being worked, but at the same time establish a coordinated South-wide effort to achieve our goals. The role of the CORE workers is not to lead, or "do for", but to share their knowledge and skill gained through various experiences, with the people of a community--so that they, themselves, can see alternatives and use this knowledge and skill to accomplish their own ends. This involves both relief from the oppression they encounter on every level of daily experience, and more abstractly, to participate in a larger effort to eradicate the sources of their condition. This means action to improve streets and sewers in the Negro section, integrating public facilities, improving local school systems; it also means the realization of larger, more far-reaching importances, outside direct, daily experience, to accomplish the less immediate but more essential goals on a state-wide, South-wide scale.