

TO: STATE, FIELD AND PROJECT DIRECTORS

FROM: HOSEA L. WILLIAMS

RE: Bi-Monthly Report-Voter Registration Department

DATE: November 18, 1965

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The Executive Staff endorsed a fall voter registration and political education campaign in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. The Executive Board unanimously agreed that voter registration and political education would be its primary objectives for the fall of 1965. Each state would be structured with a field secretary (Mr. Herbert Coulton, Virginia; Mr. Golden Frinks, North Carolina; Mr. Ben Mack, South Carolina; Reverend Samuel Wells, Georgia; Mr. Albert Turner, Alabama; Reverend Major Johns, Louisiana; Mr. B. T. Bonner, Texas), office administrator and several field workers. The field secretaries are directly responsible to Mr. Hosea L. Williams and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for conducting a vigorous and profitable voter registration campaign throughout the states. A total of seventy subsistence workers are carrying the campaign throughout 121 counties in these seven states.

Upon the advice of the Department Head, Mr. Hosea Williams, after a careful study and an analysis of past operations in the political arena, the Executive Staff agreed to try a new technique in getting Negroes to participate in the governmental process.

Realizing that our fall voter registration and political education program was conventional, only conventional results could be expected. Therefore, the Executive Staff unanimously supported new techniques and procedures. Rather than working in ten southern states simultaneously, all of these forces would be concentrated in one state for a sixty day campaign. Afterward, this entire staff would be given a thirty day furlow before attacking another state for another sixty day campaign. By concentrating in only one state at a time, the Executive Staff felt that we would be able to settle the problem of mass registration once and for all, rather than extending the operation for unlimited time.

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In conjunction with this new approach, the Executive Staff has already approved roving itineraries for Executive Staff members throughout the project counties. This means that daily one of our best spokesmen would enter a county, meet with the local citizens, speak at a mass meeting, lead a march to the polls the following day and continue on to another project county. The success of such a campaign would be evident in the revolutionizing of the Wallace machine and all of the segregated governing structures throughout the State.

The objectives of each state will be clearly defined. For instance, in Alabama the objectives are to elect as many Negroes as possible to the State Legislature, to county and city positions and at the same time defeat the forces of segregation on a statewide basis.

The 1966 election in Alabama will undoubtedly revolutionize the Wallace machine and change the entire political structure of the South.

After a careful study, it was concluded that Wallace's major strength could be found in the metro areas of the black belt. A project envisioned to produce what other voter registration drives throughout the years did not have, a vigorous campaign without the usage of conventional methods hopefully would not result in conventional gains.

In four weeks a staff of twenty experienced voter registration workers added 8,500 Negroes to the voter registration books in Montgomery. This group of workers, referred to as the Spectacular Task Force, primary objective was to register as many Negroes in the shortest length of time as possible. Presently, there are 22,000 Negroes registered in Montgomery leaving approximately 13,000 unregistered. Our hopes were that given two more weeks in Montgomery we could register from three to six thousand more Negroes, but with the diversion of SCLC's strength to neighboring counties for the express purpose of mobilizing the masses in protest of the jury system, it is quite improbable that voter registration will continue on a large scale in Montgomery.

On November 9, SCLC launched its direct action campaign in Greene and Butler Counties of Alabama. Field staff were sent to these counties with instructions to set up offices, to begin to canvass the community and mobilize for demonstrations

that have had successful direct action campaigns have also had successful voter registration campaigns. Dallas county gives us a very good example of this. Therefore, I am anticipating two-fold success from our efforts in Alabama, efforts that would prompt massive voter registration and vigorous demonstrations which would lead the way to legislative enactment to demand the administration of justice; to demand an investigation of the southern dual judiciary; to demand freedom and equality by law, and to rid the system of fear, intimidation and terror forever.

In three of Alabama's districts, Negroes of voting age outnumber whites. Because of this, we have an opportunity to elect five representatives to the Alabama Legislature; Marengo County, one representative; Hale, Pickens and Greene, two representatives each; Dallas County, two representatives and Perry and Bibb Counties, one representative each.

CHRISTMAS VACATION VOTER REGISTRATION (A Proposed Christmas Voter Registration Project Expense Free-SCLC)

The purpose of the project is to utilize Northern volunteers that wish to come South and work for two to four weeks on voter registration during the Christmas holidays.

The accompanying memo was sent to the 600 persons and 66 SCOPE Chapters on our present mailing list. (The orientation date is wrong. It should be changed to Monday, December 20, 1965). Chicago SCOPE, under the direction of Lance Nelson, has issued a press release to the Chicago newspapers announcing the project in an attempt to recruit volunteers. A recruiting team will be leaving on approximately November 15, for Southern California for the SCOPE Regional Conference. Special care will be taken at that time to publicize the project. Mr. Carl Farris and J. T. Johnson will be traveling through California (both Southern and Northern) during December and at that time will be visiting schools and publicizing the project. The National Student Association is recruiting students for SCLC, CORE, SNCC and NAACP for the same project.

A one day orientation will be held in Atlanta on Monday, December 20. At this point, there appears to be no necessity to bring in outside speakers. The speakers should consist of, among others, Hosea L. Williams and J. T. Johnson who is presently directing the project in Montgomery.

Volunteers will be placed in Montgomery, Birmingham, Mobile, and Bessemer, Alabama; Atlanta, Georgia and Chattanooga, Tennessee. The concentration will be on the urban areas which require less sophistication for effectiveness. The primary concentration should be on Birmingham which presently has 190,000 unregistered persons. Atlanta was chosen because of the reduction in transportation costs.

Volunteers have been asked to provide fifteen dollars for each week for their expenses. We have also requested that they bring down their own cars. We are approaching local persons about housing and moving only into those communities where we can find free housing for the volunteers. Food and miscellaneous expenses will be covered by the fifteen dollars per week each volunteer is to bring.

There seems to be the feeling at this time that the project will be too expensive considering what it will accomplish. Here is a letter from Springfield College in Springfield, Mass. "I am sure this college would take care of the expenses of its participants." This is typical of the attitude of most persons desirous of participating in the project. It is a short-range project and the volunteers are expecting to cover their own expenses as indicated in the enclosed memo.