

REPORT ON A MEETING WITH MISS EVELYN GANDY, STATE WELFARE COMMISSIONER, ABOUT PROJECT  
"HELP"--January 3, 1966 by Mrs. Annie Devine

Mrs. Palmer and I visited about one hour with Miss Gandy, who was very friendly and answered our questions as limited and as reserved as she could get away with.

Question 1: Has the State Advisory Committee for Operation HELP been set up?

Answer: No. We are so busy we really have not found time. Many County Supervisors Boards have not approved the plan. The State Welfare Department is concentrating on getting the program into the five counties that do not have any kind of commodity or Food Stamp Program (These counties are Jeff Davis, Copiah, Desoto, Tate, and Noxubee.) Hinds Co. has an all-needy family program, and so it will not be considered as part of the program directly. They will also not have the program where there are Food Stamp Programs in effect (that is, in Lowndes, Chickasaw, Coahoma, Jones, Harrison, and Madison Counties).

Question 2: Are applications for jobs with Project HELP now being accepted by the local welfare offices. Answer: Yes. People should apply for jobs under this program now. She's quite sure there will be no discrimination. People will be placed on a qualification basis. For example, some people can fill the bags with commodities.

Question 3: Since the project is a six-month demonstration, it seems time is running out to get organized. We would like to submit names for the state advisory committee. We will send them to your office soon. Answer: Yes, by all means submit the names. We will get fair representation on this committee. Counties will set up their own committees. Supervisors boards will be meeting today, hope they will approve the plan.

Question 4: There was discussion on the welfare program in general. Miss Gandy said that 80% of the funds used for welfare come from the Federal Government. Mrs. Palmer and Mrs. Devine said that there obviously weren't enough funds to have a program that meets half the needs of the people.

(Note: A list of names recommended by the MFDP was sent to Miss Gandy on Jan. 6, 1966.)

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REPORT ON THE OPENING OF THE MISSISSIPPI STATE LEGISLATURE, Jackson, Jan. 4, 1966

--by Charles McLaurin

On Tuesday, Jan. 4, 1966, two members of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party were turned away by the Clerk of the State House of Representatives as they attempted to watch the law makers in session. The two FDP members were told to obtain passes from the representatives of their counties. Then a man standing in the door asked the FDP members if they knew who the representatives of their counties were. After the names of such were given the two men were told that the law makers were in session and could not be reached. As the two men talked to the clerk, a state patrolman and several white men watched from behind. The two then left the Capitol.

This just proves again, that the men now claiming to be state representatives are not representatives of all of the people, and that the use of passes which must be given by men who hold these seats only because they have kept Negroes from voting is wrong. It is this type of harrassments and reprisals that the FDP seeks to end by filing a suit to halt the session.

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Following is a letter from George Shelton, Jr., Chairman of the Mississippi Freedom Labor Union: A Report on what happen to the movement in Mississippi: My personal opinion is that the workers who are here now have been here for six to eight months. And dealing with people everyday and night is a great pressure on any body and sooner or later their mind will soon stop developing like it used to. And that makes a person become like a dead battery-that is in a car. It need a push off so that the generator can charge the battery up again so that is the way the workers mind is.

What can be done to build the spirit up again: A demonstration usually used to build up the spirit. What kind of march, and what is needed in Mississippi the worst. More and better jobs, federal loans, and better education system instead of so much integration.

The plans of the MFLU: 1. Federal programs to try to get homes for the poor people that might be thrown off plantations. 2. Try to find all jobs that is supported by federal funds and try to get pressure on them so there will be equal hiring. 3. There will be a group held responsible for seeing that there will be more and better jobs for unemployed people.

What have the people in Mississippi to be thankful for Christmas. They haven't earned anything, they haven't won anything. They lost the ASCS election across the state. What can be done to better the condition of Mississippi: 1. Get Negroes to run for Head of Education. 2. Get Negroes to run for Board of Health, 3. Get Negroes to run for Road Supervisor. To try and get some black people in the POWER STRUCTURE in Mississippi.

Try to put more time in Mississippi and not in Vietnam because there isn't but one way we can stop the WAR, that is to start a WAR in MISSISSIPPI.

JACKSON CO. (Hess Point)--Selective Buying Campaign went on here since November. 3 stores gave in and hired one Negro each--Sears Roebuck, Three Sisters, and Shainberg's--as clerks. The week after Christmas, FDP members went around to check if they still had their jobs, and they did. See also HELP report.

JONES CO. (Laurel)--Early in December, the home of Rev. Ifom Crockett, who is not in the Movement, was burned. Oil cans were found near the house, and the police are investigating the possibility of arson.

MARION CO.--The boycott continued for about 5 weeks before Christmas, and they are now planning a Black Easter. On Dec. 18, 25 people took part, in the pouring rain, in the first march ever in Marion Co. They read nine demands on the City Hall steps, which include: paved streets in Negro community, no more police harassment, courtesy titles, no more cutting of welfare checks, \$7 a day pay for maids, and no more tampering with phone and mail, and 3 Negro policemen hired. Picketing of downtown stores went on for several days. On Jan. 3, one little girl integrated the white elementary school, and in the past week one Negro policeman was hired, and there are openings for 5 more officers. Several streets in the Negro community will also be paved.

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#### REPORT ON PROJECT HELP

Project HELP is the six-month food distribution and education program which is being run in Mississippi under the Poverty Program--Office of Economic Opportunity. For more information on this program, see the report on the visit to the State Welfare Office about this program, on page 9.

Several county FDP's have already been to see their local welfare offices about the program. Following is a summary of several of these visits.

BOLIVAR CO.--Committee went to the Welfare Office on Dec. 20. They submitted a written proposal with the names of people they recommended for the county advisory committees, as well as suggestions about how the program should be publicized, and where food distribution offices should be set up in the county. "We were told by the manager that he had been sick for the past three months and knew nothing about such a program (quote). The only program I know anything about is the county program and it is operated with county funds. There have been no funds from OEO for a food program that I know of (unquote)

When he was shown the information from FDP he said a committee had been elected four or five months ago to supervise any money that was granted to the State by OEO but when asked who this committee was he revealed only one name. He looked at the proposal and handed it back and told the committee to go to the Chancery Clerk's office, maybe someone there could help us.

He also wanted to know where we got such information, who we was, where we lived. He talked a lot about the county office and how it was run, but he could not give the committee any information about the federal program. He said there won't be any additional distribution points, or jobs to be offered. (from Mrs. Velma Bartley, Shaw)

ISSAQUENA CO.--A delegation went to the County Welfare Office on Dec. 22. The woman in the office said she didn't know anything about the program. Her name is Lucia Shipp/

JACKSON CO.--Three people went to the County Welfare Office around Dec. 20. The administrator, Mr. Goff, said he had not received any information on the program, but he had received a memorandum from the State Welfare Office saying that the money was here in the state, but only for those counties that are not getting commodities. They asked about the supervisory board of the HELP program, and he said it was white only. They asked about jobs for people in the program, and he said they didn't need to hire anyone because convicts could do the work for free. (from Mrs. Nettie Sellers)

QUITMAN CO.--9 people, including 6 ministers, went to the Co. Welfare Dept. on Jan. 7. The woman in the office, Miss Duke, said the county will distribute commodities until April, and then will participate in HELP during May and June. The Dept. of Welfare has already picked the people to be on the HELP Advisory Bd. It is integrated, but there are no poor people on it. (from George Shelton)

SHARKEY CO.--Sometime between Dec. 20-30, a committee talked to Mrs. Kate Herring of the Co. Welfare Office. She said the only thing she knew about the Food Distribution Program was what she read in the newspapers.

WINSTON CO.--On Dec. 30, a committee went to the Co. Welfare Dept to talk to Supervisor Mr. O.B. Edwards. He said he had just been down to the employment office to see if any Negroes wanted jobs (apparently he would use them in the HELP program). The committee asked Edwards not to hire anyone until they had made their recommendations. Edwards agreed, and said he needed one college graduate to serve in an administrative capacity, and several people with less education.

If you go to your county office to ask about the program, please send us a report. Also, we will send the Bolivar Co. proposal to anyone who would like to see it, in case you are planning a visit to your local welfare office, and would like to see it for an example of what such a proposal could look like.

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