

TO: Mrs. Dorothy Cotton

FROM: Mrs. Victoria Gray

SUBJECT: Mississippi Report of Citizenship Education Program
from April 1 - November 30, 1966

This will be an informal report that describes in the period covered the general situation in Mississippi, activities of the Citizenship Education Program within this situation, plans and recommendations for the coming year.

I. The general situation and activities of the Citizenship Education Program within this situation

April: Mississippi in April was kind of like taking a breather; we had won a refunding of CDGM after approximately six months of struggle, we had won the Sunflower case for new elections, we had filed with the Secretary of State the names of our potential Congressional and Senatorial candidates to participate in the Democratic primaries in June, and we felt we were beginning to strengthen our Citizenship Education Program after being threatened with extinction from several other educational programs of different orientation. We held our usual monthly statewide Citizenship Education teachers workshop and attempted to deal with some very practical problems of effective teaching. We discussed some of the more general problems and then did some demonstration teaching, and evaluated same. Even though the weather was terrible, the workshop was unbelievably well attended.

May: With the primary only one month away, and having been assured that our candidates would be on the ballot, the emphasis in the entire state was more or less directed toward preparation for same. In addition to our regular monthly workshop, we held a special workshop in Sunflower City. Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Cotton and Dr. Green came and participated in this two-day workshop. Their presence was especially appreciated, because in addition to their usual efficiency and inspiration, there was the sharing with us of their experiences in the Alabama primaries. This gave us some foresight as to what to expect and possibly prevent in our own primaries. The Sunflower workshop culminated with a mock election day. This was so favorably received that all Citizenship teachers were urged to hold similar workshops locally in addition to their regular classes; many did. In the meantime

the opposition again became very active. The hostile and unfriendly elements in the state stepped up their routine of harrassment and attempted intimidation, presumably to keep the new and near new voters from the polls come election day. One incident will be remembered by members of CEP staff who came to the Sunflower workshop -- that of the police chief and companion riding by the church with a companion and a machine gun (most conspicuous) resting on the front seat of the vehicle. There were daily reports from around the state of other and similar happenings. This did not, however, noticeably dampen the spirits or hamper the preparations for the elections.

June: The storm broke. As we were busily making last minute assignments, completing schedules, etc. on election eve (June 6), the state was momentarily paralyzed when news bulletins announced that James Meredith had been shot and then that he had died, in that order. The immediate reactions were unbelief, hurt, anger. Within the hour it was confirmed that he had indeed been shot but not killed. People then began to move and think again. Among other things we felt this was a threat to people who would be going to the polls, so we immediately started to mobilize people around the state to call meetings that night and help people to realize that this challenge could best be met by a strong turnout at the polls on Tuesday. Even though the news media did not deem it noteworthy, the turnout was tremendous and we were generally very pleased with the support our candidates received. The story of the Meredith March, completed by SCLC and other organizations, is well known; however, I would like to point out the fact that the people of Mississippi participated in and supported that March with all of their resources (this fact seems to have been largely overlooked); CEP teachers and others who had been exposed to same played a significant role in mobilizing the communities along the way to have prepared food and oftentimes places to sleep for the marchers. As you know, the March took up most of June and July, culminating in a terrific impact on the state of Mississippi. It activated communities and counties where there had been no evidence of change or desire for change before; e. g., Grenada, Mississippi, which SCLC returned to expose for the hypocritical role it played as the March passed through. Everybody, including the power structure, admits Mississippi will never be exactly the same again.

August: Our state hosted the SCLC Annual Convention. The latter part of July and first of August found Mississippi's Sr. United States Senator along with its Governor and others raining a constant barrage of untruths on the motives of Dr. King and the SCLC for holding the Convention in Mississippi. Rev. Allen Johnson (SCLC Board member) attempted in a mild press release to set the record straight, but with no visible effect; the barrage went on almost daily. Finally MFDP decided to challenge Mr. Eastland (through a heavily loaded press release) as to his motives for this on-going attack. All news media refused to use this release, but we sent Mr. Eastland a copy, and things quieted down considerably. As a result of the March and the Convention, Mississippi had its best attendance to the CEP workshop this year.

September: With the exception of Grenada, we turned our attention to reactivating those areas of work that had suffered during the summer of excitement. A few new classes got under way as preparations for others were being made. CEP teachers and groups were also quite active in encouraging more parents in sending their children to integrated or formerly all-white schools. Then it became quite evident that CDGM was once again in trouble. With the premature announcement by Senator Stennis of the formation of MAP which would replace CDGM (and has until now), people of common thinking got busy again trying to find some way of keeping the Headstart program under the same administration. We were once again engaged in a crisis situation which caused us to neglect other programs. Not only does CEP in Mississippi support this effort, but Dr. King has committed himself to same. The most unbelievable factor here, is that one of the leading civil rights organizations has thrown its support in the person of both its State President and Secretary to the power structure-orientated MAP; In fact, participated in its formation. This is highly significant, we feel, with indications of what we can expect in the future. The fight goes on.

October: Although elections are just a month away, two things hold us in limbo, the CDGM battle and the fact that our candidates will again be left off the ballot. We simply filed a suit against the State Elections Commission in federal court and pursued the CDGM fight at all levels. Even so we had a small delegation from Mississippi at the October workshop. These were people by and large who recognize the important role that citizenship education must play in the entire community if we are going to wage an effective fight now and in the future. Not enough being done around the coming election.

People are generally divided as to whether or not our candidates will be on the ballot and to add to this, it is being rumored that the NAACP and Young Democrats will support Eastland. Nobody save MFDP and CEP teachers seem aware of or are doing anything to inform people of the meaning of one terribly important potential amendment that will appear on the ballot. The court ordered that our candidates should go on the ballot ten days prior to the election.

November: Election month! Much disappointment and unbelief in spite of the warnings. The Negro ridiculously split due to the influence of aforementioned organizations. However, in view of the short time of actual preparation, I saw some areas of optimism. Our candidates carried several counties and quite a few supervisory districts. Also the overall picture helped many people to realize that there is much work to be done if we are to help our people become truly self-determining. I think our November statewide CEP workshop gives credence to the last observation. People were really concerned about planning a program that will give local people the information and skills necessary to cope with the changing and complex situations facing us. Further evidence of the understanding of the seriousness of the situation, I feel, was the presence of so many Mississippi people (21) at the refresher workshop, and their intense interest and participation in same.

II. Plans

Our plans as we see things now will center around the discussion which came out of the November statewide CEP workshop and the state meeting at Penn Center.

- A. To increase (in the most needed areas of the state) or recruit CEP teachers
- B. To improve or make more effective our teaching through monthly statewide one-day workshops, quarterly workshops at the district level -- hopefully these can be two-day workshops (like Sunflower, maybe) -- weekly workshops at the county level.

- C. To emphasize and initiate as much as possible increased community organization with as broad a base as possible
- D. To place Political Education at the center of our curriculum in view of the Subnatorial elections taking place in 1967.
 - 1. Relate politics to federal aids or lack of same
 - 2. Relate politics to community conditions in general
- E. To look for additional funds to implement A-D.

III. Recommendations

- A. That one person from CEP staff participate in either the state or district workshop
- B. That each county with four or more classes have a responsible and dedicated supervisor who lives in that county
- C. That the state supervisor have a field assistant who can help with coordinating the state CEP activities, Especially in the area of receiving and finding applicants to CEP teacher-training and other out-of-state workshops. It seems that we could cut down on the expense involved here in terms of both money, time and energy, and the duplication of same.

Hope you can pull something helpful out of all this. I assure you that you'll receive a monthly report in the future.

STATEMENT OF EXPENSES, APRIL 1 - NOVEMBER 30, 1966

Telephone	\$ 36.52
Gas	39.47
Transportation (air)	117.05
Food for workshops (May and November)	5.01
Supplies for workshops	13.09
Travel (workshop participants)	10.00
Hotel bill	<u>30.63</u>
TOTAL	\$251.77