

June 22, 1964

MEMO RE: The disappearance of three summer project workers in Neshoba county, Mississippi, while investigating the bombing of a Negro church which was to be the site of a community center this summer.

Three workers for the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) have been reported missing since late yesterday afternoon during a trip to Neshoba County in middle-eastern Mississippi.

The three are Michael Schwerner, 24, and Andrew Goodman, 20, both from New York City, and James Cheney, 21, of Meridian, Miss. Schwerner and Cheney are CORE workers and Goodman a summer volunteer. Cheney is Negro. They had gone to Philadelphia, Miss., in Neshoba County, to investigate the bombing of Mt. Zion church and the beating of three Negroes there June 17.

The communications spokesman for the Meridian, Miss., CORE office said that the three left Meridian at 10 a.m. yesterday with the intention of returning to Meridian before 4 p.m. They have not been heard from since they left Meridian.

COFO and SNCC workers have been in touch with all local jails and hospitals, but only the sheriff of Neshoba has said that he knows anything about the group. The sheriff said the group was arrested late yesterday afternoon on a charge of speeding in their car, but were released by 10 p.m. He said that he knows nothing of their whereabouts after their release.

John Doar, a top lawyer of the civil rights division of the Justice Department, said today that the Justice Department is investigating. Earlier, a Department lawyer in Philadelphia, Miss., and an FBI agent in Jackson, the state capitol, said that they did not feel they had the authority to become involved in the search for the three workers. They said they were not sure a federal statute had been violated.

Fathers of both Goodman and Schwerner have spoken to Nicholas Katzenbach and Doar of the Justice Department to demand investigation of the case. Summer Project volunteers at the orientation session at Oxford, Ohio, are telephoning and sending telegrams to their Senators and Congressmen to demand Justice Department and FBI investigation of their disappearance.

Schwerner, project director at Meridian, is a graduate of the New York School of Social Work. Goodman is a junior at Queens College.

Senator Jacob Javits (R.-N.Y.) has notified summer volunteers from New York who called him today that he is apprised of the situation in Mississippi and is in contact with the Justice Department.