

FROM: Marks' COFO  
TO: JACKSON COFO  
ITEM: Project Report, Jan. 23 - Feb. 3  
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General: The Marks' COFO staff was reorganized in late January. Cleve Sellers, Holly Springs project director, has also taken the responsibility of directing COFO in Marks. He will alternate between Holly Springs and Marks as long as necessary. Cleve also brought with him John Sigel from the Holly Springs Project, and Robert Smith from Clarksdale. Robert will serve as assistant project director in Cleve's absence. These three men will be working with Joe Bate-man and Harry Swann who have been in Marks since last summer. This reorganization was necessary due to the apparent withdrawal of Allan Goodner as project director, and to the general lack of a structure within the Marks' COFO. The project was without a director after January 4, and due to the lack of finances and the loss of office space, the project was hardly functioning.

Reorganization: Due to the lack of a freedom house, Marks' personnel has been living and taking meals with several Negro families in the community. We hope eventually to have some sort of men's freedom house. We are also negotiating for office space, and also for materials to repair and furnish the proposed office building. At the present time however, office work is being done in homes in the community. Marks' COFO also has several hundred dollars in debts which must be paid. We are attempting to obtain aid from SNCC in Atlanta to meet these back bills. Another problem is obtaining office supplies and general information concerning freedom schools, voter registration, job corps, etc. We have no serviceable mimeograph machine for printing these ourselves. Canvassing and voter registration are being hampered by the lack of a regular WATS line telephone; we have been using a neighbor's telephone to keep in contact with the Jackson's office. We have been successful in reobtaining the use of the Masonic Hall for mass meetings, and have also been offered the use of the Allan Chapel. Our problem, in general, is a complete lack of finances, and a lack of any previous organized set-up.

Present Activities: In the twelve days we have been in Marks, most of the time has been spent in the re-organization process discussed above. We have been making contacts with the community leaders, and have been fairly successful in obtaining their cooperation and aid. The main problem here seems to be altering the COFO image produced by the former project director. We have held two mass meetings, attended by between fifty and sixty people. It is difficult to evaluate the general attitude of the community at this time. We have also been organizing deposition material for the lawyer whom we expect in Marks this week. Copies of affidavits and witness reports which were sent to Jackson last summer have been lost or destroyed. We have also made a file of Negroes who have shown interest in registering to vote; at mass meetings, we have attempted voter registration classes. Evenings, we have visited these people, and have given practice in voter registration on a personal basis. COFO has made one trip to Holly Springs to get clothing for Marks; the clothing was distributed on January 26.

Proposed Activities: Our major goal at this time is to get COFO in Marks firmly established as a part of the Negro Community. This means setting up a permanent COFO office, and having the community become acquainted on a personnel basis with the COFO workers. We are also planning to push voter registration classes, in the hopes that sometime between the SNCC Atlanta meeting and the end of February we can have a freedom day here in Marks. We are hoping to get perhaps twenty-five to forty people to go down to the courthouse as a group and attempt to register to vote. As for Freedom School, it would be

difficult to instigate such a project at the present time due to the lack of a meeting place; by the summer, however, we hope to have an organized and functioning Freedom School. We are presently laying the groundwork for an organization of a Mississippi Student Union chapter here in Marks. When we receive a car and perhaps some more workers, we are also hoping to move out into the surrounding towns of Lambert, Falcon, Darling, and eventually throughout Quitman County. Also, although there is not a formal FDP organization in Marks, we hope to change our Monday mass meeting into an FDP chapter.

Robert Smith