

SNCC News of the Field

GOULD, ARKANSAS

Bob Cableton reports that in Gould, many black people have become dis-illusioned over losing the November elections and feel that it is hopeless to fight the white power structure. Bob is fighting to keep their spirits up and says that some do understand that the work we are engaged in is a constant battle and struggle, that we must keep fighting. At Christmas, he and his co-workers distributed toys and clothing to those in need. He continues to organize in Gould, is trying to develop a sense of black consciousness there, and would like to start classes on political education with the long range objective of funding more Negroes for public offices, since Gould is 82% black. He has also started a letter writing campaign to Congress in defense and support of Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, and is using this issue to help awaken political awareness in the Gould black community.

On January 12th, their Freedom Center was burned down around midnight, the fire department arrived 45 minutes after they were called. The community definitely feels that this was the work of the Ku Klux Klan and some of their black henchmen. Bob is presently trying to raise money for rebuilding the center with concrete bricks and blocks.

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

Howard Himmelbaum, who is no longer part of SNCC staff, reports that he is actively engaged in developing programs in the white community on all different levels. He attempts to explain the concept of Black Power to whites, and what their responsibilities are toward helping the movement. He is contacting white college students (says there are a few rather radical white students in Arkansas) and discussing their guilt by silence if they fail to challenge the white power structure, and trying to encourage them to go back into their home counties and organize the white community around the issues of poverty and power politics. One of the main tools which he hopes to develop is a state-wide welfare program which will challenge and destroy the concept of welfare as it now exists.

PHILLIPS COUNTY, ARKANSAS

At press time, we could not locate Myrtle Glascoe by phone, but Howard Himmelbaum reported that she continues to organize the black communities in Phillips County around the concept of Black Power. On Sunday, January 29th, she is setting up the first meeting of an all black county-wide political organization. Black people form 48% of the population in that county, and there are many strong, energetic people who are working on developing Co-ops and eventually taking political control of the county.

HALIFAX COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

Julie Tyler, who has been working in Halifax County for six months, reports that she is struggling to organize the black community in that county. She is currently trying to raise funds for the legal defense of Robert Lee Vincent (accused of shooting 3 klansmen) and Glen Miller Squire (rape case), and hopes to use this issue around which to organize and raise political and economic issues.

RULEVILLE, MISSISSIPPI

Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer reports that the political situation in Sunflower County is very discouraging, that the white power structure continues to stifle and thwart every effort on the part of black people to develop an independent political organization there. There will be a special election in Sunflower County as a result of the Dis-Enfranchisement suit which Mrs. Hamer filed against the county, although the date has not been set. Mrs. Hamer was seeking to run for Mayor of Ruleville, but she was dis-qualified through many tricky maneuvers of the courts and county government; although she is consulting with her lawyers, she has lost hope for becoming a candidate in this election. Concerning the other black candidates running for county offices, Mrs. Hamer said that whites are swindling them by buying off black "Uncle Toms," and that Sunflower City is the only town they are sure to win. Sunflower County has a population of 14,000 blacks and 8,000 whites; of these, there are 4,000 registered black voters, and 90% of the whites are registered. She and her co-workers continue the struggle to register black voters, but are handicapped by lack of funds and transportation.

ISSAQUENA COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

Mrs. Unita Blackwell reported the following concerning Issaquena County, which has a 68% black population. They continue to work on a special Voter Registration Drive started by the Southern Regional Council. Out of 828 eligible black voters, they have succeeded in registering 500. Out of 462 eligible white voters, there are 700 registered, which indicates that their voting lists must include dead or non-existing persons. They are anticipating a \$500 grant from the Mississippi Voter Education League (under the administration of Roosevelt Size) to be used for voter registration.

There are political workshops being conducted in four locations--Mayersville, Tolula, Valewood, and Hopedale--where the communities study the structure of the county government and roles of the county officials. The Delta Ministry contributed money for the local people who teach in these workshops.

An Issaquena County Advisory Board on Adult Literacy has just been organized, but there are still no funds raised to implement proposed programs. All groups are pooling their resources, striving to work together. Concerned blacks recently met in Cleveland, Mississippi and decided to reject the Food Stamp Program since they did not feel such a program would meet their needs.

GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI

Jake McGee reported that his home was completely burned down on January 23th, after two unsuccessful previous attempts. McGee reported the incident to the FBI and LDC office in Jackson, but anticipates little help coming from those quarters. He and his family lost everything they owned, they were never able to get insurance on the house, and they are presently staying with friends who have taken them in. Some people in the community are trying to raise funds for Jake and his family, but probably these efforts will not raise the necessary amount for him to secure another home. Funds are desperately needed. The McGees lost their home as a result of his work in the movement, and all those engaged in our struggle should do everything possible to forward financial help, along with clothing, food, and other necessary items to his family. You may contact him in Greenwood at the following number: Area code 601 53 9861.

Three days prior to the home burning, McGee was jailed for "dumping trash" before Christmas on the road which runs through his property. He is out on property bond.

GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI

James Jones reports that they are presently having difficulties in getting the political program off the ground because they are involved in a struggle to keep the present poverty program (CDGM) in the county and to keep Mississippi Action Program (MAP) out. The last federal grant to CDGM was cut off in September, and since that time people have run the centers on a volunteer basis. L.B.J., Stennis, Eastland, and Shriver organized MAP to replace CDGM, which has been funded for three months, yet they only operate in Lauderdale and Warren counties. It is clear to James Jones that poor blacks do not want MAP in their counties. From talking to CDGM officials in Jackson, he understood that during the many negotiations with OEO, it was agreed that counties in which MAP was not already operating, CDGM would continue to function. If there was no deal between CDGM and MAP, then at some point OEO backed down on it's premise because MAP has now been given (by OEO) four previously CDGM counties—Wayne, Neshoba, Leflore, and Humphreys—precisely those counties where the movement is the strongest. Jones feels that a deal was made and that John Mudd knows all about it; they have tried to meet with Mudd and other CDGM bureaucrats, but have had no success. If they find that CDGM did indeed make a deal with MAP concerning those counties, drastic action is planned.

The forces which the movement is up against in Leflore County are the white Catholic missionaries who invited MAP into the county. This group has been living and thriving in the black community without doing anything constructive except keeping blacks "in their place." They have objected to blacks who couldn't read or write being registered, and are now trying to build a political machine on the backs of blacks and to increase black membership in the Catholic Church. In order to survive, Jones says they must kill this political power-play which expects to grow through exploiting blacks, and he and his co-workers are now in the process of informing the black community that the Catholic Church is their enemy. They have developed a strategy designed to destroy the leadership of this group and to expose it's identity to the black community. At the same time, they are using this fight to mobilize the county for political action.

Political plans for Leflore County are to run and elect black candidates from Justice of Peace to Sheriff in the coming elections. Care is being taken to insure that such candidates will really represent black people and speak to their needs. Thus far, two candidates have committed themselves.

MOSS POINT, MISSISSIPPI

Irish Sellers reports that he has been busily engaged in collecting SNCC Two-way radios, parts and antennas from several projects and locations, and storing them safely in Moss Point. Most of these radios required repairs, which were made, and many new parts were purchased. The costs of repairs and new parts far exceeded the money which was available to Mr. Sellers, and he is in desperate need of funds to cover several bills which he owes. One store proprietor issued a warrant for his arrest due to non-payment of bills, which required that he post bond.

Mr. Sellers has also organized some FDP people into a SNCC Radio Committee consisting of about 25 men who have taken interest in operating two-way radios. Each person buys their own radio, pays weekly dues, and attends weekly meetings on Saturday nights. Money collected from dues and a savings club, which functions as part of the committee, will be used to operate the radio base which is manned from 4 until 12.

SHARON, MISSISSIPPI

Andrew Lee Green reports that he is working in Madison and Leake counties and is engaged in the following work: (1) working on the next election, getting people to understand the importance of becoming a registered voter and teaching them how to vote, (2) getting a black man to run in the next election, he and his co-workers have considered having an all-black primary election to teach people how to cast their ballot and who for, (3) working to keep headstart in Mississippi, and (4) working to keep MAP and GAP out. Black plantation workers are being moved off of the plantations so the land can be rented to the Governor; it is said that blacks are getting too much money and the whites have all agreed not to sell blacks any land.

TOUGALOO, MISSISSIPPI

Mary Varela reports that she is coordinating the work in Mississippi of those groups producing and requesting materials for the 1967 campaigns for county offices, and doing photography for different groups in the state. She says there is great need for experienced, selected organizers to come into Mississippi in the next nine months and develop the county political machinery for one or two target counties. Mary would like for SNCC staff members to write papers on black nationalism which would be published in the newspapers and publications of several Latin American movements and organizations. She is also fundraising for SNCC people to travel in latin America, and is making contacts for future work in a Spanish speaking ward of a northern urban area.

CLEVELAND, OHIO

Alex Weathers, who would like to affiliate with SNCC and become a field secretary for Cleveland, Ohio, is currently organizing an independent grass-roots movement in that city. He has been active for the past few years there, and has much experience with rent strikes, and working with black welfare recipients. Through his efforts, black mothers on ADC have organized themselves into a welfare Grievance Committee to deal with the issues which directly affect their lives. Alex visits the poolrooms and bars nightly and holds meetings in his home attended by 30 to 100 people every week; he is trying to build a cadre of young men who are discussing the issues of capitalism, the white power structure, and the war in Vietnam, and find ways and means by which they can obtain power to deal with these problems. He also is making contacts in the black middle class community--doctors and lawyers--in order to build a buffer group between the grass roots organizations and white power structure. His goal is to form a Permanent Defense Committee and persuade lawyers to defend poor black people free or at nominal fees; Jim Brown, formerly with the Cleveland Browns, attends these meetings when in the city, and appears anxious to lend his assistance. They are presently engaged in research to find ways of establishing a Co-operative Drug Store and are seeking a pharmacist who will lend his services free of charge.