

Local registration drive in Albany, so far

The drive was initiated by the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority's Alumnae Chapter here in Albany. Marion King and Mamie B. Reese are co-chairmen of the proje ct. Although the drive was to be their group project, remarks made by Marion even before the drive began indicated that there was an untapped reservoir of reluctance on the part of the Educated Ladies to throw themselves fully into this type of "social action" — registering voters. They were leery of the Albany-Movement-SNCC-type people. They expressed fear that having Dr. Anderson's picture appearing in the paper in the name of the drive would promote the wrong image.

Anyway, into the fairy tale rode the National Office, of the Deltas. They were in support of the project. They had read like all of us, of the travails of Albany's darker citizens in the name of freedom. National office made hints that the Delta Christmas party might be given to Albany. This Christmas party takes the form of publicity and donations from every chapter in the country. One hitch in the plans: although Albany itself deserved the party, what had the Educated Ladies themselves done to deserve the party? In their quest for The Golden Fleece, they pledged to register 2,000 new voters by Christmas. Fine, fine.

The plans were laid. Each of the Negro sections in Albany were assigned two area chairmen, one chairman being a Delta, the other a non-Delta who was experienced in canvassing and organizing. Committees were set up — business, speakers, telephone, education, and the like. Material was sent to all chairmen. Meetings were called, at which a small number of the Assigned Leaders appeared.

Meanwhile, Back At The Drive Office, Penny, Betsy, myself and Mrs. Doris Gaines, (Delta, but young and interested), were holding down the fort. By the end of the first week, the number of SNCC workers was cut down to one, myself. Penny and Betsy then began helping Rev. Wells in East Albany. This change was instituted because it was said that the Deltas were not showing up at the office because of the presence of The Young Radicals. Since the number of Young Radicals visible in the office has been cut down, the Deltas have steadfastly continued to not show up at the office. Doris and I began to recruit canvassers by telephone ourselves, since the chairman didn't seem to have workers out in their areas. We had difficulty in getting cars to drive those who consented to register down the the Court House and City Hall. We had no contact with the Deltas who were "in charge", since they wouldn't come to the office or hand in reports. Life was difficult.

Results up to this point: Since December 3 when the drive began, 26 have been registered. Responsible for these registrants are Rev. Wells who has canvassed with a handful of students each afternoon for an hour when he got home from work, Marion King who took eleven students down from the Vocational school (Praise Georgia for instituting the 18 year voting age), and two non-Deltas, Mrs. Singleton and Mrs. Wabking. Marion has further canvassed each night with a different Delta in a different section for the last week. That Rev. Wells, Marion King and SNCC were in fact running the Delta drive was quite clear.

We just got a newsletter from the Mississippi crew (while I was typing this) which is beautifully relevant. In connection with our Educated Ladies and their self-consciously professional husbands, it becomes necessary to quote:

"Once one discovers who the power sources are, and who the figureheads and puppets for the real powers are; he must mouth (feeble) protests against the injustices of figureheads and puppets, being careful not to offend the real sources of power.(note, this is called militancy)."

AMEN

"As the powers in the white community become aware of what you are doing (to help "our negroes") relations in the white community take a turn for the better(note: relations between the "Negro Leader" and the white community). This adds to one's image as a militant Negro Leader, enabling one to solicit funds from the Negro Community to continue the "fight".

I think the tie-in of the above with the Deltas (who, by the way are a sorority of teachers), needs no explanation. I wish you could have seen the Delta president's letter to the national office, which explained how the Deltas needed support "in our fight for freedom which has held the Negro of Albany in bondage for so long." And on and on for two pages. The woman took all her heart felt lines from AP and UPI releases of last summer. She even mentioned "the brutal beating of Soror Marion King", although Marion tells me that her sorors expressed nothing but disapproval of her actions last year.

On the night of Friday December 14, we held a brief meeting with Rev. Wells, Sherrod, Faith, Marion King, Betsy and Penny. Not much real strategy planned there, since we were all under the weather, cold weather, if you'll remember. We did decide that SNCC would mobilize a core of students to canvass each afternoon for the next six months. We will attempt to pull in the Deltas, and non-Delta teachers. Marion indicated that we could use some of the \$300 a month that the Deltas will get for the next six months for the project.

Sunday, December 16, meeting held at the SNCC house. The Six Months Plan was announced to about six local students who said they'd work with us. Sherrod threw out ideas like, The Bus, establishing tutorials, parties, working with parents and teachers to involve them, forms, and most important, the faithful canvassing of Albany's Negro neighborhoods for an hour after school each day during the next six months. In sum, the formation of a hard-core, well trained, aware, and cohesive group.

The responsibility for bringing in the feet-dragging teachers and other adults has been placed on the students' shoulders, as well as SNCC's. Charlie and I attended church where many of the teachers and DEs belong yesterday. First we will ask the teachers to tutor, then to hold forms, then to help in the drive, maybe? Meanwhile the kids have more contact with them than we do.

This afternoon we will begin by picking students up at Carver Junior High and Monroe High at 3:15, and canvassing in East Albany, where Rev. Wells has already covered a large number of the streets.

Faith