

[1964]

CANTON PROJECT REPORT -- FEBRUARY 28 through APRIL 28

The following report is an attempt to summarize the activities in Canton during the past two months. Rather than a chronological outline of events, I will try to ~~plot~~ outline the development of different kinds of activity throughout the entire week.

General Pattern of Events

The period can be divided into three phases. In the first phase we carried on two freedom days. The emphasis was on getting a lot of people at the courthouse as a demonstration of how Negroes are denied the opportunity to register. The freedom days provided a focus for staff work. You can build people up for a particular event more easily than you can make a continuing steady effort.

The second phase was without ~~plot~~ a definite focus except that of getting to the courthouse day by day. Work in the rural areas expanded, but little progress was made in the city.

The third phase was much like the second except that the introduction of the political programs and summer program provided a new impetus to the work.

Freedom Days

Two large freedom days were held, one on February 28 and one on March 13. ~~Plot~~ On February 28 about 300 people waited outside the courthouse to be registered. The staff had worked very hard leading up to the day, because they had a specific exciting task to do - get people to the courthouse on February 28. The majority of the people who stood in line were rural people. Many specific threats were made to Negroes with jobs in Canton. Some of the threats were carried out. Much police brutality was expected, but the people were allowed to walk by two's to the courthouse. National Council of Churches ministers were present as observers. ~~Plot~~ The F.B.I., the Justice Department and ~~plot~~ representatives of National News media were observing. During Freedom Day and the day after ~~plot~~ 7 persons got in to take the test. Law enforcement officers were there in large numbers.