

[1964, May 6]

Report--Wed., May 6th thru Sat., May 16

Meridian

Rita Schwerner

On May 6th the three people who had been jailed for their participation in the boycott on Hill's Dollar Store were released. The boycott itself proved successful, in that the manager agreed to hire a Negro salesman with equal pay, hours, and job description. We have not yet made a decision about moving the boycott on the other stores, such as the five and tens. We did send letters to their national offices about three weeks ago asking for policy statements. We received an evasive letter from Kross, no reply from Newberry's, and the public relations man for Woolworth's is coming into Meridian on Wednesday to talk with us. It is likely that after speaking with him we will reach some decision.

We have been receiving some encouraging results in the community center. More people are participating in programs, and there is a great deal of interest in the expansion of facilities for the summer. In addition, we have received some equipment from various sources. Some personal friends of mine sent a gift of a new electric sewing machine. National CORE has informed us that a tape recorder and a duplicating machine are being shipped down. Several other people are arranging for the donation of a typewriter. Not only will this equipment help the office to function more smoothly, but much of it will be of use for the summer programs. For instance, the additional duplicating machine can be placed in the building we have obtained for the Freedom School, in order that the teachers there be able to use it for lessons. The tape recorder will be of use both in recording testimony and for classes.

We have obtained the Baptist Seminary for use as a Freedom School. In addition to class rooms, it has a ball field, and will sleep 18 people. We have housing for about 40 additional people. We plan to have a small Freedom School in the rural area of Lauderdale Co. in one of the churches.

I am hoping that we will be sent someone with skill in crafts, in order that we can institute and maintain an arts and crafts program here in the community center. Rev. Bendrick, a local woman minister, has informed us that she is a licensed mid-wife, and had, in the past, taught classes in pre-natal care. She has expressed an interest in that phase of the program, and has said she would be glad to train a few of the young women, both local, and summer staff, to instruct others. We hope to set up classes in pre-natal care and nutrition. It is possible that one staff person will be able to travel in the rural area several times a week giving such instruction to people who cannot get in for classes.

At the present time we have a middle aged woman from California who was sent to us thru recruitment in the Jackson office. She will be here helping out in the center for about two weeks. She is a former high school Spanish teacher, and will probably be able to do some teaching, though in such a short time it is not feasible to set up structured classes.

We are still in debt, and greatly in need of money. The local people have started to assume some of the responsibility for feeding us, as our paychecks (for the 3 of us on CORE staff) have to be used for necessities here in the office. We understand that this situation exists thru out the state, so we are not making a special complaint, simply reporting the conditions here.