

5/29/64

TO: James T. McCain, Director of Organizations, CORE  
Richard Haley, Southern Office, CORE

FROM: Judy Benninger, Task Force, Florida.

SUBJECT: "Gainesville CORE"

On April 23, 1964, Pat received a letter from Mr. Richard Haley suggesting that she visit Gainesville in response to a letter from Ed Richer of Gainesville to Mr. McCain expressing a desire to have a CORE group there. Previous to Mr. Richer's letter there had been many other expressions of interest in CORE due to speeches there by Pat, some participation in Dunnellon CORE by Gainesvillites and my own acquaintance with the people interested in CORE.

As a result of Mr. Haley's letter, Pat contacted several people in G-ville and suggested that they call a small meeting of interested people to discuss CORE and whether or not they would like to form a chapter there. We went to G-ville on May 1st for this meeting, discussed CORE philosophy and handed out literature. The group decided to investigate discrimination in the area of city and county hiring and perhaps discrimination in the municipal hospital. They decided not to work on public accommodations for two reasons: (1) 90% of restaurants, both theatres, and the majority of motels were desegregated. Other groups were working on city recreation facilities rather effectively, and a plan for school desegregation is under way. (2) they felt that more support might be gained from the uninvolved non-skilled or semi-skilled Negro workers who are not significantly affected by the rather

middle class movements now established there.

Mike Geison, chairman, told me that he had forwarded to Mr. McCain a list of officers, a constitution and a request for affiliation.

I was in G-ville yesterday on personal business and had an opportunity to talk to Mike, Mr. Richer and several other members of the group. They have a number of problems which arise, I think, from a lack of sufficient understanding of the rules for action and from a lack of procedure know-how. Also, leading members of the established civil rights groups often counsel them to do nothing at all for fear of upsetting the so-called racial harmony in G-ville, and on other occasions counsel them to do things of a radical nature without counseling them to exhaust all other steps they could take. At present the group is confused and unsure, although I expect that a hard core of that group will continue with the hiring demands "no matter what".

Second, I personally feel that this group needs some work in non-violence. The prevailing attitude of the established civil rights groups is that non-violent workshops are unnecessary since they don't ever plan to be in a situation where a non-violent response would be required (because they think they have such good relations with city police and government, etc.) As a result, few of the members of the CORE group have practice in non-violence. If the group follows its announced ~~step~~ schedule of steps to achieve the goals they have set, and if the city and county do not comply with their demands, the group may have fairly immediate

use for non-violent training, aside from the other reasons why they should have it.

Mike asked if Pat could come to G-ville for the meeting this Sunday night and stay a few days to conduct workshops and help them get rolling. This seems unlikely--that she will be able to do it.

Despite the problems the group has, it has managed to bring the question of hiring before the public. The established civil rights groups are reacting either by censureship of CORE or by beginning to plan more effective programs of their own in competition. I have enclosed several slippings which relate to their activities in G-ville. Below is a brief outline of the demands they are making and the schedule of their program.

1. visits with city manager and Mayor to request the following:
  - a. no discrimination in city hiring.
  - b. recognized place in city hall for announcing job openings, including requirements for the job, base pay and job description. Also, who to see to apply.
  - c. central hiring office for all departments of city
  - d. fair promotion practices.
  - e. reasonable firing practices (outgrowth of firing Negro recreation director after a number of integrated dances and picnics where he refused to exclude whites).
2. Formal request to be made before city commission concerning above demands. They asked for either granting of their requests--some immediately as a show of good faith, or the setting up of a committee to investigate the allegations and report with recommendations to city commission or a specific date given by which time these demands would be met.
3. If the above is not complied with, the group plans a series of demonstrations beginning with picketing, then constant questioning in city commission until an answer is given and perhaps mass demonstrations.

4. I have suggested to them, and they agree to try it, that they go a great deal of leafletting and talking in the Negro community about the discrimination in the city hiring. They also plan to issue press releases.
5. Finally, the group plans to ask for NRTA programs in the vocational schools of the county to train people for the industries which are in the area, particularly in connection with GE and Sperry and clerical work at the University. They hope to be able to draw in unemployed Negroes to participate in planning for this, in picketing, etc., and as manpower to supply sufficient applicants for whatever opportunities they can open up.

This seems to be the situation in G-ville at present.

Sincerely yours,

Judy Benninger  
Field Worker, Florida