

WEEKLY FIELD REPORT

7/9/64 (rec.)

BL
Wash. Ctr

ISSAQUENA

Dear Charles,

I told you on the phone that Bob and I were going to see the sheriff on Monday (July 6, 1964). I think neither of us is any longer sure of sanity of this move. The sheriff was typical - he doesn't like the idea of outsiders coming in to agitate "our nigras," he says Negroes have not voted because they haven't wanted to or weren't qualified, etc. Bob talked to him for about an hour. Nothing really important was said. He said there was organized segregationist groups in either Issaquena or Sharkey. He said if there were any members of the Klan or WCC, he was unaware of them. He said as a law-enforcer, he will protect us and any other Negroes participating. He said qualified voters should have no trouble registering -- he said a great many things and tried to gracefully intimidate us. He was very insistent on getting our addresses, supposedly he cannot protect us unless he knows where we are living and where the Freedom Schools will be held. He also wanted to know who had invited us. No information was given. We gave the Sidney St. address as our present address and told him we were commuting at this from Greenville. We waited at Tony's, where Bill was to pick us up, for a car coming from Vicksburg to take us back to Greenville. The Sheriff followed us about, spoke to the owners of Tony's (White) and I assume asked him to look out for the car and get license number, etc. We left Tony's and walked down to Pecola Thomas's, we were followed

there by the deputy. He went across the street to the white store and watched us from there. We arranged to meet Bill on a side street South of town. This morning a man came by to tell us that the Sheriff and his deputy had gone all over town last night to Negro homes to find out if we were there or had been there.

The Sheriff continued to harp on the use of demonstrations (that is any large group of people coming to the courthouse) as creating unpeaceful situations. Tomorrow we're taking five (5) people to register. If the whites make it necessary for us to do so we are prepared to take more and/or stage a demonstration using both those old enough to vote and the kinds. Bob and I disagreed on this. He felt we should take more. I felt we should test them first and not intimidate them with a large number of people and possibly push them through fear to violence. We're doing it my way because of a fiat.

Whether we are right or wrong in going to see the Sheriff it's done and it makes it ever more imperative that we get a car down here, preferably with Mississippi plates. The Sheriff said that some Negroes had come to him and told him that they had seen out of state cars in Mayersville and that some young man had been talking to them. Bob had gone into town again today, I shall probably go in late myself. We have a meeting arranged at the Moonlake

Baptist Church for tonight at 7:30. We have to see the people in order to alleviate some of the fear the Sheriff's visit might have created. This coming week may determine the cooperation we will be able to get throughout the summer. At this point we have housing for four. No one is willing to take whites. Here again I will make a plea for Muriel. I think the need for here is much greater than in a city like Greenville where your project is as far under way as it is and in the liberal climate that you are working. The problem of housing for whites also affects that FHA person Stokely is supposed to bring down next. I think possibly we would have to rent a house in order to house the library as well as the whites. A library could be placed in one of the Churches.

Saturday night in Rolling Fork a cafe was raided on a tip that some of us were there. Bob has been over there and probably someone he spoke to told the whites who assumed we were living there.

Would you see that I get some copies of the Freedom School application form and also the two briefs enclosed. Some very important mail please bring it when you come down. I've run out of money.

~~1/2/68~~

Louis Grant