

KNOX COLLEGE

GALESBURG ILLINOIS



~~Department of English~~

July 12, 1964

Editor,
Galesburg Register-Mail
Galesburg, Illinois

To the editor:

We are writing to commend the Register-Mail for taking cognizance, in its editorial of July 10, of the "Mississippi Summer Project." We agree heartily that the objectives of these students are "commendable, and (that) this is work that must be done." We would like to take issue, however, with your view that "the National Council of Churches and the Council of Federated Organizations... should withdraw these youngsters from a dangerous situation and regroup, perhaps to fight another day," and with the reasons you offer in support of this conclusion.

Your objection that the effort is "poorly timed" seems decidedly at odds with the current public concern for civil rights as demonstrated by the recent passage, with overwhelming support in both parties, of the epoch-making Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Regarding your charge that the movement is "inadequately organized," we would point out that the participants were carefully screened and chosen, briefed by a high official of the United States Department of Justice, Mr. John Doar, and intensively oriented at their Ohio training camp by experienced civil rights workers from Mississippi to the dangers that they would encounter as they sought to organize, instruct, and encourage long-suffering and disenfranchised Negro American citizens to exercise their constitutional right to register as voters.

Contrary to your belief that their impact will be "miniscule and hardly worth the possible cost in bloodshed

and life," we believe that the actions of the President of the United States, and the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as well as the extensive coverage of the project in the national news services, prove conclusively that its impact has been widespread and effective in making the nation aware of the unconscionable circumstances of over half a million American citizens who are no more free than the captive peoples behind the Iron Curtain.

Finally, as teachers of the three Knox College students who are members of the project, we cannot concur with your judgment that "it is senseless to deploy rank amateurs into the battle against a condition that requires the very best leadership that America can muster." We cannot expect our students, whose eagerness to do freedom's work is partly a product of their education, to stand back and hope that help will come from another quarter. We believe that these young people are engaged in a courageous effort to become "the very best leadership that America can muster." They appear to us to be answering the call of their late President, John F. Kennedy, whose inaugural address invoked the command of Isaiah to "undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free."

Respectfully,

Gordon B. Dodds

Douglas L. Wilson