

We returned to Moss Point about 6 p.m. and attended a lively NAACP meeting. The President was away at a convention; the Vice president presided.

~~X/~~~~was~~~~/~~~~the~~ It was evident that the membership were very interested in hearing what we had to say. The chairman conducted the meeting so formally that it stifled any free movement or emotion - he always introduced people to the floor and had to reiterate what they said or asked. However, they were with us and said they would do certain things. We emphasized that this was their struggle as much as ours. People wanted to know what NAACP would do in case of reprisals; leadership was evasive - we outlined what we could do and what we would try - everything. Later talking to Charles Evers it was apparent that even here NAACP leadership is not receptive to needs of the membership and Negro people, but more concerned about "organizational status". The Negro people here are beginning to be more aware that SNCC is the people.

We announced a mass meeting for July 1 at KP Park. Everyone said they would spread the word. They'd look for an office also. We were told that while we were gone during the day, 2 young (16) Negro boys were picked out of a crowd at the soft ball field for having "insulted" a white woman and that they were arrested. No one could see them or bail them out; we said we'd try to get one of our lawyers down.

July 18 - Sat. Moss Point

read by J.M.

[1964]

Worked on Freedom Registration files. Canvassed for people to attend prayer meeting of CCFO's tonight at First Baptist Church. Talked with reporter from local newspaper "Chronicle" about the grand jury statement that "Leading Negroes testify don't need civil rights workers.".....

Young Negro girl from community was walking home from the store during the day, a white 1959 Buick with 5 or 6 whites drove by and threw several bottles of beer at her.. she was seriously hurt...hit several times in the lower part of her back. When taken to the hospital, no one waited on her...she was in deep pain..... Finally a local Negro CR girl got the hospital Negro Dr. Harris to help her..the white doctors generally refuse to help Negroes....The police were there and wanted to know why the other girl was there..They showed no concern for the hurt woman only why the other girl was there. A witness to the incident was there and tried to give the details to the police. (The incident happened in Moss Point, the hospital is in Pascagoula so the Pascagoula police would do nothing...) The Moss Point police tried to confuse the witness, but finally took down the information.....

Early this morning, our local registrar was stopped by the Pascagoula police and told to come down to the police station next Monday to talk to them. This has been happening to several people.

Early this morning, a white man came by the office who works for Mayer Pierce of Moss Point and was interested in what we were doing. He seemed genuine. But some of us think he was sent.

Last night, two girl CCFOers had to move. Fear is permeating the atmosphere; jobs are being threatened and lost.....

Police stopping CCFO cars demanding that they get Miss. Tags.

Those jailed in Biloxi, are now out. The trial was removed to federal court.

Prayer meeting was fair; a lot of strain on part of CCFOers and not much local attendance or participation.

MSU meeting seems to be going well.

July 19 - Sunday..... About 50 local people and CCFOers went to the beach today. It was a freedom school excursion. Very successful both fre moral, mixing and politicking. Only two cars came by and yelled at us and one cop approached only wanting to know if we were together so that there would be no trouble between black and white. Later the CCFOers from Gulfport came by also. No other type of work was done today, except a few went to church in the morning.

[1964]

July 20, Moss Point

A lot of work was accomplished today. Our first newsletter was written by Ron and distributed at the mass meeting. Freedom Registration forms were made up in lieu of the fact of not having any. The bus depot will not give us the packages since we don't have the shipment papers.

Marnie McKay talked with the director of Moss Point Chamber of Commerce today. The director's general attitude was one of congeniality. She thinks that everything is all right and that the COFO people are immature and communistic. She says that one of them (Ron) is a known communist and that they are investigating him. She did cooperate by giving some general information about Moss Point....

The law student, Allen Verson, talked with a captain of Moss Point police about the use of a sound truck. He was told that the announcements must be submitted for approval and a permit must be obtained; only certain hours can be used. But we can't get a permit. The submission is illegal constitutionally.

.....55 people canvassing concentrating on freedom registration. 242 forms signed.....13 people went to court house;;; 5 out of 7 known passed..... 21 people committed to go to the court house from canvassing work.....

MSU meeting held trying to organize. They are giving a party to get more participants, COFO and all adults invited. 20 attended.

May more people are becoming involved; initiative is being taken on the part of more and more...It looks like this project will be an going affair.

Mass Meeting—250 attendance. Very good meeting. Different COFO volunteers gave specific explanations of the work done and needed to be done. Sandy Leigh talked about the Freedom Democratic Party challenge and its importance. It was very specific and meeting; everyone could identify. The grand jury proceedings were explained. \$43.00 was collected and several people were signed up to take people to the court house.....Reporters were there from the Miss. Press Register and Chronicle...they are favorable and liberal men. We had a long talk with them and they are printing a statement by the pres. of Moss Point NAACP about the grand jury which indicates the lies of Byrd and the truth of community and NAACP support..... Something about our work and the mass meeting will be in all local newspapers.....

...the mystique of the church and apathy is being torn down...Guyot is getting across...church and "democracy" are one in the same.....

Monday: Jane Morris

[1964]

JM

MOSS POINT - JUNE 21-June 30

Sunday, June 21:

Charles Glen, Howard Kirschenbaum, Ron Ridenour, and Fred Meely arrived in Moss Point - five miles from the coast and 20 miles East of Biloxi - around noon. They first went to Pascagoula - pop. 17,000, about 3,000 Negro - into the Negro neighborhood. They met some people who knew "we" were coming. Mississippi project has been widely publicized by the NAACP, churches, TV, newspapers, radio, etc. They met a member of the local NAACP branch, a good man who gave them some information:

- 1) The city hired another 10, total of 15, Negroes on the police force. There are 150 men on the force, however the Negroes can't arrest whites, are not on the budget, have to buy their own weapons, etc. They are "flunkies" and "Toms". One killed a Negro some months ago and nothing was done, even though everyone knows the assaulted Negro did no wrong, but was a potential danger to the Power structure.
- 2) Jackson County pop. is over 55,500, about 19.6% Negro (10,864). 5113 Negroes are eligible to vote - about 1400 (24.4%) are registered. The main problem here is not outright discrimination in voting, but general discouragement and lack of understanding of the importance of voting on the part of many Negroes. It could be estimated that 3 out of 5 eligible Negroes who go to the court house become registered.
- 3) Be careful of Negro informers.
- 4) Always be conscious of danger - security, safety precautions and self-discipline.

Later we went to some cafe in Moss Point. They learned that our two best contacts were in Wash., D.C. at the national NAACP meeting. ~~But~~ Before long the general curiosity overcame the people. They had to know what 2 Negroes and 2 whites were doing together. They explained and everyone had some understanding of the project. They wanted to know more specifics and particularly why we were motivated to come south. ~~But~~

June 22:

Everywhere, people are interested in what is being done. Charles knows a few people and we have been talking to them., learning about community problems. On June 14, the Negro citizens had a memorial for Medgar Evers - a leaflet was hung up on small businesses - mostly cafes - announcing the services. Sheriff Byrd (County Sheriff) came around tearing down the signs and ordered all owners to see him. He told them that he could take away their licenses if they participated in any way with Civil Rights. We heard of people losing their jobs and being run out of town for speaking out, of burnings, jailings and beatings; of having few paved roads and no street or stop lights. 7.1% of the Negroes are unemployed - about 4% of the whites are unemployed - and over 50% of the Negroes are unskilled laborers. The average income of Negroes is \$606 while for whites it is \$2000 - annual income overall being \$1300, about 1/3 of the national income. ~~But~~ About 40% of the labor force is Negro, while Negroes make up only 4% of manufacturing and industry.

Monday afternoon, Mermie McKay arrived, and was taken to the home where she will stay all summer. Charles, Howie, Ron, and Fred were staying temporarily with a family after having spent the previous night in motels.