

Meridian, Miss.
Aug. 11, 1964

Report on the activities of a NCC Counsellor
from July 19--Aug. 11, 1964

Arrived in Jackson July 19, and on failing to find anyone at 507½ N. Parrish at dinner time called a friend, the local Unitarian minister, Rev. Donald Thompson, and spent a few hours with him and his wife getting their views of the situation.

On July 20 was given a thorough orientation, along with other clergy, at 507½.

On July 21 drove with others to Meridian, my assignment. There Rev. Wm. Hervey was finishing his tour of duty as minister-counsellor, and he was helpful in giving me local background information.

My title has been Minister-Counsellor to students in the summer project of COFO, and the title describes at least part of the work, but I have tried to familiarize myself with all parts of the local organization. My general rule has been to feel my way quietly, to thrust in a question here and there, and a suggestion as well, but not to be directive nor to assume powers. Our students from the north are a remarkably capable group, are fiercely individualistic, and in most cases are self-starting and self-disciplining. They know they are here to do a large piece of work in a short time, and they are not wasting their hours.

Chief problems of the students have been, in my estimation,

- 1/ tension inculcated by the paranoid atmosphere of Miss. and by some actual danger or at least harrassment.
- 2/ just plain overwork
- 3/ lack of recreational opportunities to take one away from the work
- 4/ transportation problems (thus the NCC car does much taxiing)
- 5/ lack of comfort and cleanliness opportunities (partly taken care of by the hiring of a room & bath for cleanup purposes at the Negro hotel across the street.
- 6/ loose organization of the office, with insufficient inter-communication
- 7/ complications brot on by local youth, some of whom are dedicated and able workers, and others of whom are simply hangers-on who get in the way.

I have done no counselling-in-depth, but have had many simple conversations while waiting, while taxiing, while doing committee work, etc.

As opportunity offered I have tried to participate in the work the youth have been doing, sometimes going out with them in house-to-house canvassing for the Freedom Democratic Party, sometimes taking part in precinct meetings, sometimes going out into the country to urge people to attend rallies, sometimes going down to the court house with folk registering to vote, sometimes going to the police station to inquire about police practices, sometimes going with students in the "white community project" to interview local white ~~students~~ ministers, lawyers, officials, doctors, etc. In this way I have had an inside look at most operations of the local project. Attendance at the staff meetings of the project and also of the Freedom School has of course been helpful to me. The youth have set a fast pace, often also a daring one, not always fitted to my age and habits, but I have tried to carry on, feeling that a side-by-side pattern of operation was best under the circumstances.

The experience has been an expansive one to me in terms of time and energy and comfort, as well as money, but it has been an exciting and satisfying experience, and I am thankful that I have been able to have a share in this freedom movement.

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