



NORTH FLORIDA CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PROJECT

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TO: Richard Haley, Southern Regional Director, CORE.

FROM: Patricia Stephens Due, Field Secretary, CORE.

DATE: August 14, 1964

SUBJECT: Developments of the Voter Registration Project and CORE in Florida. A report.

The North Florida Citizenship Education Project, presently a three county effort, has been in progress since the 7th of July. Attached is a statistical summary of registration in these areas.

The three counties in which we are now operating represent different problems, and different programs are being used to solve these problems. Suwannee and Madison Counties are areas in which concentrated and overt registration efforts had never been made before we began working. In both counties, despite intimidations, harrassments and arrests, working community groups have been formed by staff to carry out registration work. In Suwannee County the staff have met their greatest resistance from the established Negro leadership. However, because they were able to gain the confidence of unregistered people and less prominent but more militant community people, a strong and aggressive program is developing. The two girls working there have been able to get to the unregistered areas—bars, cafes, tobacco farms (where they have been working this week), the streets, and rural churches. Although local so-called leaders will not cooperate, the warm response from the less fortunate segment of the population, and the help they are getting from newly interested citizens leads them to feel that a permanent group for registration will be set up. Most registration days more people come to register than time allows for, and canvassing, car pool groups and several registration meetings are part of the program.

In Madison County the great resistance has come from law enforcement agencies. A number of arrests have been made there, and a law clerk was beaten while attempting to investigate a public accomodations situation. As in the other counties, many more Negroes show up to register than can be registered. In Madison the community leader, Rev. Jamison, has taken a strong stand, and he allows civil rights workers to live in and operate from his home. The local N.A.A.C.P. Youth Council has been active in registration efforts, and there is little doubt that some sort of permanent group will be left to carry on activities. .

In Gadsden County, where Negroes outnumber whites, and where about 90%

of the Negro population eligible to register is unregistered, and where this unregistered population is about 10,000 people, a great concentration of effort is being made. The county has three major towns, and there are six staff distributed in these towns. Each town has the beginnings of a permanent registration group, and the county CORE chapter is also supporting the drive. Each week the registrar's office is open for only 6 hours. During this period, however, about 200 Negroes are registered, with almost as many more being turned away during the day because of an insufficient registration staff in the office. In September the books will be open every day, and with a continued push and the fact that the local CORE chairman is running for Sheriff, great registration is expected.

From the point of view of actual registration, the project is being very successful. Without fail the maximum number of people who can register under present registration procedure do, this being about 400 people in the three areas. However, because of the short registration period each week in each of the counties, even registration could be increased through legal or direct action, both of which are being planned. The greater problem, or deficiency of the project lies in the fact that the project is to end September 7, only 4 days after the books will be open every day. Therefore, according to present plans the bulk of registration days will be going on without staff impetus. Further, a great deal of voter education must be carried on between September and November to insure that Negroes who have newly registered will know how to go through the voting procedure. In all counties great numbers of illiterates have been registering. Experience in Gadsden County shows that illiterates can learn to vote and vote for the people they want to if they have help. In order to speed up voting they should learn to write their names, and we have been encouraging literate people to undertake the task of teaching people to write their names. Further, sample ballots must be distributed and explained. And last, actual voting must be observed by interested parties to make sure that irregularities and discrimination do not occur during the General Election day.

As a result of the conclusions drawn above, we strongly urge or request that the project be continued until after the general election. It is vital that staff be left in each county to continue this work, and additional funds will be necessary to insure the continuance of the effort. Many of our workers have said that they must go back to school the 7th of September, but some have expressed a desire to remain on the project as long as funds are available. Minimum needs will be outlined later in this report.

Chapter activities:

Although we have been working exclusively in voter registration, we have been in a position to keep up with some of the activities of North Florida chapters and to learn of their needs. Quincy CORE has

derived some benefit through working with staff assigned to voter registration. Many local members act with staff in canvassing, driving and registration day work. Quincy CORE will begin direct action tomorrow in an effort to have the books opened every day this month. However, a great deal of work needs to be done in organization the internal structure of the chapter. Further, the group needs guidance in its direct action projects and it needs more workshops. Quincy CORE is receiving more and more financial and moral support from the community, and these resources must be utilized.

As a result of a lack of servicing and the student nature of Tallahassee CORE, this group too needs some serious servicing from a Field Secretary. There are enthusiastic CORE members in Tallahassee, but again the group needs reorganization and suggestions for program.

Dunnellon CORE, which is a relatively large community oriented group, but which is not yet affiliated, is in the midst of an internal split which threatens to break up the group. They have a number of willing workers, both adult and youth, and both age groups have been doing sporadic testing. However, they are in great need of organizational work, CORE group processes, etc. They need someone for at least a week.

The Gainesville CORE group, which received unaffiliated status at the convention, also needs help. There is a small group of students and local Negroes who are relatively militant, certainly militant when compared with the other local groups. However, they need suggestions as to programs other than public accommodations, and they need to know techniques in membership work, etc.

To solve the problems of these four potentially strong and effective groups, it will be necessary to have the services of a field secretary for at least two or three weeks.

SUGGESTED CONTINUATION OF THE VOTER EDUCATION PROGRAM

As a minimal recommendation, it is vital to the success of the current project to leave at least one person in Suwanne and Madison Counties until after the November election, and to leave at least two persons in Gadsden County. Further, a central office in Quincy would have to be found, as it would be impossible to continue using my house for this office after September 7. Three cars would be necessary for this continuation. An allotment for office supplies, telephone costs and other usual expenses would have to be included. In essence this would entail a two month extension of the current project; staff would be cut and expenses would also be cut. I feel, however, that funds used during this period would be worth more, because the books will be open, than even the funds expended during the present period. Gadsden County groups have contributed several hundred dollars which we are holding to pay staff with in these two extra months, but a definite grant from an organization will be necessary to do the best job possible.

NON-WHITE
STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF REGISTRATION

| COUNTY | ELIGIBLE | <u>REGISTERED</u> | | <u>% REGISTERED</u> | | REG. POTENTIAL* |
|------------------------|----------|-------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|-----------------|
| | | APRIL | AUGUST* | APRIL | AUGUST* | |
| Gadsden (Quincy) | 12,261 | 1,425 | 2,125 | 11.5 | 17.6 | 10,136 |
| Madison (Madison) | 3,067 | 1,602 | 1,803 | 52.2 | 58.7 | 1,264 |
| Suwannee (Live Oak) | 2,159 | 1,046 | 1,250 | 48.4 | 57.8 | 909 |

* Approximations based on our records
The increases from April to August represent
registrations during the month's work.

12,309

Total registrations this month: 1,105

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Stephens Due
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Field Secretary, CORE