

We considered our job to be three-fold: (1) to be available as counselors to the COFO staff and local volunteers. In this capacity, the first goal was to establish rapport and inspire confidence in our ability to accept differences in religious commitment and our tolerance of a general critical attitude toward the institutionalized Church. (2) to work within the Freedom Movement itself and to serve as teacher, canvasser, surveyor, contact, etc., just as any other COFO staff member. (3) To contact the white community and help establish a continuing communication between sympathetic whites and the movement, and communication between Negro and white leaders.

(1) RAPPORT WITH STAFF

In the Cofo community, we passed the test period, and established what seemed to be adequate rapport with the group in a matter of three days. The workers seemed to sense our admiration for their abilities, energy, and endurance. We came expecting to find a superior grade of person in the project and found even more commitment, courage, and character than we expected. The effectiveness of such a collection of brilliance and enterprise is truly dazzling. They are understandably weak in group process, organization, coping with daily trivia, and detailed coordination of such resources as transportation, man-power, and time. More frequent staff meetings including evaluation and planning would focus the many talents, which are now so often scattered and dissipated.

In this group, dedicated to the equality of races, there is much maintenance of sexual inequality -- the males tending to ignore the females and attempting to relegate them to the stereotyped roles of housemaid and secretary. The presence of a married couple in the role of minister-counselor could (given more time) offset male-female conflicts. The girls found no hesitation in appealing to us for help in this area. Also, in a group unusually tolerant racially, there is noticeable intolerance of other differences, i.e. age differences, social ineptitudes, naivete in dealing with the Negro community, etc.

Counseling took the form of providing a cushion for tension, escape valves for built up hostilities, or a buffer foil for religious or social discussions. Tensions evolved from almost continuously relating to each other, from depressing phone calls from parents, frustrations with transportation conflicts. Yet ^{workers} they are always ready to rally to register voters, teach those hungry for knowledge, and to help the threatened and harassed. Perhaps, of all the tensions, the greatest is that caused by a hindrance most easily removed: the lack of sufficient transportation. The cars here are few and often fail to operate. If NCC could provide means for registering out-of-state vehicles, there would be no reason for the minister-counselor not to bring a car -- at least, not in this project. *Also provide repair centers.*

The minister-counselor should keep in mind that the vast majority of COFO workers are deeply committed to their task, highly moral and ethical in their own way, widely evangelical, and firm in their faith. Some have given up regular outward practices of sectarian religion, but all are dedicated to God's Way in the world -- much more so than the average regular Church-goer.

Individual contacts (confidential)

Negro:

Rev. James Spencer -- Wesley Meth. Church
Mrs. Rosa Straughter Bapt. pres. minister's wives
Mrs. Phelps " "
Rev. Hosie Phillips " chmn, Negro minister's assoc.
Mr. Eddie Thomas
Mr. Taylor
Mr. Crump (Crump's Laundryett)
Mr. Levi Brown
Mrs. Bessie Jones (not reliable)
Mr. and Mrs. Triplett (Meth. Ch.)

James Rice (2 yrs. Stamford)

Mrs. Jerrie Anderson, Magnolia St. (2 yrs. college)

Mr. J. C. Hayes

Jessie Smith

Mrs. Chatmann Court St.

Dr. Aaron Shirley M.D. Frank Summers (improvement league)

White:

Rev. Stuart Wood All Saints School, Episc.

Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Meyer PO Box 1193

Rabbi Blinder 1209 Cherry

Rev. John Kist, S.U.D., 923 Second No.

Rev. James Conner 105 Hawkins St.

Rev. Jenkins, All Saints School

Rev. Calcote " " "

Mr. and Mrs. Farris (cf. Fr. Kist's list)

Mr. Alec

Jack & Nancy Withers
214 Meadow St.
Naugatuck, Conn. 06720

P.S. We took notes on several evaluation sessions
with staff workers. Send you results by mail
later.

We feel that creative listening in the counseling role has done much to dissipate tensions. The workers themselves helped us establish our role, and each time we were engaged in a counseling relationship, we felt decorated! The fact that we ~~were~~ were man-and-wife team was evidently quite effective. Beyond the double man-hour resource, there was the example of bi-sexual team-work, and the chance for youth to observe a working marriage. The latter evaluative statement would not have occurred to us, had not so many (girls especially) asked about our marriage and about our methods of establishing a non-competitive working relationship.

(2) THE ROLE OF WORKER

Our first duty was to teach (the first week of our stay here) in the Freedom school. We did this together so that if one were engaged in another project, the other could cover. We taught the classes in Sociology, Citizenship, and Negro History. The Socio. class was engaged in a community survey in hopes of obtaining socio-economic data for at least one precinct in Vicksburg. The members of the class carried out interviews, and carried them out very carefully and thoroughly. Citizenship studied the new civil rights legislation in detail. Negro history was based upon a text-book, Bennet's, Before the Mayflower, an excellent resource.

The most interesting project undertaken by us while on the ~~project scene~~ was a complete survey of the Negro families in the fourth precinct of Vicksburg. We arranged for the mimeographing of interview forms, instructed staff and students in their use, and organized the canvass. The complete canvass took the bulk of four days. Adequate tabulation and computation of the results will take longer, but raw data is now available on family size, house-size and facilities, annual income levels, welfare and social security payments, educational level, voter registration, FDP membership, occupational and housing patterns for a large segment of Vicksburg's Negro community: information not formerly available anywhere. The survey was received enthusiastically by the majority of persons interviewed - almost none refused to answer questions. Results were uniform whether the interviewee was white or Negro. Only a slight hesitancy was experienced near the top of the economic scale.

Much was learned and much encouragement must have been given the Negro community by our close association with it. We pray that the work will continue among our brothers and sisters here. A minister and his wife serve a unique function - and perhaps serve best as contacts to the Negro community. The minister in the Negro community is greatly trusted and respected by virtue of his position. A personable minister, and a friendly and energetic minister's wife, can do more in that community than in the white. Staff workers at COFO, members of the Negro and white communities, all expressed what we feel is genuine regret that we could not stay and work with them longer.

"Ivory tower" ministers can only reinforce negative impressions of the Church in our society. Tolerant, knowledgeable, willing to serve where needed, and flexible men can on the other hand reinterpret the Church and make it relevant again in stressful societies like COFO and Miss. towns.

(3) CONTACTS IN THE WHITE COMMUNITY

Security precautions, initial fear, and transportation crises prevented us from making as many local contacts as we had hoped we would. We did contact twelve ministers and one rabbi (white and Negro), some of whom had been contacted before by minister-counselors. Some of this was a waste of time, but we did find a substantial core of sympathetic persons in Vicksburg, who seem to be determined to continue a real contact with the project and with the problem of solving the racial conflict here. Nancy met with all the Negro ministers' wives (16) who were in town during our stay. Two of the Methodist ministers seem enthusiastic about our presence here, but are unable at this time to contribute anything to the situation. There was a meeting of interested adults on Wednesday night to try to determine future action. About half-dozen attended, including one layman and two young people (his son and daughter). Many good suggestions were discussed and further contacts were attempted with little results so far. The most encouraging event of the week was a meeting with about 15 college students who are native to the community and who are interested in working out racial problems. An intelligent and rousing discussion terminated in one or two concrete decisions for action -- about half-dozen white students from this meeting have continued to visit Freedom house and work with the COFO volunteers on such projects as they can without being spotted and harassed by their townsmen.

A discouraging aspect of the work in the white community is that the theme song seems to be "I believe in it, but I can't be seen doing anything about it" or "Wake me up when the war is over." An encouraging factor is that none of my fellow Methodists expressed any resentment at my presence here. Their attitude was rejoicing that someone was here doing some inter-racial work, since they can't because their hands are tied.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

1. A minister needs to be in the project longer than two weeks. He should be tolerant of a variety of different attitudes toward religion and toward him personally. And he should be quiet, patient, and be willing to listen more than he speaks.
2. Ministers should be given more specific orientation in the assigned project and less general and generally useless philosophy of non-violence (which is probably assumed by most volunteers). Ministers should communicate, if possible, with the project leader before entering the project. Our leader was away from the project more than he was here during our first days. Strings were much too loose and confused. Projects should play a larger role in defining the job of minister-counselor.
3. On subject of NCC orientation of COFO staff volunteers, workers here generally express the need for more technical assistance in running mimeo, building toilets, showers. Perhaps a team could travel from project to project to help evaluate such specific needs and provide better training in these matters.
4. COFO workers need to be helped to be more aware of local leadership resources - how to spot them and how to use them more effectively. Much effort is wasted satisfying their own needs to lead and direct, and too little is spent on the task of developing indigenous workers.

I haven't had the pleasure of working with you enough to be able to evaluate what the two of you have personally done here, but here are my thoughts about the possibilities of the role of ministers in the civil rights movement in general.

In regard to the relationship of the minister to members of the project, I don't think there is anything special to say. I think the best way to act is just as you have done, in a friendly, equal, way. I suppose you could always be different if you ran into somebody in need of spiritual counseling, but that seems unlikely.

In regard to the Negro community, I think that labelling yourself specifically as a minister (by wearing a collar, etc.) is useful because it is a very respected profession. I should think that the time and place to be uniquely useful in a way that is difficult for other project members is when dealing with gatherings of Negro ministers, acting as a liason between other project people and ministers whom they are trying to organize to do something, make announcements in church, etc. I would think that most Negro ministers would be more willing to deal with a fellow-preacher than ~~xxx~~ with a college student. Also a minister could be particularly useful perhaps when there were occasions when speeches had to be given to church congregations. To a lesser extent some of these same things might be true when dealing with middle-aged and older women's groups, since these are people who probably would tend to respect and listen to ministers more than to young students.

As for the white community, I guess many of these same things hold true, that if they are willing to listen to anybody, ministers, older people, and church congregations would be more willing to listen to a minister. But here the problem would seem to be that white people are least willing to listen to someone who has been here for only a short time ("you people can't just come down from the North for a few days and tell us how to solve their problems"). Although perhaps this objection won't be ~~xxx~~ raised if you stay in the background, setting up meetings, chairing them (which you did excellently on the one occasion I saw), rather than as acting as a party to a dialogue, which of course in the long run must be ~~xxx~~ between Vicksburg whites and Vicksburg Negroes.

I say this skeptically, because I don't have much faith that a large scale dialogue will develop or that large numbers of whites are going to grant concessions to Negroes on the basis of talk and understanding. I wish it could be so, but because I believe that only well organized political and economic action will be effective in the long run, I view the ministers' role, like that of other civil rights workers, as ~~xxxxxx~~ one of organizing, encouraging, helping the organization of Negroes. Although naturally I think contact between the two communities should be encouraged when it does develop.

The times when a minister's role is going to be that different from that of other project workers aren't going to be that frequent, And I think the best way to act is to try to be one of them, as you have done.

Warren

We asked several workers to evaluate, as above. This is a sample response. We have notes on other, mostly oral interviews or noted comments. Will send another report on that when we get home & have a chance to compile them. Dick Wilkins