

REPORT

PROJECT: Ministers' Project, Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Dates : August 24 - September 1, 1964

Purpose: To participate in the cause of civil rights for Mississippi Negroes in the context of the program of the Church as established by the National Council to cooperate with the Council of Federated Organizations. (Of these coordinated organizations, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (into Miss. in 1961 directed by Robert Moses), sponsored the Summer Project of which the Ministers' were a part).

No. of persons participating in the Ministers Project during
Summer of 1964 -----262
(28 states and 3 faiths were represented)
15 of these were Disciples)

Report by: Fannie M. Bennett, National Counselor, Churchwide Leadership Development, The United Christian Missionary Society, Missions Building, Indianapolis, Indiana

No. of persons in group during the week of August 24-29 -----14

No. of persons contacted by Fannie Bennett either by teams of two, in meetings with others, or individually:

Work in the Mobile Street Library -----	25
" " " Palmers Crossing Library -----	10
Voter Registration in Library Precinct -----	75
Canvassing for the bus boycott & mass Meeting in Mt. Zion Area -----	60
Canvassing for jury duty authorization registered voters of the Walthall precinct ---	15
Attending mass meetings and helping when needed -----	500
Attended Church Service and helped prepare -----	50
for lawn parsonage dinner 8/29/64	7
Working in the office of COFO and Ministers' Project, making reports in connection with the canvasses -----	19
Lived in the home of the Campbells with Univ. of Md. student -----	9
	<u>765</u>
	Total

The Schedule and the facts of happenings

- Orientation at the Jackson, Miss. Office of Mississippi Summer Project, Warren McKenna, min. Director 10-a.m. - 4 p.m. 8/24
-We were given blanks to sign pledging ourselves to work with COFO and comply with the rules the briefing folder contained: "Security Handbook." (copy with master file)
-introduction by Warren McKenna of some 20 workers who arrived on August 24 and assignment made: 6 to Hattiesburg; 8 to Canton; 4 to Fugalee
-briefing by a rept. of the doctor's group by Dr. Count Gibson: Medical Committee for Human Rights and Dr. Sidney Greenburg and nurse, Miss McCarter who had come in from Canton for supplies and educational materials. Since July, 1964 this medical committee has had psychologists

doctors, nurses located in Jackson, Greenwood, Canton, McComb, Hattiesburg and 2 other localities. They are not licensed to practice in Mississippi but can work with the local medical personnel in referring cases and doing first aid, teaching health education, etc.

-the 55 Negro doctors are good in Jackson but are not allowed to work in the hospitals. The University Medical center is good and cooperative. Drinking water is safe in the major cities but it is best to trust the bottled drinks in small towns and rural areas.

-Lawyer: Asa Sokolow told us that the Lawyers Guild and the President's Commission for Civil Rights under Law are permanent all over the country. They have three projects in Mississippi and other equally "hot" areas: 1) to advise the NCC representative before trouble breaks 2) to advise them on procedure when in trouble and 3) work with the Negro lawyers

Outside of Jackson the ministers are the favorite targets for arrest. The phones are tapped. Never argue with officers.

Go with them. If they demand a search ask if they have a warrant. When arrested, one has a right to telephone call and this should be to office to which you are subject: COFO, Min. Proj. or pres. of Pres. Comm. for Civil Rights Under Law. Stand "mute" until you have a lawyer and tell them as little as possible without insensating them by ignoring.

Arrests come for picketing, handing out leaflets, or anything we do for Mississippi has different laws. Cars are non-integrated. Always register with local authorities and be sure the office knows where you are at all times.

2. Introduction by Warren McKenna. The Commission on Religion and Race with Dr. Robert Spike as head has four areas of service:

- 1) orientation of volunteers in Jackson and Tougaloo
- 2) ministerial counseling with 25-30 projects along with COFO staff
 - . voter registration
 - . freedom schools and libraries
 - . community centers

3) work in the white community where COFO does not work

Ministers service the projects which COFO runs. All students are recruited by COFO and ministers are recruited by the National Council, along with lay persons.

Lack of information has caused difficult times for NCC. We have a budget separate from NCC. Two-hundred volunteer students are at home arranging for return or in Atlanta for training and will return for longer service---"We shall overcome accidentally."

3. Briefing by CORE member on non-violent procedures

- 1) the attacker dehumanizes the one whom he attacks and seeks argument to get him to be fearful and hostile. Straight is best.
- 2) Be sensitive to the mood for ignoring may set attackers off.
- 3) Approach in a way they do not expect and do not be afraid - do it first
- 4) Act as normally as possible for we still "witness" for our cause even in face of danger.

We role played how to receive "beatings".

4. Recording

- 1) History of the Negro in America. Ever since 1619 the slaves have lived a frightening life. Some form of slaving has been in progress or practice for many hundred years: "humans treating humans as animals". They were told not to be citizens although "all men are God's creatures." They were members of Christian churches. One of the slave ships was named "Jesus." The treatment produced split personalities resulting in distrust. Only God knows if Mr. Lincoln's interpretation was a right one. Civil War did not convince America that Negroes are fully equal. 1877 tried to
 - . never vote especially on major issues
 - . Negro and poor white never join together to solve mutual problems
 - . left dependent on the white "master" and not trained.
 - Ku Klux Klan organized to get whites to depress Negroes.
 - Jim Crow Law in 1896 including Negro and White Churches until segregation was accepted.
 - Interracial Revolution and Supreme Court Decision in 1954 - after and before but we chose not to see it. So they fought through Birmingham, Little Rock, Greensboro, Clarksdale, closing schools, jails, buses burned. Meredith in 1962, Medger Evers, four girls in Birmingham Church Building and two boys outside WHILE CONGRESS DEBATED THE CIVIL RIGHTS BILL. So the Negroes asked Martin Luther King: "why love?"
- 2) Approaches to Mississippi
 - bitterness against white rulers and man that must be faced
 - meet both hope and distrust Read "In Another Country" by Baldwin
 - been down for so long do not know who they are so must build the feeling of "I'm a child of God."
 - some have been freed and have convictions
 - we meet whites who do not deal with a Christianity that is relevant
 - . mental illness results
 - . anything new threatens so fear results: controlled press,
 - . UN, U.S. and NCC is against them pressure groups
 - . threatened by both white and Negro locked doors
 - . threatened by N being in power politically because they know what the white did.
 - . Greenwood does not have enough whites to have to commune instead of spending their money in Greenwood.
 - those who have not been "backed" against the wall but they are for Mississippi and will not change until white and black work together to break it - they are not going to be heroes

5. Orientation in Hattiesburg: Mark Allen, Minister Stubenville, Ohio(Pres.) William Bason, Pres. Student Minister Austin, Texas; Ralph Ross, Friends Service, Comm. Wichita, Kansas; Harold Smith, Prof. from Wooster, Ohio; Walter R. Rice, UP from Conn. and Fannie Bennett were assigned to the Ministers Project in Hattiesburg and motored in the Hertz rented Chevy to 522 Mobile Street where Director M.J. Sanderson (in absence of Bob Beach), Jean Dimond (Pres. Missionary minister) & Susan Weber (Pres. student from University of Md) met us and began our initiation by taking us to the Green Door for dinner. Mr. and Mrs. Moody, owners of the Restaurant had taken their stand, withstood arrests and boycotts of supplies, until they could serve whites and blacks together. This was our major place to eat for two weeks.

-Those who joined us for the week's work were Mrs. Margery Gumbel, Epps, Washington, D.C.; Allen and Betsy Green, University at Claremont, Calif.; Bill Bickel, Bapts. from Community Center, St. Louis (Berea). Vern Roseman and family were already here and with us until Thursday; 8/27

-Calendar for the week as announced by Sandy would be approximately:

- . Voter Register registration on Tuesday with follow up intermittently
- . Community Centers to be staffed each afternoon
- . Library to be staffed each morning and afternoon
- . Thursday night each week mass meetings for "selective riding" organization (bus boycott).
- . Canvassing Wednesday for the mass meetings
- . Checking on registered voters who would be willing to sign an affidavit for jury duty
- . Working in either Ministers' Project or COFO offices on reports and research
- . Contacting the white community for conferences, luncheon, tea or whatever arrangements could be made to talk with key persons
- . Helping to drive the project cars or personal cars for transportation
- . Tuesday afternoon rally at Palmers' Crossing
- . Tuesday evening guests of Rabbi Ben Ami in his home near
- . Men helping to paint parts of three days at John Cameron's Church; Faith Tabernacle Baptist Church.
- . Friday night evaluation for the first week 8/27/64

-The same rules applied for our "operation" as were given to us in

6. Some Results and Insights of the ten days Aug. 24 - September 4

- 1) This is an excellent learning experience for ministers such the same as our missionaries on the field when they transfer administration to the nationals. The students of COFO are in charge and they constantly are training local leaders and placing them in "front" and in places of responsibility. Ministerial counseling and contacts with white community were sponsored by Ministers Project.
- 2) During these 10 days we added approximately 50 registrants to the 80,000 Freedom Democratic Party
- 3) At the same time about an equal number of registers voters were either secured or recorded. Many school teachers had registered this summer who had not been placed on the records of COFO.
- 4) In discussing the duties of the registered voter as a citizen we were able to get them to see that jury duty is very important especially right now when Hancock has been in jail for 40 days and Glen for somewhat less time. That the only way to get fair trial is to have an integrated jury.
- 5) The consciousness of God at all times was very evident and the witness to us "professionals" was great as we lived in the homes, attended the reception of the five delegates from Atlantic City; called in the homes, attended the mass meetings and church services. One good Baptist lady has turned over the downstairs of her home for COFO headquarters and she sees to keeping it clean by getting volunteers to help.
- 6) Groups of persons from the precincts are organized to serve one meal a day to the COFO workers and invited the ministers one noon to join them.

- 7) The radiance and enthusiasm of the five delegates from Atlantic City as they told their story and as they cautioned all that this beginning of "equality" must be continued through being effective citizens: registered voters enlist others and get them to the court house to vote; qualify for jury duty; vote for those who are willing to take positions on the Board of Education; help plan for and teach in Freedom Schools; urge members of families who need to learn to read to attend the literacy classes. Our hostess has had such a class in her home and is planning and registering for another this fall.
- 8) The willingness of the families to open their homes for the Ministerial women and COFO students to live in their homes even in the face of danger showed real consecration!
- 9) The diligence of the workers to get the leaders of the community an opportunity to counter misinformation with correction information is most effective. The challenging of the press to be accurate and making corrections before copy goes to press - as journalism students check shows real preparation.