

CANTON COFO, TWO WEEK'S REPORT
September 10, 1964

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

The office staff has recently changed hands. Margaret Cunningham and Mary McGroarty have gone home. Mary Ann Shupenko is now in charge and is in the process of re-organizing finances and files. During the summer a lot of records of incidents were not kept. She is trying to track down the people involved in arrests and trials and get their statements.

Finances have been straightened out by George Raymond, Jimmy Bolden and Mary Ann. However, Jesse Morris has now worked out a new budget and we'll have to begin working into it. Leake County is getting their own budget, so out of this office will be handled only Canton, Valley View and Rankin County.

We are in desperate need of a tall filing cabinet and of a good typewriter. We have nothing but a bunch of broken down portables in the office. Local people have come in by the dozen inquiring about welfare. The Welfare Committee of the Madison County Movement is pretty poorly organized. They have no communication with the people, consequently they continually come into the office for help. We could use another shipment of food and clothing in Madison County.

We could also use a good telephone code into Jackson. Lately with all the incidents occurring here in Canton, we have used the phone quite a bit calling the Jackson office, and the operator gives us quite a bit of trouble with the John Anderson code.

Things are still a little confusing, but they are all getting straightened out and the work is being done. The local people here are most cooperative. They are getting tired of being harassed by the police and are very willing to give statements and affidavits.

COMMUNITY CENTER

Martha Wright is in charge of the Center. Her staff consists of Arlene Bock and Sally Schiedler (both of whom have been returning for more than a week but who have not appeared as yet), George Johnson (who runs in and out and who is also working on the boycott), and Jo Ann Coiman.

Wednesday, September 2, 1964 we moved the Center from St. Paul's AME Zion Church to the green house next door to the Freedom House. The entire house had to be cleaned, and we painted the inside. We also had shelves built.

Since all the male staff members were busy with other things, we had to depend on local teenager boys for all the heavy moving and painting. This was a problem at first because many of the teenagers who frequent the vicinity of the Freedom House are extremely reluctant to do anything for us which requires physical effort. But it was profitable also, since we now know who the willing, dependable workers are and have gotten to know them. The same applies to local teenage girls who have been helping to set up the library.

The Center should be open by Monday, September 14. Its immediate functions will include:

- 1) library, catalogued and with a check-out system; staffed by local teen aged girls.
- 2) at least one afternoon or evening per week devoted to just children under 12 (recreation, story telling, etc.).
- 3) one evening for teenagers (Youth Club and M.S.U.).
- 4) tutoring and citizenship classes.
- 5) guitar and piano lessons (given by two local people).
- 6) photography classes (Arlene Bock).

We also will have Freedom School at the Center and hopefully a roving Freedom School to cover the Flora, Gluckstadt, and Cedar Grove areas of the county. BUT WE NEED MORE FREEDOM SCHOOL TEACHERS.

We also need sewing machines with which Judy Orr (Federal Programs) will run sewing classes in the Center, and we will work closely with them.

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

The Federal Programs staff consists of Judy and Eric Orr and Milton Pickett. The principle concern of this staff is the Farmers' League and the Chamber of Commerce. As a necessary adjunct to both is investigation of health and welfare on the federal, state and county levels.

The League should grow substantially from the A.S.C. election experience. The chances are good for an integrated county committee. The organization that will win the election will solidify the League. Next will be the cotton gin coop. While the A.S.C. organization is going on, moves will be made to tie up land for the gin. Frank Weil addressed the League on incorporation August 26. He gained easy rapport with them and they seemed anxious to cooperate. When they answered his questions about incorporating they were committing themselves to economic action. He made it clear to them that he would work hard and draw up the plans. They are becoming aware that the League is going to engage in economic activity that will benefit them and give them a respected voice in the white community.

The Chamber of Commerce suffers from ambivalence and fear of the whites. It will be hard but important to get the community committed to group action. Classes will be set up in bookkeeping

and other management skills. These will be needed by the men who will direct the shopping center. Two LDCG lawyers met with the group August 24 and explained how to set up a corporation and its function. Then there was a general question and answer period. The discussion was taped to be played back to the committee people who were out of town.

We have tried to open up the Canton mystery on welfare. To do this we have used ministers to canvass and conduct interviews in the Negro community. The initial effort was to get some sort of picture and data on welfare conditions in the community. The ministers were good at canvassing and would have been extremely valuable if we could have given them mimeographed questionnaires which would obtain reliable and uniform data on the community. However, the mimeograph machine was out of repair. The main problem with welfare now is to get detailed information on exactly who is entitled to what. Judy is researching her questions via the available material, but much work is still to be done. We have a number of cases to follow up as soon as we have the necessary information.

We had a short but successful meeting with Dr. Vital, President of Tougaloo on August 24. He is a member of the Mississippi Advisory Committee and of Governor Collins' committee to implement the new Civil Rights Bill. He pledged his support and invited us back again. We will make an appointment to see him next week. He referred us to people who will assist us in arranging for a night course in book-keeping; the course will be offered through the Chamber of Commerce. We then talked to Mr. Briggs, the Public Relations man for Tougaloo. He gave us the names of two Jackson teachers to contact. In addition he agreed to give us help in arranging for speakers.

The area of Federal labor law violations has not been investigated. This means checking the industries in the Madison County area as to contracts, the nature of their trade (intra- or inter-state), and if they comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act (minimum wage, time and a half for overtime). This information is difficult to get, but not impossible.

POLITICAL PROGRAMS

Chris Rainone and Mrs. Anne Divine are in charge of Political Programs. They will concentrate in the next few weeks on establishing a county-wide organization for the purpose of dealing with future elections and manifesting the program of the Freedom Part. Organization will be along beat-precinct lines. A block captain system for communication will be set up in the Canton area.

The county organization will center around FF County Executive Committee. The three committee members in each beat will be responsible for mobilizing the program in their beat and will develop county programs on the Executive Committee. Each beat will operate on a three-precinct basis for close contact with the entire member-

ship. A meeting place will be located in each precinct. Workshops will be held in the precincts to familiarize people with the FP program and to choose precinct leaders. Later candidates for local elections will be chosen through the precinct system. A county-wide mass meeting to be ~~held~~ held September 12 will serve to launch this county organization.

For purposes of efficient communication and de-centralized control, a block captain system will be organized in Canton. The city has been divided into ten areas, each to be headed by an area secretary. The area secretary will be responsible to the Precinct One Leader and to the secretary of the Madison County Movement so the system will serve both FP and the Movement.

To make FP in Madison County a formidable political entity the number of Negro voters in the county must be substantially increased. Thus we will continue to emphasize voter registration. A VR checklist to ascertain exactly what the situation is in this regard will be obtained through the precinct leaders and block captains. A Civil Rights Rally, possible of district-wide proportions, will be held on October 3, as a prelude to a Freedom Day and to encourage registration attempts generally. The suit against the Madison County registrar which is now pending in a Federal District Court will be followed closely and moved to the Fifth Circuit if necessary to fully mobilize the counties eligible Negro voters who compose 73 percent of all eligible voters in the county.

A permanent office for Madison County is now being sought. Fund raising activities for this and other party activities will be considered shortly.

SCHOOL INTEGRATION

Tuesday, September 1, 1964, the children met at Freedom House at 8:00 p.m. Seven children actually went into the school to attempt to register. Parents were not allowed to get out of the cars or go into the schools with the children.

The children were met at the sidewalk by Superintendent Allen and the police and were taken into the school by them. They then wrote their names and addresses on a piece of paper. On this paper they also wrote their grades. The Supt. questioned them on who sent them and why they came. He told them that registration for transfer students was to take place on Thursday. They then left. Since the police would not allow parking in front of the school, the children had to walk a block or so before they were picked up by Dr. Bridger of the Medical Committee.

The children who went were:

- Eddie Williams
- Richard Weatherford
- Sammie Owens
- James McCullough
- Addie Goines

Lawyers were present at the Freedom House and took statements. Billy Noble and several police cars sat out in front of Freedom House all day.

Thursday, September 3, 1964, children and parents met at the Freedom House at 8:00 a.m. The 19 children who went to register included:

Eddie Williams, 7th grade, age 12
 Richard Weatherford, 8th gr. age 13
 Sammie Owens, 7th gr. age 12
 James McCullough, 8th gr., age 13
 Hattie Mae Oliver, 8th gr. age 16
 Floyd Esco, 7th gr., age 15
 Dewitt Grant, 10th gr., age 16
 Helen Owens, 8th gr. age 14
 Mary Chambers, 8th gr. age 14
 John Anderson, 7th gr., age 13
 James Anderson, 7th gr. age 13
 Chester Thomas, 9th gr. age 16
 Jimmy Grant, 9th gr. age 15
 Gladys Dinkins, 10th gr., age 14
 Lena Harrison, 9th gr. age 15
 Georga Mae Reid, 9th gr. age 13
 Mary Lee Bennet, 7th gr. age 13
 Betty Jean Silas, 8th gr. Age 13
 Juanita Bennet, 8th gr. age 14

The parents who attempted to accompany them were:

Rosa Lee Weatherford, Mrs.
 Mr. McCullough
 Mrs. Lockett
 Mrs. J. Bennet

The press statement was issued by Mrs. Annie Divine and Mrs. Lockett.

The children left the Freedom House at 10:15 in five cars driven by a member of the Medical Committee and by Rev. Kenworthy. Parents were in the cars with the children.

Cars were staked out at Liberty Supermarket and people were staked out at vantage points throughout the school and downtown area. The cars were driven by Dr. Fredrick Johnson, Dr. Dave Denison, Dr. Robert Axelrod, Rev. Kenworthy and Dr. Buckingham.

Rev. Kenworthy and Dr. Denison's cars got through to the schools and deposited the children. Parents were not allowed to enter with the children. The other three cars were detained at the sheriff's office until our lawyers could get down there with a verbal authorization to drive the cars. They were then allowed to deposit the children in front of Canton High School.

The children were taken into the school and filled out transfer applications. The school board asked them why they wanted to come to this school and they answered that Canton had better equipment than Rogers High. The superintendent told them that Rogers was better equipped, that it had 3 laboratories and that Canton High had no library, both of the last two statements were lies. They then asked the children, if they were allowed to come back next Tuesday would they come? The children all answered yes. They then left, walked off the ground and a ways before the cars arrived to pick them up. Then they came b

to pick them up. They they came back to the Freedom House and told their stories.

On the local scene, there were police and sheriff's cars all over the school area. It was swarming with them. Out in front of the school there were several white men, fairly well dressed. Two or three cars of hoods circled the school. All the city trucks were out tarring the streets or just in general blocking the streets. They were alerted to watch for us and probably stop us. At any rate, 19 children got into that school and filled out forms.

We had excellent press coverage -- Life, NBC, ABC, etc.

SUMMARY OF INCIDENTS

September 1 there were two arrests: Houston Howard for reckless driving and running a stop sign; James Bennett for Both were released the following day. Both were struck by officials as they were being released.

September 3 the families of two children who attempted to register at Canton High received threats. A road on a white man's property was declared a forbidden route for the Weatherford family. The Canton Postmaster, Mr. Luder warned the grandmother of Betty Jean Silas that her grand-daughter she should not have tried to register.

Also September 3 a red truck with one light and a black chevy passed Freedom House. Occupants of these cars were seen throwing bottles in the area of Freedom House. Shortly after the police came to the House and asked to look around inside. They blamed the bottle throwing on Freedom House occupants and said that if anything is thrown from the House again they will arrest everybody on the grounds and in the building.

September 4, the Owen family was warned about the registration of their daughter at Canton. James Sutton, Mr. Owen's boss at the Gulf Oil Co. threatened Mr. Owen with the loss of his job.

September 5 Mrs. Pinkie Stovall was stopped in downtown Canton while shopping on Center St. and ordered into the police car. When she asked why she was being arrested one police officer knocked her down and both dragged her into the police car and took her to the city jail. They told her she was arrested for cussing. The actual charge was resisting arrest and disturbing the Peace. She was released on \$75 bond Sunday afternoon. Earlier Saturday her son was arrested. The charge is not known. Neither is involved in civil rights work.

11:00 p.m. Sept 5 COFO received a report that about 9:00 p.m. in downtown Canton by the train station a white pickup truck stopped, two white men got out of the truck and forced a young Negro boy (about 16 or 19, stocky build) into the truck at the point of a gun and then drove off west towards Flora. There was a crowd of people around at this time but no one got an accurate description of the white men, the truck, or the Negro youth. This was reported to the City Police.

September 5, 10 p.m. all Negro bootleggers were closed up for an indefinite period.

September 6, 2:30 A.M. Joe and Barb's store (owned by Joe Ferguson) was bombed. The store is approximately 2 blocks away from the Freedom House. There was considerable interior damage to the structure of the building. The ceiling is falling in, all the glass in the windows and doors is broken. It didn't appear that there was any great damage to the stock in the store. City police, sheriff's men and a great number of FBI (15 to 20) appeared to investigate.

September 6, 3:10 a.m. six sticks of dynamite and a bomb were found on George Washington's premises. A search was also made of the land around Freedom House and the Community Center (G.W.'s store is kitty-corner from Freedom House), but no other bombs were found.

September 6, 6:30 a.m., George Raymond and James Saunders were arrested in front of Mr. Washington's store by Deputy Sheriff Billy Noble and Police chief Dan Thompson. They were taken to the city jail for investigation. Mr. Raymond was released at 10:45 and Mr. Saunders at 11:15 the same morning.

September 6, 9:45 p.m. Mr. Wilbur Robinson and 7 other people were arrested for no reason. They were not told what the charges were and spent the night in jail. In the morning Mr. Robinson was charged with disturbing the peace. He paid bond of \$26 and was released about 8:15 a.m.

September 6, Chester Thomas and his mother were threatened with the loss of their home by Jake Vincent and Amos Dial if Chester were to go to Canton High.

September 7, all Negro businesses were raided by the police.

September 8, 13 Negro students were turned away from Canton High, told to go to Rogers High until the School Board notified them of its official action on their requests for transfers.

September 8, 12:05 p.m. William Forsythe Jr. arrested when he took two Negro women to the Court House to register to vote. He was taken in "for investigation."

About 9 am Wednesday September 9th, a body was found

in the big Black River off Highway 51 North near Pickens, Mississippi by pulp wood workers employed by Junior Penn. This information was brought to the Canton COFO office by Henry Earl Ware, 18, about 1:30 pm. He stated further that the body was that of a boy wearing a CORE T-shirt and white undershorts. George Raymond made several telephone calls including one to the Highway Patrol in Jackson, where it was learned from Sam Ivy that the boy was Negro and about 14 years old.

After contacting the national office of CORE, Raymond learned that the boy's name was Herbert Oarsby, 14, New Orleans, who had been visiting his grandparents, Mr. Tobe Hart, in Pickens, Miss.

It was learned that the body had been removed by State Highway patrolmen and taken to the Holmes County Coroner's office in Lexington (Holmes County), Mississippi.

At 6:30 pm a party from the Canton Cofo Office, consisting of Jerome Smith, (CORE Field Secretary), Henry Aronson (CORE counsel in Mississippi), Sue Buckingham (physician for CORE) and two NBC newspapermen went to Pickens to investigate further.

Mrs. Ida Oarsby, the boy's aunt, was first contacted by Mr. Smith. She stated that the body had been found hanging over a bush with the face in the water. She said he had been missing since Sunday night. She suggested that the grandfather, with whom the boy was staying, had more complete information. Mr. Tobe Hart was then found, and Mr. Smith talked with him. He said the boy went out of the house Monday noon, the grandfather thought to play with the cows in the field. He was missed later, but the boy's brother (here also from New Orleans) told the grandfather that Herbert often played so late that he went to the house of relatives overnight without notifying the parents, and thought that was why he was gone. It was not until Wednesday morning, when the grandfather ~~was~~ was walking along the river, that the body was seen. The grandfather thought it was a dog at first, but then saw the clothes on the bank. The grandfather did not know about a CORE T-shirt. He returned to the house, notified the police, the undertaker, and the doctor. They apparently examined the body and assured the grandfather that he was not shot or harmed. The grandfather believes the boy drowned. He was known not to be able to swim, and had been begging to go swimming. The family thinks he stepped off the bank and found the water deeper than expected (water level in the Big Black is very low ordinarily). The boy had run away from home in New Orleans, where his parents are separated. The mother was notified by the grandparents to come to Pickens, and was expected Thursday, when the funeral was scheduled.

Another local informant contacted by Mr. Smith led to an interview with the ambulance driver who had brought the body from the Coroner's office to the funeral home in Pickens. He stated that he had seen the body and that he saw no bruises or bullet holes. He suggested that if a COFO physician saw the body it would have to be early Thursday morning.

Jerome Smith and Henry Aronson returned to Jackson at 8:45 p.m. to contact a COFO worker who was acquainted with the Pickens area. They were to consult the Jackson Medical Coordinator, Dr. Jeanne Sperlock, about obtaining a pathologist from outside to make a medical examination. Smith stated that the Negro community members with whom he had talked were suspicious about the circumstances of removal and examination of the body.

It was learned Thursday morning that Dr. Sperlock had contacted two pathologists, in St. Louis and New ~~York~~ York, about medicolegal questions involved in obtaining an autopsy. Permission of the county authorities would have to be granted in order for this examination to take place.

Catherine Nicholas, Negro from Canton, Mississippi, and several other eyewitness who were not interviewed, reported that she had seen a Negro boy the same age and size being forced into a white pickup truck at gunpoint by two white men in downtown Canton at 9 p.m. the previous Saturday. This was investigated by George Raymond and duly reported to local police Saturday evening and to the FBI Sunday morning.

COOPY