

HOLLY SPRINGS PROGRESS REPORT

October 7, 1964

The Holly Springs COFO office is the headquarters for nine surrounding counties in Northern Mississippi: Marshall, Benton, Tippah, Tate, Union, DeSoto, Lafayette, Lee and Yalobousha counties. This office had thirty-seven workers this summer to cover these areas.

Now we have ten workers to cover the same area, and one fifth of the money. Consequently some of these areas are being neglected.

The COFO program which is in practice throughout the state of Mississippi, focuses on bringing out indigenous leadership. The methods of organization are: the voter registration drive, the Freedom Democratic Party, the Freedom Schools, and federal programs such as farmers' leagues. Many of us work in all areas.

Benton county is the most progressive county in the Northern area, and probably in the entire state project. There is a strong leadership which began before we came, and has consolidated since we have been here. The men and women have formed a Citizens' Club which works on establishing farmers' cooperatives, seating a Negro on the cotton allotment committee of the county, setting up local libraries in homes and churches, etc. The voters' leagues are strong and are instrumental in supporting delegates and programs of the Freedom Democratic Party (FDP). There has been a Freedom School since July, one was attended by all ages and is now on recess until after cotton picking; the other school which is now in session has two classes: voter registration education, and a youth group. This youth group and another in the county are planning to build a community center which will be named after a Freedom worker who was killed in an auto accident in August. Fund raising is done in Mississippi as well as the North and West, however on a relatively small scale.

Tippah county had only two meetings of the FDP all summer, whereas Benton has been meeting weekly since June. There is currently an upsurge of energy, and two brothers are taking on the responsibility and expense of organizing the entire county. One meeting was held during which new leaders spoke, we spoke, a member of the State Executive Committee of the FDP spoke. The forty people there voted to set up a Freedom School to promote voter registration and a youth movement through classes. This certainly is a promising county. We hope to have the funds to operate in it along with the people.

Union county is presently in a sad state of affairs. The men who are the chairmen of their precincts, and the leaders, have decided not to do any work until "things cool off" in Mississippi. These men are terrified. It would be a tremendous advantage to this county's organization if we could set up an office there. As of now this is impossible. However, we are not relenting.

Marshall county which is our home base needs much work, since it is the largest area with the highest percentage of Negroes (about 75 percent). There are a few local leaders who take on an abundance of responsibility. The FDP is strong only in some areas. A Freedom Club of the FDP has been formed by a delegate to Atlantic City. The purpose of this club is to financially support families who are put off land or lose jobs for registering to vote or participating in the Freedom movement. This is a very real threat. They raise money at their weekly meetings, about \$20 weekly. This won't support a family of 15 very long.