

Tom Ramsay, Weekly Report for week of 10/5/64 to 10/11/64

10/5/64

Freedom day at the Madison County courthouse. Spent morning talking to people on Hickory Street, attempting to get them to go to the courthouse to register (or at least to attempt to register, most of the people have realized by this time that the act of confronting Port Campbell is simply a gesture). We got about thirty people out of the eight thousand or so that are eligible to try in Madison county. Most people just don't think it makes a difference any more and are unwilling to try.

Took the last group to go down myself, was evicted from the courthouse grounds by Sheriff Cothen on the basis that I was disturbing the peace. Then was pushed around by Steve Bowen, a local white defender of the faith. My God, these people are sick!

10/6/64

Chamber of Commerce tonight at the Masonic Hall. Tried to get them to think for themselves about why they should form a C of C. Most of ~~those~~ those who come are there because they finally break down and decide they should discover if there is really anything there which might help them in their business. Or else they hope by participating they can tie in on the Washington shopping center when it comes into fruition. But, after one of our meetings, they go and come no more! The problem is that the group was originally gotten together to serve as a front for the Washingtons, Jacksons, etc in getting money for the building of the shopping center. And most of the little businessmen around realize that about all they can ~~now~~ expect in the way of a personal result from the shopping center is to go out of business or at least be confronted by reduced business. So why in the hell go along.

I'm trying to get them to begin a discussion of the purpose of the chamber. Tonight they formed a committee chaired by Reverend McCree to draw up a constitution and bylaws. Hopefully we will be able to draw enough people into the process so that the goals will end up being more in line with the interests and desires of all the businessmen rather than the four it now represents. Wilbert Robinson was unfortunately re-nominated for President. We managed to delay the election. Perhaps in a couple of months we can get someone else in to replace him.

10/7/64

Farmer's League meeting at Mt. Zion Church in the 15th precinct. Otha was furious because we hadn't yet gotten our charter from the state. Gave a rousing 30 minute speech which ended by advocating the overthrow of everything. We won't be able to move much more here until we get the charter. The combination of Cotton season and Otha's disgust are enough to stop everything now.

In the evening CO Sr and I went over to Rev McCree's house for a couple of hours. The two of them talked at length about the problems of the movement in Canton. Discussion ended by McCree asking CO to go on a trip with him. Good?

10/8/64

10/8/64

Spent the day working on the War on Poverty program. Frankly, I don't think we can expect too much outside the fields of education and perhaps, initially, work-training if Paul Johnson can be put in the position of accepting this. The education portion of the bill is the only portion of the bill that can be put into operation at the state level without the approval of the governor. All we need to do is have a group of illiterate adults get together with the county superintendent of schools and demand he institute a program of literacy training for the county. If we at the same time bring pressure on Washington I imagine we can swing it. The work training program is literacy training plus a job for people under 22. I see this as being part of the local conservation effort (that is we will work through ~~xxxxx~~ Hendrick's office in attempting to set up a conservation-construction-land clearing program for Madison---I think they already have something like this in the master plan for the state---)where we get our local people jobs while setting them up for further basic schooling. At least we will be able to get them a salary while they go to school. Since this is so basic we might be able to get the state to go for it. The other parts of the bill have no immediate effect on the state. Thus I don't see our lever if we go to them and ask for help. Why should they even spend the 10% they want for something that will only help colored people?

10/9/64

There was a meeting of the membership committee scheduled for 9AM at Wilbert Robinson's office. None of the committee showed up, including Wilbert.

Meeting of community F this afternoon at New True Light. We nominated Mr. Charles Taylor for candidate from this area.

10/10/64

Mass meeting at Milton Grove to raise money to replace the burned churches. Rev McVeechaired, talked at length about the movement and little about the necessity for raising money. Thus, people gave little money. I'm sure that, unless the Committee of Concern manages to raise the coin, the churches won't be rebuilt. Of course, the best thing would be if they weren't rebuilt. There are too many little churches in the county now. One here in Canton manages to get a grand total of three adults plus the pastor to worship on a Sunday.