

As per request, a report on the situation, such as it is, in Gulfport.

1. Charles McKeller, Charles Wheeler, both SNCC staff  
John and Ann Else, paid by Disciples of Christ  
Tom Trost, volunteer, leaving Wednesday  
Jim Parry, Dave Edmondston, Eleanor Aragon, Jack Mogelson, all of whom have committed themselves to stay indefinitely, all of whom need subsistence (Jim Parry has been here since this summer, and COFO or SNCC has supposed to have been paying him subsistence since September. He hasn't received anything from anybody. SNCC should carry through on its obligations, or COFO should, or somebody.)
2. Doug Smith relieved us of our project car. This leaves us without transportation. Eleanor has a decrepit old Ford, which she doesn't want to get involved in anything strenuous unless in most dire emergency. John Else's car is usable, except it's usually in the shop and it's a VW anyway, so not very capacious. We need another COFO or SNCC car.
3. A. We're getting a bunch of stuff for Community Center from up North (Mrs. Harry Davis, Rochester), but we don't know exactly what yet. There is a Mennonite Community Center in North Gulfport, a rather poor city one and an inoperative Catholic one in Central Gulfport, so we haven't set anything up in opposition. We are working with the Mennonites now, and are trying to work out some joint programs with them. They're cooperative.  
  
B. Federal programs we haven't done anything with. Since this isn't a farming area, we haven't done anything with farm programs.  
  
C. We have a Freedom School going for high school age kids, giving Negro History. MSU chapter with about 15 members. We've only had one teacher, picked up another this last week, both staying on.  
  
D. Got 2/3 of a boxcar full of stuff last week. Not yet organized enough to distribute, since it fills most of our downtown office to the ceiling, leaving no work space. Two women are forming a local committee to distribute it.  
  
E. We've got it down to the point now where we know the sections of the Constitution used most of the time (4 sections, about 75%). Of those who went down this summer, only six passed. Since then we've had about a dozen; the rate of passing has improved immensely. We now just tell them what to do and where to register, and take them down to the courthouse and let them go in alone. In Harrison County, they don't harass anybody, as far as we know, and the registrar, who gets insulted if anybody tells him he isn't fair to everybody, is much more helpful if we don't go in with our people. He's even helped a few to fill out the forms and pointed out mistakes. So we should be able to get a fair percentage of people going down now passed. We've been concentrating on North Gulfport, and the local FDP people are running voter education classes on Saturday nights. There are three very strong people in Coria City who are interested in setting up classes and adult education. They have been working on their own to get people down to the courthouse, and we're going over to talk to them about setting things up this afternoon. We've been averaging somewhere around fifteen to twenty people a week, either going down with us or on their own, which is possible on the Coast without any fear of intimidation. Conversely, what this means is that we have to counteract apathy, be-

GULFPORT/ 2

cause people feel they have things so much better here than in the rest of the state. Since we are finally beginning to get some good local organization, and to get our own efforts sort of organized, we're able, I think, to step up VR work so far as we can with limited personnel and eight widely separated communities to cover and no car.

F. We get good cooperation from local people for FDP work (we had, for example, 21 polling places in the Freedom Vote, manned by local people, for the most part the shopkeepers where the boxes were located), but we end up doing most of the organizing. We have four or five strong people in most of the areas we have to cover, who will do a good amount of work on a special project like the Freedom Vote, but we don't have a good organizational set-up for day-to-day work, like VR. In North Gulfport, Mrs. Keyes, who is vice-chairman of the county FDP, Yvonne King, who is secretary, and Rev. Magee, are organizing things like voter classes and mass meetings, and pretty soon can probably do all the work themselves, so we can start concentrating on Central Gulfport.

On balance, things, except for transportation and subsistence, look promising.

You're welcome,

Chuck McKeller