



To abolish racial discrimination by direct, nonviolent methods

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Mr. Richard Haley
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Dear Richard,

The Madison County Farmer's League has finally received its incorporation papers. The importance of this in terms of economic control of the county is unbelievable. The two projects the Farmer's League are now embarking on are:

1. Supply House
2. Cotton Gin

Once these two things are established and the working plans become a reality we can control the county and its economic makeup. This coupled with the outcome of the ASC elections will break this county wide open.

Because the people we are closely involved and working with are lacking a certain amount of education; they in turn lack the ability to really attempt to set up a co-operative. They don't know how to cope with the state and government authorities and are in danger of losing their incorporation.^{1.}

This is business. Nothing like this has ever happened in this state. We don't know how to set up this thing. We need someone for at least two weeks for legal guidance. Then we need someone to manage and keep it going (Do you know anyone?) After three months they could be making \$5000 a year gradually building up to \$10,000 as the supply house gains more power.

1. Upon receiving incorporation papers from Secretary of State Ladner, and from the attorney general they stated to Otha Williams, president of the Farmer's League, "if you tie up this organization with any Civil Rights work we are going to take it away from you".

The Farmer's League can project the image of the movement into the community and into the state; it can skyrocket. It's that important, and now we are in jeopardy of losing what we've worked so hard for.

Following is a brief outline on the Farmer's League:

BUSINESS RELATIONS WITH THE WHITE COMMUNITY

The white merchants showed little interest or respect for the dignity of their Negro customers. The black man got exactly what he paid for in goods and services, almost none of the cordial treatment that one should legitimately expect in the conduct of business. Prices were too high in most of the white establishments; in many instances a black man had to trade on credit for almost the entire year and ended up after his crops were in, out of debt but incapable of starting the new years growing without first going back into debt with the same white man. In many cases the white used business relations with the black community as a tool to control the actions of the Negro. Otha Williams, one of the most dynamic of the people gathered at these first meetings, was eventually forced to carry his cotton out of the county to have it ginned.

During the discussions it became evident that most of the negro farmers present felt that if they had their own sources of supplies and if they owned their own gin, their lots would be greatly improved, both in pure business terms and, more important, in terms of self respect and commanding the respect of the white community. They were being financially scalped by their white "brothers" who seemed also, because they could get away with it, to lack any fundamental understanding of the need for dignity in the daily conduct of people's lives.

CONDUCT OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS

As the discussions were continued there developed a growing source of concern with the manner in which federal officials in Madison County conducted themselves. There was a conviction (later proved to be substantially correct) that the programs of the federal government were being operated primarily for the benefit of the white farmers. Little or no information about the federal governments activities had seeped down from the officials in the county courthouse to the small farms operated by these men. Again, when they did have contact with the local federal officials, meetings were lacking the respect that an employer should show toward those who pay his salary.

The farmers decided to form an organization, The Madison County Farmers League, in an attempt to do something about the two areas of concern that became clear in the discussions. The Farmer's League was to have two main purposes: 1) To form a cooperative for the construction of a supply house and cotton gin and; 2) To disseminate information about programs the federal government carried out for the benefit of farmers in the Madison County area.

The cooperative has received its charter from the state of Mississippi and is presently selling stock to raise money for the construction of a supply house which they hope to have constructed by the first of the March. They have already collected \$2,600 of the needed \$15,000. Feelers are presently being sent out for a manager who we hope to hire by the first of January.

Out of the federal information program grew a concern with and determination to win the county Agricultural Stabilization and Control Board elections. The ASC regulated the production of farmers who grow cotton, grain, hay, soy beans or feed corn. It determines how much acreage each farmer is entitled to, measures his land after planting to make sure that he has complied with the allotment given to him, and pays him his price and support payments when prices fall below parity at selling time. Each county board is selected by representatives from local communities who are chosen in an election held early in December.

The Madison County Board is filled with white men and, up until this year when the Negro has been encouraged to vote it has been when two white men were fighting with each other for power in a community. This year we have selected our own candidates. We presently expect to win in six of the eight communities in Madison County.

Read paragraphs 1,2,3, and 4 and section 2 carefully -- the importance of this is great. We can control the economics of the state. This can stimulate a whole new movement. On the ASC elections, I want absolutely no publicity before December 3rd., the election date. On that date and after is enough time to start the publicity wheels rolling.

Well Dick, I really wish this was a conversation rather than a letter because I could relate and get through to you by speaking, the real feelings I want transmitted to you may not have come out.

The following facts and needs cannot be put off or denied:

1. Possibility of loosing ASC elections because of lack of finances and transportation and a huge margin of fear.
2. Possibility of loosing corporation because of lack of legal guidance; lack of person with proper qualifications who can come to this state and work as manager of the corporation.

OUR FAVOR: No more water, but fire next time.

Brothers In The Struggle,

George Raymond Jr.
Canton

GRjr/mcs

cc sent to: Marv Rich