

Meridian

CORE SOUTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE
2209 Dryades Street
New Orleans, La. 70112

DATE November 10 OUT
December 13, 1964 IN

LAST REPORT COVERED Oct 17- Nov 9

PROJECT/CHAPTER Meridian Project

FOR PERIOD _____

PERSONNEL ARRIVALS/DEPARTURES: AND
visitors (include all volunteers who
will be staying longer than 2 weeks)

Sandra Watts - leaving Dec. 14
to work in Rankin County, Miss.

Louise Somalyo left project
due to illness. See last page

PROGRAM REPORTS (attached) Those checked are included in this report

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICAL | _____ EMPLOYMENT |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FREEDOM SCHOOL | _____ HOUSING |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY CENTER | _____ PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS |
| _____ FEDERAL PROGRAMS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General |
| _____ CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FINANCIAL | _____ |

NOTES (Please include items you consider special and be sure to list future events
with dates. Indicate in the body of your report that problems,
if any, they present and what assistance you would like

Need information on the Unions, and on Public Accomodations

MERIDIAN PROJECT REPORT
November 10 - December 13

Again, I am sorry for the delay of this report. Too many things have been happening in Meridian that have delayed putting out this report. These things have ranged all the way from expanding all energy in fixing up the new office, to the jailing of several of the staff, to the hearing of the 21 men arrested in the Neshoba cases. Therefore this report will not follow the exact outline that it should. It will include a financial report, a political report, a short Freedom School report, a brief Community Center report and a general report of the Project's activities since November 10th.

GENERAL REPORT

The Meridian Project acquired a new office the month of November. It is in a building about a block away from the old office. The building is large with the bottom floor being separated into two oblong rooms. One of these rooms is used for a political office and the other is used for the Freedom house where the men sleep. Two weeks was spent in readying this building since it was in pretty bad condition. The repairs ran all the way from painting to laying of bricks. The building also has a top floor, which consists of one large room. There were provisions made in the lease for the project using this room also. Right now plans are being made for painting this room and using it for staff meetings for the Fourth District and also for workshops bringing in people from the surrounding counties. This room can also be used for mass meetings. The political office moved into its new office the last of November and the first of December. The old office is now used entirely for the Community Center.

On Friday, November 27th, eight staff people were picked up by the police in connection with a stolen record player. This record player had been given to the office by a sailor. This guy had been coming to the office for about a week. He informed us that he had just been discharged from the service, that he was almost 21 years old, and that he was waiting for his discharge papers to come in. He helped us fix up the office and seemed to be a very nice person. His home was in New York and he seemed very sympathetic to our cause. About a week after he had been coming to the office, he asked Sandra Watts to take him out to a house to get something that he had left there. He said he wanted to get it before he went home. Sandra drove him out to a neighborhood in her car, he got out of the car and then got right back in the car after about two minutes with nothing with him. He told her to get out of there. She then asked him exactly what he was trying to pull. He said that he wasn't doing anything wrong, that he simply had to pick up a TV set that belonged to him. Sandra drove him back to the office and nothing further was said. About two days later, he asked her to drive him out there again and she refused. Later he brought a record player to the office saying that he had been packing up his things and didn't want to carry the record player back to New York with him. No one in the office payed any

General (con)

attention to the record player. Everyone was too busy getting the office ready. The next day the police came to the office, with a search warrant, broke down the door and found the record player. They arrested eight of the COFO staff who was present in the office at that time. Sandra Watts tried to explain to them what the sailor had asked her to do the one time he had gone out to the house. In other words she was trying to be helpful by telling the police what she thought had probably happened, since he had asked her to carry him out there once before. (But at that time did not get anything) Anyway they took all eight staffers down to the police station and kept six of them there until early in the morning. They kept Joe Morse and Sandra Watts in Jail charging Morse with possession of stolen property (since the lease for the building is in his name) and Watts with burglary. Joe and Sandra stayed in the County jail for six days until their hearing. Their bonds were set at \$1500 and \$2500 respectively. Henry Aaronson, their defense lawyer, at the hearing, advised them to plead guilty to a lesser charge that the District Attorney had set after he heard their stories. Aaronson explained to the pair that this really wasn't a Civil Rights case as such. Even though neither of them had done anything wrong, there was too much circumstantial evidence against them. It would only become a Civil Rights case when they appeared before an all-white Mississippi grand jury. Too many things were out of line that involved Joe and Sandy in a set of very unfortunate circumstances. So at the advice of the Project Director, Preston Ponder, both Sandy and Joe pleaded guilty to lesser charges. Sandy pleaded guilty to willful trespassing and was fined \$250 and six months suspended sentence. Joe was fined \$150 for possession of stolen property as a misdemeanor.

Wednesday, December 2 Eight local students and two COFO staff members were arrested in connection with testing of the Civil Rights Bill. The students had just been to the Toddle House and were walking up to the Trailways Bus Depot when they were all arrested for disorderly conduct with John and Jane Doe warrants. They were all put in the County Jail. Freeman Cocroft and Lucien Kabat were also arrested first for loitering, then the charge was changed to contributing to the delinquency of minors when it was found out that two of the students arrested were only 11 and 12 years old. At the hearing the next day, the students were let go but with a stern warning from the Judge. He explained that he was letting them go because he felt they were lead into this by other people. He also stressed that the next time something like this happened, he would punish the people who were behind this. Freeman and Luke were both held under \$650 bond apiece and their hearing set for December 14th.

The next day after the staff was out of jail everyone except Freeman Cocroft went to Nattiesburg for the state staff meeting. Upon the staff's return plans were set up for the Congressional Challenge via the Fourth District's Project Director's meeting and a Fourth District Staff meeting. After the staff meeting on Wednesday, many of the staff stayed over for the hearing in the Neshobab Case.

Sandra Watts

FINANCIAL REPORT

This report will cover all of November and the first two weeks in December.

The following is an itemized list of deposits and money received during the month of November.

At the end of October the Bank Balance showed a total of	\$7.84
December 2	90.00
(Budget money from COFO)	
December 2	72.00
(private contribution from ex staff member)	
December 9	50.00
(contribution from Pittsburgh raised by local Meridian woman specifically for Meridian Project)	
November 14	2.08
(received from Security Life Insurance Co. for their part of light bill)	
November 15	20.00
(contribution from ex staff member)	
November 17	500.00
(contribution from Joe Morse's contacts in Minnesota)	
November 17	50.00
(loan from Marjorie Henderson since out of state checks hadn't cleared yet)	
November 20	100.00
(COFO budget check)	
November 20	7.51
(money received from closing out old bank account)	
November 23	32.00
(Jackson repaid us for bus ticket for staff member)	
	\$931.43

The expenditures are as follows:

Loan to Sam Brown	4.00
Gail Falk repaid for Gunter's bail and car repair . .	19.00
Office supplies - 3x5 cards and markers /	5.68
Loan to Mrs. Chaney	12.00
Parking tickets	5.00
Repaid loan to Preston Ponder for gass	10.00
Parking Tickets	3.00
Joe Morse repaid for gas	10.50
Postage50
Gas	2.00
Steel brushes and putty knife	3.14
Rent on old Freedom House (just partial rent since we moved first of month	10.00
Preston Ponder expenses for local people in Gulfport trip	20.00
Paint for new office	15.00
Joe Morse utility deposit for new office	37.00
Charles Prickett bus fare to Canton	4.00
Gail Falk transportation	1.68
Water and sewage for old Freedom House	9.14
Mississippi Power Co. light bill	18.83
Mississippi Power Co. light bill on old Freedom House .	3.57

Financial Report (cont)

Paint for building	2.00
Gas Co. Old Freedom House	6.16
Mississippi Power Company Community Center	9.25
Telephone Co. pay phone52
Neshoba Democrat paper	3.00
Clarke County Tribune paper /	4.00
The Newton Record paper /	2.00
Paint for New building	9.58
Paint for new office /	10.50
Paint for new office	5.50
Repair on power saw	9.28
Preston Ponder loan	1.00
Postage	1.00
Marjorie Henderson food	1.00
Paint for new office	12.00
Gunter Frenz	35.00
wire cutters	3.00
repaid loan to Philadelphia Project	20.00
Ken Slote repaid for expense on new office	12.00
Gail Falk repaid for expense on new office	30.00
Preston Ponder repaid for expense on new office	31.30
Sandra Watts curtain material	10.00
Shadwick's Garage repaid for bounced check that Philadelphia cashed at the garage	125.00
Joe Morse building supplies	63.00
Marjorie Henderson repaid loan	20.00
Rev. Witherspoon rent on new office	50.00
Fielder and Brooks .rent on Comm. Center	40.00
Ken Slote building expense	30.50
Loan to Louise Somalyo	6.00
Joe Morse repaid for lumber for new office	11.36
Loan to jim Collier	10.00

\$767.47

December 1- 13

Received:

COFO Budget check	90.00
Northern Contribution	15.00

105.00

Expenditures:

Ken Slote repaid loan for new office.	26.00
Office supplies	10.00
Mimeo paper	8.88
Office supplies	10.00
New Office	4.65
Correction fluid and envelopes	5.89
Willie Moss personal loan	10.00
Food for staff meeting	10.00
Parking tickets	8.00
money for phone	1.00
Groceries for Freedom House	2.64
Phonecall to Batesville	2.00
Joe Morse gas.	4.00
Rent for new office	50.00

Bank Balance ----- \$104.67

\$155.06

Sandra Watts

FREEDOM SCHOOL REPORT

The Freedom School has now been in operation since the first of November. Gail Falk co-ordinator and Frank and Judy Wright and Luke Kabat have been working in the school. The classes start at 4:30PM for the high school students. The lowest level is the 7th. grade. From 3:30 to 4:30 the younger kids have reading classes at the school. The classes include English, French, Math, Science, Negro History and a Class called Freedom which discussed the Movement. Attendance has not been too good but students are being contacted all the time. The students are all eager to test and have been conducting tests every night after Freedom School. The students are also planning to raise money for the Challenge but these plans are still in the planning stage.

COMMUNITY CENTER REPORT

Since the Community Center has now been ~~left~~ left alone in its own building new plans are being made. Eric Weinberger plans to set up a leatherworkshop in one of the rooms. There are also plans being made to have a Kindergarten in the morning with local mothers helping with the children. Sewing classes are still going on as is the play period after school every day. Freeman Cocroft is working with the younger students. A more complete report will be submitted by the Weinbergers.

I am sorry for the brevity of these two reports but it has been impossible to get the leaders of these two projects to write out their reports at the same time. I am trying to give you an idea of what has been going on in these two areas. The next report will be more complete.

Staff Report

Preston Ponder - Project Director - leaving for school in January
Joe Morse - Political Programs - staying through the summer
Marjorie Henderson - leaving for school in late January
Freeman Cocroft - Comm. Cnt. - leaving for school in late Jan.
Luke Kabat - Freedom School - leaving for school in late Jan.
Gail Falk - Freedom School - leaving for school in late Jan.
Frank and Judy Wright - Freedom School - indefinite stay
Eric and Elaine Weinberger - Comm. Cnt. - indefinite stay
Ken and Mary Slote - leaving for New York in March
Gunter Frenz - political programs - indefinite stay
Sandra Watts - leaving December 14th. to work in Rankin County
Barbara Moss - political programs - local worker.

Sandra Watts will be leaving the Project on the 14th. of December for Rankin County. Mary Slote will take her place in the office. All communications should be addressed to her.