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Southern Office Director.

FROM: Stuart Wechsler, Task Force, Chattahoochee, Florida

DATE: December 15, 1964

SUBJECT: Field report for Chattahoochee area and Liberty County

I VOTER REGISTRATION: Voter registration has slowed down in Chattahoochee. I have not been conducting a formal canvass of the area. Several people have expressed a desire to go down to the registrar, but I have found it impossible to take them since I usually do not have a car. I have been thinking of a plan utilizing the teenagers for a prolonged registration drive. It would be an operation "Little Brother" or something like that. Chattahoochee would be divided into several areas. One or two people would be in charge of each area; after the initial canvass to determine who was registered and who wasn't these people would be responsible for determining getting everyone in their area registered. I would say that there is approximately 75% registration or over in the Chattahoochee area.

II Since what Community organization there is is tied up with the Center I will lump both of these topics together. I will give a comprehensive description of the Center and its facilities.

Physical Plant: The Center is housed in an old Cafe. It is a single story cinder block structure. It contains four rooms and a small basement. Of these we have title to all but one of the rooms which is presently being used as a pool room. a few days out of the every month. A rundown of the rooms follows

1) The main room is about twenty feet by about fifty feet long. At one end is a small raised stage about three feet deep and wall to wall. The room also contains a counter and a soda fountain. The soda fountain is fully equipped with a freezer and all the other paraphenlia. There are two bath rooms with entrances from the main room.

The room is an ideal meeting hall. It can also be used as a classroom since the equipment is already present we have used it to sell some merchandise. Anything we don't need a license to sell, such as potato chips, sodas, ect.

2) The second room is entered from the main room. It is about 16' wide and about seven deep. It contains a stove and a gas outlet. There is also a sink. There is an electrical outlet in the room as there is in the other.

This room is suitable for small classes or as an office. Some of the women in the community have talked about starting a sewing class and a cooking class. Both of these activities can be conducted in this room.

3) There is a small basement about 15' by 15' with an entrance off the second room. As of now it's use is limited due to the fact that there is approximately five feet of water in it. This of course would tend to dampen the spirits of anyone engaged in any activity in the basement.

The basement will have to be drained before summer. A man who used to work at the cafe told me there are a great many water moccasins in the basement which often comes out during the summer. They may have a disruptive effect on any activities being conducted in the center at the time of excursions.

4) The fourth room is about 12' by 15'. It has a separate entrance from the rest of the center. It contains an electrical outlet. The room is an

ideal site for the library. We can also use it as an office for the Chattahoochee area. We have not been able to utilize this site as yet because the person who occupied it previously has not yet gotten his equipment out of it.

We are renting the Center from a Mrs. Odeal Adams, a Negro store owner, through her representative, Rev. Orel Lewis. We do not have a contract. I think that it would be advisable to get one since the good Reverend is known to be something of a Tom. I thought that I would wait till the Progressive Club was more organized and then suggest that they go to the Reverend and get the contract.

CENTER FINANCE AND ORGANIZATION: The Center is in pretty good shape financially. There is a strong possibility that it will be self supporting from the very beginning. The ~~money~~ money necessary to pay for the first months rent and utilities was raised by door to door canvassing

The Progressive Club was formed to help raise finances for the Center. Originally it was a woman's club headed by Mrs. A.W. Jackson. But at a meeting held the 2nd of December, the club was expanded to include both men and women. In addition it was decided that the Club would help in the planning of the program and conduct Center activities. I suggested that officers be elected and that the meeting be governed by parliamentary procedure. The officers elected are ; President, Mrs. Altomese Jackson, Happytown tel. no. 663-4842; Secretary, Mrs. Jeanette Langston, Crawfish Island, tel. ; Recording Treasurer, Mr. John Speights, Newtown, tel. 663-2296; and Financial Treasurer Mrs. Ruby Graham, River Junction, tel. 663-4453

The Club members will pay dues of one dollar per month. This money will go into the Community Center treasury. In addition various fund raising activities will be conducted by the club. These will include shows, dances, etc. and selling of various products such as cake and barbecue.

In addition to the Club the Center itself will be making some money. A piccolo and pinball machine have been installed. We have gotten \$107 from these two machines in the past three weeks. The kids have been manning the counter at the center and selling soday potato chips and other packaged candies in the evening. From this source we have raised about 10 or 12 dollars a week.

In working on the Center program I have tried as much as possible to avoid making it a CORE program. I have tried to make it a community program. At meetins and in informal talks I have stressed the fact that this is a community center and that if the community does not get behind and push that CORE does not have the money or the intention of carrying it all the way by itself. I have outlined a plan for community implementation and formulation of policy, in the meeting of the Progressive Club. It was accepted with minor changes.

1. The center should be run by a committee consisting of representatives from all interested groups, such as the Progressive Club, the Task Force, a teachers committee (which I have talked to several teachers about who have expressed interest). perhaps if miracles still happen a ministers group could be organized. In addition representatives from each of the programs being carried on at the center could be represented on the board. As of now I forsee a pre-school program, a teenager program, an adult program and possibly a literacy program.

IV. Chapter Development: Possibilities for a CORE chapter appear good. There are several high school students who have expressed interest. Betty Martin (who has been ~~xxxx~~ writing the Center News) is very eager to get a chapter started. Myres McCray has also expressed a desire to work with the chapter. I am planning a meeting for before Christmas to discuss the formation of a chapter. It will be tied in with either operation "Little Brother" or testing of public facilities.

One of the other possibilities is to have Quincy CORE become Gadsden County CORE and have meetings in Chattahoochee and Quincy on Alternate Mondays. I have mentioned this idea several times but nothing has come of it. One of the arguments advanced by Jewel Dixie against it was the fact that most people couldn't get transportation. I do not believe it necessary for meetings to be held in one area each week. I believe that only the executive committee of the chapter has to attend each meeting to create a unified county structure.

The difficulties in starting a chapter will be the usual ones of parental reluctance, and some distrust of CORE policy and methods.

V. Police Intimidation: City police in Chattahoochee have made themselves notable by their absence. ~~XXXXXX~~ Since I came to Chattahoochee I have been stopped by the cops only once. He insisted I was going two or three miles over the limit and he didn't arrest me because he didn't have a case.

A policeman came down to the center one day to look around but he didn't say anything, and soon left.

The county sheriff appears to be the only law enforcement agency actively engaged in harassment. They appear to center their activities in Quincy and I have not been bothered at all in Chattahoochee.

VI. Testing of Public Facilities: Public accommodation in Chattahoochee have been tested by members of Quincy CORE. None of the restaurants serve Negroes with the exception of the Bus Station where the manager makes distinction between interstate and intrastate travelers. She also often charges, exorbitant prices (\$1.00 for cokes). None of the motels have been tested.

VIII. The economy of the Negro community is based on the Chattahoochee State Hospital. Practically every family has at least one member of its working at the hospital. The hospital is segregated as to both facilities and treatment of patients and employees (see hospital).

Most of the people own their own houses and are fairly independent of any economic thumbscrews of the white man. Although as is usual most of the people buy furniture and other goods on credit, it seems unlikely that these companies can bring much pressure to bear. Foodstuffs are more often than not bought at one of the four Negro-owned groceries in town.

Hospital--The hospital is the largest mental hospital in the state. It is completely segregated. Negro workers are paid far less for more work than whites. There are no Negroes in supervisory positions. Dining facilities are segregated as are bathrooms and other facilities. Negro patients are kept in separate wards. They are forced to work in the laundry and kitchen, both hard jobs which the white patients do not perform.

White patients are permitted off hospital grounds at times but Negroes are not. Whites are often taken on trips but Negroes are not.

Negro workers find it hard to get such necessities as soap for patients (one ward has 354 patients for which nine bars of soap are allocated each week). Workers have to do the jobs of nurses and even doctors, giving medicines, taking temperatures, blood pressure, etc.

In general, there is complete inequality of treatment of both patients and workers.

There is a segregated Employees Association at the Hospital (Florida State Hospital Employees Association). As it is a branch of a state-wide ineffectual substitute for a union. Several men (Bill Robinson, Herman Morre) from Quincy have expressed a desire to work for improvement

of the conditions at the hospital, by working through the Association. To this end I attended a meeting of the Association on December 9, 1964. I read a list of the demands of the Quincy group (including pay raises, integration and promotion based on merit rather than race) to the fifteen members present at the meeting. I suggested that a petition be circulated and then sent to the State President of the Association. This was put down by the president of the branch (Mrs. Viola Paine) and two or three other people. They insisted that they must first go through the usual grievance procedure to correct the conditions. The procedure is so ineffective that they are unable to get an increased amount of soap. I did not have the support necessary since only one of the men who formulated the demands was present at the meeting. A called meeting of the association was held on the 14th of December, I felt it better if I did not attend. Instead I suggested that it would have more of an effect upon the "leadership" of the Association if some of the members made a request that a CORE worker be present at the next meeting. This was done, and a worker is going to be invited to next month's Association meeting. This time I will take the precaution of having the meeting packed with people who are desirous of doing something. If the demands can be put forth within the official framework of the Association it will probably be more effective in that it will have an organized and recognized group behind it.