

MCC RESPONSE (RECOMMENDATIONS)

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Following the December 1-16, 1964 work in the Mississippi Delta recommendations need to be made. Due to the complexity of the problem and lack of dialogue between Negroes and whites it is difficult to make precise recommendations. Thus suggestions will be stated as accurately as possible to aid in future planning and implementation.

The MCC response should consist of:

A. SHORT TERM

1. Distribution of material aid to Bolivar, Sunflower, Leflore and Tallahatchie Counties in January or early February, 1965.

The supplies would include shoes and warm clothes for children, food (canned meat, dried fruit and rice if at all possible) and medicine (aspirins and vitamin pills). Before implementation, the precise need, amount and available storage must be determined with Amzie Moore.

2. Further investigate and define the long term recommendations when the material aid is distributed in early 1965.

Cleveland should be used as the base for the short term involvement because MCC efforts would not duplicate those put forth by the Delta Ministry or civil rights organizations, the neighboring counties are within driving distance, consultation with the Delta Ministry would be possible, Amzie Moore has valuable contacts and suggestions, storage is available, long term involvement will eventually be started in the vicinity.

B. LONG TERM

1. Repeating Edgar Stoenz's September 27-30, 1964 recommendation, "MCC should get a man (couple?) on the scene as soon as possible. While living in the area (perhaps initially in Greenville) he will determine the nature of the MCC program much as Vincent Hardings did when they moved to Atlanta." It is now recommended that MCC select Cleveland as the base from which to work. Some of the more needy counties are within close driving distance.

2. MCC should either rent or buy a house, for the MCC personnel, in the Negro community or buy one in a white transition community in Cleveland.

- a. Negro Community. Being located in the Negro community would cut off any dialogue with the white community.
- b. White Community. As individuals (not as MCC representatives) it would be possible to buy a house in a white transition

community. It would be impossible to rent a house in a white community because one would eventually be evicted and spend most of his time protecting real estate. The location may permit the worker to develop friendships with the neighbors. In this approach the worker could secure a regular job in Cleveland while secretly helping the Negro and gathering further information. After a few months the worker would probably lose his job but would be established in the community and may be able to keep some dialogue with the white neighbors.

It must be realized that there will be open opposition to the MCC program and it will be difficult to see immediate results. But no one sent of God has been popular. Prophets were stoned. Christ was crucified. Apostles were rejected. Ultimately obedience to the Lord is justified only by faith, not by reason or experience. Or as a theologian once said, "the serving church will not be overly concerned about results . . . Its calling is to share in the reconciling ministry of Christ in the world, and trusting the outcome to God."

Any worker will be considered as an "outsider." Much frustration will result by breaking the paternalistic attitudes. The strategy used by Delton Frauz in his interracial work in Chicago should very seriously be considered.

Minister by:

- a. Listening. One must learn and understand the people. Sympathetic presence is the first step toward a solution. It takes weeks and possibly years to break the sound barrier and develop the ability to identify with people. Speaking does not give most people anything new. Most have heard the Gospel. What is needed is someone who will listen and whom the people can observe as a "suffering servant". To change nice friendly attitudes to real friendships, the white worker will need to absorb the hostility the Negro has toward the white people. The MCC worker will become a symbol of the white person that has taken advantage of them. This is bearing the cross for all of humanity.
 - b. Presence. The worker will secondly identify with and speak in behalf of the Negro to the power structure.
 - c. Communicating. After listening and serving a worker earns the right to speak and verbally witness to the people.
3. Investigate the possibility of moving a few Negro families to a town or farm in the north. A concerned congregation or group of men could loan money to a few Negro couples for the purpose of becoming established in their northern community. The northern sponsorer would need to suffer with or in behalf of the Negro families as they move, seek a house,

secure a job and become established in the community and church.

4. The NCC program in Cleveland should include the following and also other aspects depending upon the particular worker.
 - a. Ministry of listening, presence and communicating. The very fact that a white person sympathizes, suffers and speaks to the Negro as a human being often has a greater impact than relief, being a minister or a representative from an organization.
 - b. Many Negroes work too independently. If they are faced with a problem they will as an individual approach the white man a few times and stop. If these individuals would form a group and then approach the white man it would have a far greater impact. Some issues which need group action are to get streets in the Negro section graveled or paved, some more effective U.S. commodity distribution procedures, less discrimination by the welfare office and police.
 - c. Relief. Using the Cleveland Community Center or MCC house as a base a limited relief program needs to be continued.
 - d. Self-help projects. Sewing classes in the Cleveland and Ruleville Centers would be taught to the ladies. Mrs. Byler is very interested in exploring the possibilities of teaching the ladies to make various items to be sold in her shop or Mennonite churches.
 - e. Education. Health instructions in general hygiene and birth control to the older girls and mothers should be taught.

The aim of the MCC program would be to assist as crisis arise, distribute food and clothes, teach classes, develop a self-respect among the children and adults, explore possibilities of other self-help projects and suffer with the Negro.

5. The Delta Ministry has started an emergency relief program and would appreciate an experienced relief worker. If such a person is not available on a longer term, consideration should be given to assign someone on a shorter term basis of three to six months.
6. While in Mississippi two suggestions were repeatedly given to me. It is with a certain hesitancy that they will be mentioned since they are outside of the responsibility of the VS section. Yet the reason for recording them is because they fall under the broader MCC umbrella and are very important.
 - a. NDS. Titus Bender, Annis Heave, Fanny Lou Hauer (NDP Candidate) and others were very pleased that NDS has already been involved by rebuilding some of the bombed churches in the Jackson area. They should be encouraged to continue rebuilding churches. The rebuilding of the bombed churches is a very important part of a creative response to the Mississippi crisis.

- b. MEDA. The best solution to the problems in Mississippi would be to make numerous Negro families economically independent. There are a few 40 acre Negro farmers who are able to make a living by growing cotton and soy beans. More of these farmers need to be helped. There are numerous competent farmers who would like to own and operate a 40 acre farm, however, are unable to borrow money or receive a loan. It was repeatedly suggested that MEDA should help three or four farmers become established and if this pilot project is successful it should continue on a broader scale. Basically this would mean that loans would be given to individuals and then they would receive training and assistance in the operation of the farm.