

TO: Mr. Richard Haley, Southern Regional Office; Mr. Spiver Gordon, Florida Field Secretary

FROM: Stuart Wechsler, Core Task Force, Gadsden and Liberty Counties.

SUBJECT: Field Report for Gadsden and Liberty Counties from February 15, 1965 to February 28, 1965

Date: February 28, 1965

VOTER REGISTRATION: Once again we find that voter registration is being hampered by a lack of adequate transportation. We have set up a canvassing schedule along with Quincy CORE, however it is hard to put it into effect since we can rarely count on having a car available. In our canvassing last week (we were only able to canvass on one day) we contacted 37 persons, of these 16 were unregistered (a high figure considering the fact that these people lived on their own places), 14 said that they would register and we provided transportation for three of the people. If we were able to obtain adequate transportation it is my belief that we could increase registration to the level that it was going during the summer.

ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAM: The program is beginning to be worked upon in Gadsden County. It is still too early to analyze the direction or intent of the "good white folks" who have leaped into the war on poverty. The first mention of a meeting concerning the E. O. P. was sent by CIG announcing the meeting for February 24, 1965. It seems however that a meeting was set up by the Chamber of Commerce for the meeting preceding the Wednesday affair. C.I.G. and the Negro Business men and Civic League were notified of the meeting by phone the same day of the meeting. For some reason or other Rev. Crutcher did not notify us of the meeting. There seems to be a bit of unwillingness on his part to work with CORE members. C.I.G. itself seems to be more willing to work with us than Rev. Crutcher.

The meeting on Wednesday turned out merely to be an informative one. It was attended by approximately 110 whites & Negroes. Whites included T.L. Maxwell, chairman of County Commissioners, Adrias Fletcher, Chairman of schoolboard, Max Walker, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Blackwelder of the welfare agency, Sam Lamar of the tobacco Growers Association and John Sniper Lion's Club president and chairman of the temporary committee for the Anti-Poverty Bill.

The program was explained by a representative of Sam Hands, office State Administrator, of the Office of Economic Opportunity. It was chaired by Rev. Crutcher. Snipes made some pretty promises about working along with Negroes to improve conditions in Gadsden County. Another meeting is being set up for about the eighth of March. Plans are being made to widen representation on the committee. John Due's presence at the meeting appears to have had a very beneficial effect. The whites know that they won't be able to put anything over on anybody and they might be forced to play fair.

SCHOOL*DESEGREGATION:

SCHOOL DESEGREGATION: The school board has issued a desegregation plan. I have not yet seen a copy of it, however from what I hear it is plainly insufficient to bring about desegregation in Gadsden County. It is a pupil placement plan with so many conditions that it amounts to the maintenance of segregation in the county.

FREEDOM SCHOOLS: The school had been started a few weeks ago. Little preparation had been made insofar as getting equipment and teachers suitable for the age level of children being encouraged to attend the school (pre-school age) As it stands now the school is just a baby-sitting place. The children do not have any regular teacher or curriculum, so that the classes are of extremely limited value. The volunteers originally put in charge of the school and library are unwilling or unable to assume the responsibility of seeing that the school is run properly.

There are two five year olds attending the school. Although they are not getting as much as from the class as possible I am reluctant to discontinue the classes for several reasons; 1) If we start doing things in an organized fashion we might be able to develop teaching methods for future use, and 2) If CORE drops this program now it might be difficult to get it started again.

LIBRARY: The library is coming along slowly under the direction of two Quincy CORE members (Miss Linda Dixie and Miss Betty Jackson.) It is a time consuming task to get the books sorted and prepared for the library, but it is proceeding along at a fairly uniform pace. We should have it ready about the middle of the month.

LIBERTY COUNTY: Liberty County VR has been going along at the rate of seven to ten registrants per week.

ANTI*POVERTY PROGRAM: A meeting was supposed to be held on the first of March, however we have received word that neither the lawyer or the expert on the program would be able to make the meeting so it has been postponed.