

MERIDIAN PROJECT REPORT - May 15 - June 15

This report will consist of the following parts:

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Personnel Report

At the following time there are five full time workers in the Meridian Project.

Mrs. Catherine Crowell - Project Director - no subsistence
Mrs. Agnes Smith - Community Center - no subsistence
Mrs. Dora Carter - Welfare - no subsistence
George Smith Jr. - Assistant Project Director - CORE check
Joe Morse - Political Programs - CORE check

We are also planning to have other local people come into the project to work full time since what we are working for is the full participation of local people in the full time management of the Meridian Project.

Project Director's Report

Dick Jewett met with the staff of the Meridian COFO the later part of March. George Smith, our Project Director discussed with Dick and the staff about me, Mrs. Catherine Crowell, becoming Project Director. All agreed that I would be Project Director for a month that is, acting Director. After the month was over I was to be full director and also bookkeeper all of which Dick Jewett agreed and promised to put me on pay role but I have not received a check as of yet. Therefore our staff consists of two paid workers and four volunteers. George felt that he could accomplish more by going into the field to work as much work was needed to be done in the counties that hadn't been worked. Judy Wright and Frank Wright were also staff members but couldn't seem to get used to the Southern climate and therefore went home. We spent some time in testing and received good results from it by getting the U.S. Justice Department to file suit against 16 eating establishments. To date, 14 have complied and two will have to go to court. We also were able to file four additional suits against eating places in the interest of Mrs. Fannie Chaney and nineteen other citizens.

We are also instrumental in getting a integration school suit filed in the interest of 21 parents of Meridian and our plans will be to try to integrate these schools next year. Our plans for the summer will be to teach Voter Registration classes and take

at least fifty people down to the Court House to register for the three summer months the students are here. We will teach classes on citizenship, reading and writing. Joe Morse and George Smith will be working rural Lauderdale County and Newton County. Eric Weinberger didn't think he was contributing anything to the community therefore he left and is in New York. Mrs. Agnas Smith will be in charge of the community center, along with Mrs. Fannie Chaney until she goes to New York. All ~~xxx~~ in all, we are going to have a big summer.

Mrs. Catherine Crowell
Project Director

Assistant Project Director's Report

Since the January report, I am no longer Project Director. The reason for my doing so is because the workers that we had in the field was not making much progress. They was easily discouraged also it seemed as if they were losing interest in their work. We had three workers in the field at that time and I was only able to work in my spare time which was very limited. It came to my attention that the staff on payroll were getting little or no work done at all. They sat in the Meridian Office all the time and drank coffee and read magazines and smoked all day. No matter how much I talked and discussed their importance of working it didn't last over two days or less before they were back to their old routine. It also came to the local people attention that they would go and work in the field all day, while the staff on payroll which was all white would do nothing but sit down. One of the local ladies indicated that things like this had been going on all the time in the South and she said that she had been working and cleaning all her life behind white folds and that day is over now. The lady whom I am speaking of is Mrs. Catherine Crowell who is now working full time with the Movement. She is very dedicated to the Movement. This matter of changing director was discussed with Dick Jewett and the Meridian Staff. It was agreed upon by the staff and also Dick Jewett that Mrs. Crowell be Project Director and I would be Assistant Project Director. Joe Morse and I are now working Rural Lauderdale and opening up Newton County. We work Rural Lauderdale on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. We work Newton County on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Mrs. Crowell is doing a good job as Project Director and we are getting twice as much work done.

George Smith Jr.
Assistant Project Director

Report On Rural Lauderdale

At the present time, Joe Morse and I are now working Rural Lauderdale. It is composed of about six or seven small towns. At the present time we are working two small towns which are Kewanee and Toomsaba which are about four miles apart. We are going around from house to house telling people about the Movement and we also have discussions on things that they would like to see changed in their community. The people in the two areas that we

are now working in seem to be very interested in registering to vote and the F.D.P. We are also in the process of setting up workshops and voter registration classes for those people who are in those two areas. Our plans are working every little town in Rural Lauderdale, and we hope to get alot accomplished.

George Smith Jr.

Freedom School

We are hoping to open our Freedom School in the Baptist Seminary Building on the third floor at 31st. Ave. and 16th. Street. Our Freedom School will consist of ten teachers, teaching adults as well as children. We plan to give brush up courses in typing and shorthand as many adults have expressed a desire to want to refresh or take up typing. Negro History will be a special subject taught as well as English. We plan to use many of our local students in assisting in teaching along with the summer volunteers. We will have Miss Gail Falk back with us this summer. Miss Falk is a wonderful person as well as a hard worker.

Mrs. Crowell

Steering Committee Report of F.D.P.

This committee meets every Tuesday night at 7:30. It is composed of local people who come and discuss what we have done, and plans for future activities. Voter Registration has top priority over other plans. Occasionally F.D.P. Members ~~other~~ from other projects, Clarke and Neshoba counties come in with us. At present we are planning our Summer Project: citizenship, with adult education, sewing, reading classes and studies in race relations. In a few days, we plan to have a program with as many local citizens as will come in.

Mrs. Dora Carter

Welfare Committee Report

This department is usually open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Saturday from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. As people come in for clothing and shoes we ask them to go down to the Court House to try to get registered to vote. In some instances we help them understand parts of the constitution which they may be required to answer. Any members of staff will accompany one who may not care to go alone.

Mrs. Dora Carter

Community Center

We were sorry to see Eric leave as we all likes him. I hope I can do a good job of managing the center as he did. We have given the center a spring cleaning and have arranged things

to fit in the small space we have. I must say more and more children and adults are taking a keen interest in the center. Also the library the summer plans for the center will consist of sewing classes Monday-Wednesday and Friday by Mrs. Chaney and Mrs. Rosie L. Leflore, handicraft, story hour and Dramatics for children by Mrs. Smith and others. The community is now located at 513 25th. Ave.

Mrs. Agnas Smith

Newton County Report

Since February, the work in Newton County has been rather erratic. Frank Wright, Mrs. Crowell and George Smith found that the NAACP chapter in the county began telling people to have nothing to do with COFO soon after we began working there. At this point it seems that since the NAACP had never done anything, now none will listen to what they have to say; particularly when COFO comes in and begins to do things.

The church services to which we went in several Newton County towns were well attended. The people all seemed to be very enthusiastic and wanted to know more about voting and registration. While moving around the county from church to church, it became evident that the only town in Newton County which had many Negro people living in it was Newton. Thus our activity for the past month has been confined mostly to Newton. If any headquarters is set up in that county it will be in Newton where a large proportion of the counties Negroes live.

An opportunity for some action presented itself in Newton the first part of March. A young Negro woman 18 years old, was raped by a married white man of about 30 years old. As one could imagine, the Negro community was very upset. About 5 people went to talk to the Sheriff who had the man arrested after a statement was made. Between then and now nothing has been done to the man and he is free. Tomorrow, morning, another committee of 6 people including a minister intend to demand some action by the Sheriff.

This incident has unified the Negro community of this small town to action. This could become very emotional and violent, however, the tempers have cooled some in the weeks lapse and the issue is now is not so much that one incident, but standing up and demanding equal justice. This seems to be good.

Since Frank Wright left this project, George Smith and myself, Joe Morse, have been working Newton County. Two nights ago at a party we interested the high school students in testing and in Freedom Schools. In fact, we may begin testing program in Newton this coming week with the H.S. Students. They are quite "up" on the movement in Mississippi.

Joe Morse

Desegregation Suit Report

There are 24 restaurants in Meridian which were tested to

determine if they were complying with the Civil Rights Act. They were tested between November 1964 and February 1965 by local people of Meridian, both High School students and adults. Copies of the affidavits from the testing were sent both to the Justice Department and our Jackson legal office. It became evident in March that the Justice Department was going to take some action on the tests, for the FBI called in all the people who had tested and took statements from them. Some of the restaurants had to be retested.

About May, the Justice Department filed suit against 16 restaurants in the name of about 20 local people in Meridian. All but 2 of these 16 restaurants desegregated within 2 days. On May 12th., the NAACP legal defense fund filed suit in the name of the same local people on the remaining 8 restaurants. We don't know if these 8 will come around yet or not. This will be our work for the next few days. We have not decided on the action against the 2 who refused to desegregate.

For the past 4 weeks, the local people of Meridian have been getting a petition signed to present the school board requesting desegregation of all the schools. It was presented to the School board during the last week of April. Since then, the NAACP legal defense fund has filed a suit in the name of about 21 parents against the Meridian School Board demanding the desegregation of all the elementary and secondary schools in Meridian.

Both Harris Junior College and Meridian Jr. College are to be integrated starting this summer. The school board decided to sign the Federal Government compliance pledge on April 5th. for these two Jr. Colleges. The School Board did not sign the pledge for the elementary and secondary schools.

This desegregation activity has given some stature to COFO in the eyes of the Negro community in the past month. People are beginning to consider COFO a power to be reckoned with rather than a poorly organized and helpless group of wayward individuals.

Joe Morse

Financial Report

This financial report will not be of the complete nature that it should be. The books have been pretty much in a mess and it is going to take a concerted effort to get them in order and right now I don't have the time since I do not work on this project but am merely helping with the books. I will try at the end of this month and by the next report to get you a full itemized report on the financial status of this project. Right now I am giving you the total expenditures and the total receipts for the months from January 1965 up until May 15, 1965. There are many outstanding checks that haven't been cleared as of yet and that is why the bank balance we have right now will not balance out with the total figures. Also much of the money that is received is not put into the checking account but is saved out for cash on hand. This is one more reason why the figures will not balance out.

Total receipts for January 1965 -	\$ 819.45	
Total expenditures for January 1965 -	594.55	
Total Receipts for Feb., 1965 -	\$ 336.00	
Total expenditures for Feb. 1965 -	267.04	
Total Receipts for March 1965 -	\$ 212.77	
Total expenditures for March 1965 -	216.11	
Total receipts for April 1965 -	\$ 368.40	
Total expenditures for April 1965 -	281.25	
Receipts up to May 15th., 1965	\$ 163.30	
Expenditures up to May 15th., 1965 -	296.09	
The total Receipts from Jan. to May 15th. 1965 -		\$1,899.92
The total expenditures from Jan. to May 15 1965 -		1,655.04
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At the present time we have \$160.65 bank balance and \$6.45 balance of petty cash.

As I have said before I will include an itemized statement in the next report.

Submitted by

Sandra Watts