

OTIS BROWN JR.

SUNFLOWER Co.

MISS.

Sept. 14, 1966

Dear Friends,

Schools are opening and we in Sunflower County want intergrated schools this year. The county is divided into three districts. Last year the Drew school district submitted a Freedom of Choice Plan which was approved by the Justice Department, received their ~~shittum~~ federal funds, and figured that since Drew had so successfully resisted any Freedom Movement that no Negro would send their child to the White schools. One woman who lived on a white man's plantation sent her 7 children to the white school. Last year also the rest of Sunflower County schools did nothing about intergration. This year the schools were even willing to do without Federal Funds, but the Justice Department brought a suit to force school intergration. At first we thought 8 grades would be opened, but Justice Department insisted on only 6. They will be grades 1 through 5 and grade 12. People who want to try and enroll their children in other grades can write to the Superintendent. The ^{Negro} schools opened two weeks ago and white schools opened Mon. Some parents held their children out of the Negro schools to enroll them in the white schools. We are encouraging parents to take their children to the school themselves. We have talked to people about school intergration a long time and people are ready. Indianola and Drew divided their towns into beats with the railroad track as the dividing line, and children go to the school on their side of the track. In Indianola all Negroes live on the side of the track of the Negro school and whites on that side of the track are moving so their children can still go to the white schools. People in the rural of Indianola and Drew have Freedom of Choice, but none are choosing the white school because they live on white man plantations. Feeling that the plan for intergration of schools is unfair and wishing the best education for their children, some parents in the town of Indianola are still wanting going to try to enroll their children in the white schools. Some people are ashamed to send their children to the white schools because they don't have enough clothes for their children to wear, any additional clothes would be appreciated.

Recently, a man named Allen Herman, a Negro from Sunflower County, was arrested in Chicago and turned over to Mississippi police to be accused of burning our Freedom School in Indianola, in March 1966. Mr. Herman was first arrested for passing some bad checks and then he was pinned with the burning on our Freedom School. In jail in Miss. he was forced to sign a confession to the burning of the Freedom School. Somehow, he got a letter to a friend in Indianola telling what the police had done to him in jail and asking his friend to get him a civil right lawyer. His friend came to us and we got an LCDC (Lawyer EEM Constitutional Defense Committee) lawyer. The police beat Mr. Herman in jail to try and get him to release the LCDC lawyer and accept a state lawyer. He is still retaining the LCDC lawyer and his trial night be coming up next month. We do not believe Allen Herman burned our Freedom School, and we will do all we can to help him.

The CAP board and people of the Headstart Staff are competing for federal ~~xxxx~~ poverty program funds for a Headstart program. The CAP board is made of white people who never cared about Negroes here until recently they were inspired to help with the federal funds. The vice chairman of this CAP board even admitted he is a member of the White Citizen Council. To call themselves intergrated, there are a few Negroes whom we consider Uncle Toms on the CAP board. They are teachers and others who are not poor themselves and previously have shown no concern for poor people. The headstart staff, who formed an organization, the Associated Communities of Sunflower County, worked in the Headstart program in Leland last year and when the program ended they organized a headstart program in Sunflower County which they have operated on a volunteer basis since last October. There are now perhaps 300 children attending ASCS centers through-out the county. The ASCS Staff works without pay and tries to get donations of money to feed the children and donations of paper, books, crayon, and other material to use in the Headstart ^{school}. Before the Civil Rights Commission hearing in Greenville two months ago it was proven that CAP was not sincerely interested in the rights of Negroes of Sunflower County, but CAP stands a better chance of being funded for Headstart than ASCS. ~~already the CAP proposal has been approved~~

Already the CAP proposal has received approval from the OEO office in Atlanta, but still has to pass OEO in Washington. ASOS proposals have been repeatedly turned down with various unreasonable excuses given for why. Probably without funds, ASOS shall at least continue the volunteer headstart program to the end of this school term.

F.D.P. was sponsoring a voter registration drive in Sunflower County in an effort to register 10,000 voters before November. Some 2200 people from the rural were registered, and then the project had to be partially abandoned for the lack of funds. People in the county were paid \$20 a week plus gas expenses to do voter registration. This gave needed jobs to people for there is little cotton to pick this year. The State Employment Security Commission announced machines will do most of the picking, and Negroes school will soon stay in session all day because there will be no cotton for the children to pick in the afternoon. We have had further trouble reaching people on voter registration, because we hav'nt had a car. Our car broke down in the spring and we took it to Guy McComb who really fixes our cars and sometimes does it for free. Then Guy McComb was in an automobile accident and has not been able to re-open his shop. Our car has been sitting there because we have to get up the cost to get someone else to fix it and Guy McComb would usually let us pay when we could.

On the community center we have the auditorium sealed with Flywood. The Headstart staff will be glad when the center is finished so the Headstart school can be held there which has more room than the church where it is now held. I stuck a nail in my wrist while working on the center yesterday, but I'm still doing all I can to complete it. We've been putting in the floors and doing the wiring at night. We still need the rest of the insides, the rest of the floor, water, and sewers. It will take \$450 to complete the center now. We would be proud of any assistance you could give.

Your Friend Who Never Gives
Up.

Otis Brown, Jr.
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Pres. of Sunflower County
Improvement Association

Cc - Mr. John Buffington
451 Cottrell St.
West Point, Mississippi