

To: National Action Committee

From: David Dennis, CORE Field Secretary for Mississippi

Concerning: An Abortion for a Pregnant State

VOTER REGISTRATION

During the past year I have been very active in Mississippi in the voter registration program and some forms of direct action. From June 7, 1962 to May of 1963, I was the only CORE representative in the state, with only three short visits from other CORE representatives. Since that time CORE has hired several Task Force workers for the state.

Mississippi is a state where definite long-range programs must be set up if it is to be cracked. At this time it is the most segregated state in the United States of America. Enclosed you will find statistical data that was drawn up by Mr. Jesse Morris of SNCC last week. This report demonstrates to us the problems that confront us. This report was drawn up for the National Council of Churches in the hope that they will provide funds for projects in Mississippi.

During the past three weeks we, CORE and SNCC, have been involved in a "Freedom Vote" campaign. Many people felt that this was silly and was some sort of plaything, but, on the contrary, it did much more for the movement, toward uniting Mississippi, than anything else we have done. The purposes of the campaign were:

1. To demonstrate to Mississippi, Washington, and the rest of the nation that the Negro people of Mississippi would vote if they were allowed to register free from intimidation and discrimination.
2. To form a unit by which we could unite the people throughout the state.
3. To make the people aware of the power of the ballot.
4. To communicate with the masses.
5. To focus national attention on the political system of Miss.
6. To encourage Negroes not to support either political party unless they both change their civil-rights policies.
7. To set up a structure for a statewide political organization.

I believe that we were able to accomplish our feat. Over 82,000 Negroes voted in the Freedom Vote campaign. Many more would have participated if it had not been for the harassment and intimidation. We had over 100 arrests, several shootings and beatings and hundreds of threats and traffic tickets. Our campaign cost over \$13,000.00, paid for from contributions from all across the nation. Three of our CORE workers were jailed. One, George Raymond, was kicked around by police. Several SNCC workers were beaten, shot at, and over 80 were jailed.

Many people disagree with our program of asking the Negro people here not to support either the Democrats or the Republicans. We feel that such an act will make it necessary for the political parties to change their policies in an attempt to gain the Negro vote which would be independent at this time. If the parties refuse, then we would be in a position to begin a third political party. Some think that this would only make the state increase its pressure against the Negro in

Done

Henry

an attempt to keep him from registering. If they do, then this would make the local registration laws come more and more into direct conflict with the Federal Government, which would force the Federal Government to act in behalf of the local Negro.

Through our Freedom Vote we made contact with people in every county of Mississippi and from every county people voted. This means that we now have contacts in these counties with people who are willing to take a stand. To keep things really going we must follow up on these contacts and organize people to attempt to register on a mass scale throughout the state. To accomplish this, we must get more people into the field. At this time SNCC has around 35 people working. They cannot hire any more because of financial problems. SCLC has approximately 20 "citizenship" workers in the state. CORE has five people. With at least 20 more people from CORE we could set up our structure as we want it. We could use 20 workers who would work on a volunteer basis by which we pay their expenses. Both white and black are welcome to work.

Such a project would be approximately \$15.00 per week, per person:

Room and board ---	\$10.00
Transportation ---	5.00
Total	\$15.00

This is the first time that Mississippi has been organized to such an extent. We just cannot afford to let it fall back. We must take advantage of our present accomplishments. I am asking for CORE to support 20 more workers in Mississippi for six months as a special project for the State. This would cost approximately \$8-10 thousand.

It is my opinion that SNCC and CORE are in better positions to tackle Mississippi together than any other organization. We have formed a unit in Mississippi where we have almost become one, and I hope that it remains that way.

COMMUNITY CENTERS

The citizens' councils of Mississippi have begun a campaign to force out of the state as many Negroes as possible during the next four years. In the Delta where Negroes form a majority, they have already put their plans into action. Automation is putting Negroes out of work on the plantations, loans are being cut from the small farms, and large plantation owners are beginning to buy up the small farms, and are hiring more whites and fewer Negroes. The state refuses to allow federal retraining programs to enter the state. The state is offering free property and tax cuts to industries and the industries are offering work for whites but not for Negroes. The Udico Electrical Appliance Co. from Los Angeles is a good example. The Negro must leave or starve. He can't leave, because he has no place to go. If we can off-set the citizens' councils' program by providing training, and projects for Negroes for at least 10 years, then I believe we can conquer the problems of the area.

The type of projects which can be organized are:

- A. Farm Cooperatives
- B. Food-processing Plant
- C. Store Cooperatives (Dry Goods, etc.)

D. Private Business

1. Barber and Beauty Shops
2. TV and Radio Repair Shops
3. Machine shops
4. Upholstering shops
5. Sewing establishments

These are some of the things which are needed in the Negro Community and which are easy to learn if we could get the teachers and places to teach. In my opinion there are many people from the North who would be willing to come to Mississippi and give a year to conduct such training for people, and help the people set up such projects. This would be a private Peace Corps in the United States, which is needed very badly.

The Community Center can serve another purpose as well. It can provide entertainment and information to the people that they have not been exposed to. Each center should be equipped with the following, in addition to the training facilities mentioned above:

- A. A library where the young people can be exposed to objective books and information. There should be films shown every week.
- B. A game room where people can learn other types of games than "tunk" and "blackjack".
- C. Classes in health education, including: child care, prevention of common communicable diseases, birth control, sanitation, etc.
- D. Special classes on Economics (to teach people how to save and spend money wisely), history (to teach them about the Negro and make them aware that they have much to be proud of), citizenship (their rights and how to obtain and keep them, how to register and vote).

There should be training provided for the people to meet the demands of these new industries. If we could have 100 Negroes prepared to operate machinery, to do clerical work, etc., the industries would not be able to say "We are hiring only skilled labor." in an attempt to exclude Negroes from employment. Here we can directly challenge their hiring practices and discrimination in other fields. We cannot demand jobs if we are not trained and prepared to fill the openings.

Such projects as mentioned above would take careful planning, money and personnel. I am sure, though, that there are foundations which would be willing to provide money for such an educational project. The instructors would be the next problem, but I'm also sure that there are some retired professors and the like who would like to come down for a year on such a project. The problem would then be to find them.

My suggestion now is to open a center in Mississippi, beginning with a library and orientation programs on health, citizenship, agriculture and other small things, and attempt to interest unions and foundations in a more detailed project and then expand the centers (about 10) throughout the Delta. College students could man such a project on a simple basis, but when we move into more complicated courses, more professional people would be needed.

To fight for equal rights in Mississippi and not try to provide some kind of training and exposure to modern culture for the people is like trying to take a bath without water.

RESEARCH TEAM

There is tremendous need for some to come into the state and do a study on Mississippi, the economic situation, political policies, agriculture, etc. This information would be priceless to civil rights organizations in their combat against the system. To attack a problem successfully, one should know as much as possible about the problem.

In our field it would probably save money, and I know much energy and time. Such a research team should be capable of aiding farmers with their agricultural problems and also find means to combat them. If approximately five college students would be willing to give a year to such a project, I'm more than sure that their service would be invaluable to us.

There is need for a "white paper" to be done on Mississippi for national public consumption. This would be great to get people more interested in the problems of Mississippi, and to put pressure upon Congressmen and the President to act decisively.

A SOUTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE

There is tremendous need for more communication between the field in the South and the National Office. There is great need for more representation in the South by the national Office. Many things occur in the South that never get publicity or national attention because of the lack of communication with the proper sources and the lack of ability and time of the field secretaries in these areas to make the necessary contacts, press releases, and follow-up on events. A Southern Regional Office should be a "branch" or "extension" of the national office. It should be financed and controlled by the New York office. In this way there would not be any type of conflict in fund-raising or in policy-making decisions. The people to work in the office should be people from the Program Department (Norman Hill or his assistant), and the Public Relations Department (Bob Gore) and the Field Department (Jim McCain or an assistant). The Southern office should produce a newsletter (a Southern Core-lator) at least once per month and send out press release copies to groups. It should also act as a liason between the National Office and the Southern groups and staff.

Such an office would provide more direct communication with the groups and workers which would aid the office and NAC in making better decisions. We are quite confused and troubled over the fact that most decisions are made by people who don't know what our situation is. I am personally tired of spontaneous programs where, after the sensation has subsided, the office loses interest. The office should be established in La. or Miss. and equipped with Wide Area Telephone Service for the Southern area. This way more direct communication can be made at relatively low cost. We in the field need more direction which the national office can't give now. The Southern office is the only source, I feel, through which we can get the direction that would help us and the project.