

July 10, 1964

Rev. L. Alexander HARPER

Having spent July 9 (on special UCC assignment) visiting minister-counselors and supervisors in Jackson and Meridian, I returned early this morning and resumed my previous assignment of covering Cowan Street for Freedom Registrations. Mrs. Devine also gave me South West Street (MarkNolan Extension).

By mid-afternoon all houses on both streets had been contacted (though many not home).

About seventeen forms were signed for Freedom Registration, in addition to Wednesday's dozen. In addition, several which had been filled out for husbands (with wives' aid) and left for them to sign and return personally to Freedom House or a worker in the neighborhood -- several of these were reported (on 2nd visit) "turned in" through someone else. Hope they were certified somehow by a COFO -worker.

Eighteen homes found no one home. Most of the others had husband missing, working (if husband existed). Again I have marked with asterisks on my report those few who were to visited again by someone either to pick up form or to solicit husband whose interest was assured by wife.

Only two or three refused to sign Freedom Registration out of fear. One was an aging Uncle-Tom minister (Tanner) who had never heard of Martin Luther King. Another young woman, who drove a fine car, clearly did not want to jeopardize her job. One prosperous couple from Wednesday's visit on Cowan Street (Bottoms) refused also. All the rest were remarkably sympathetic and glad to have a chance to do something for the cause, though I did not succeed in seriously interesting many in following through in political organization in precinct workshops, etc., later.

If another worker is assigned to Cowan and South West Streets, since perhaps half of adults are still unreached, I suggest they (1) study carefully my reports and existing signed forms, (2) call henceforth only between 4:30 and 8:30 pm in order to find day-working men at home.

I found the experience personally moving, rewarding, unforgettable to visit, hour after hour, so many wonderful, still-hopeful people, incredibly lacking in bitterness and ready to take some chances for the sake of their children's future.

On a second sheet, at Mrs. Devine's request, I have ventured a number of suggestions and critical comments on the program and the use of visiting ministers. But nothing found there should obscure or overwhelm my warm and deep appreciation of the cause, of COFO, of those tough-minded, persevering, long-term leaders, especially local Canton residents who stand to risk and lose all by their actions. The rest of us can hurl our rockets and then skip out home again.


LAM HARPER

HARPER (2)

SUGGESTIONS AND CRITICISMS

When one is actually here less than four days he has little right to venture any criticisms, if indeed he should have come at all for so short a time.

However, since I've been requested, I'll risk a few "snap" judgments for whatever they're worth:

1. Some of us are, frankly, still puzzled and disappointed that COFO's whole effort -- including our own assignment -- has been suddenly shifted from genuine voter registration to what still seems a mock Freedom Registration. I did it faithfully, mind you, and "registered" over 30, but I confess I had the secret feeling that the whole thing was a charade. I know all the explanations, but they're not convincing. I believe we should have kept up at least equal attention to getting people down to that court house... This is especially true after two Justice Dept. officials told us they were banking on more local evidence of Foote Campbell's pussy-fotting with Negroes in order to hold him in contempt on August 10th. I think we're letting them down. I believe Bob Moses should be reminded of the pending federal suit in Canton, in order that an exception to policy might be considered for Canton.
2. If you're going to have half dozen short-term ministers here at a time, I strongly suggest that someone clearly be in charge of their activities, meeting with them daily to appraise with them their work. We never saw MacRee after the 1st night; nor has Zimmerman been in evidence. Had such been done, we might have wasted far less time while here. Wednesday morning we could only sit around for over two hours, maybe three, waiting for someone to emerge from a "closed staff meeting." Likewise, our evenings were unplanned and wasted on the cause, I mean, as far as the cause is concerned. Many of us had skills we would have been glad to use if asked: typing, posters, mimeo work, leading songs, organizing hootenannies and other recreation, or serious discussions with the youth in the project.
3. I question MacRee's reported decision to stop all ministerial efforts at dialogue in the white community. While he may have evidence of harm, and while he may be protecting ministers after one got socked a few weeks back, the whole thing was never discussed with us. I should think steady efforts in reaching the white leaders, especially clergy and church leaders, would be the order of the day for some of us.
4. Security: Nothing unfortunate has happened, and we all know the "lull" since the abduction of the Philadelphia trio. Nevertheless, I have the feeling that security rules (taught us in Memphis briefings and on "pink sheets" of written materials) have all but been thrown to the wind. Do we really travel carefully in pairs? (Our Freedom Registration assignments have been all solo -- on my own I picked up a couple of local Negro teenagers to accompany me to reassure Negroes visited as well as to provide some group protection.) Is there really strict checking in and out of everyone? How about security around mealtime? For example, my roommate and I walk a two-mile round trip at night to Jackson's for supper and back -- OK with us, but how many others are forced to walk after dark? How about collegiates?

5. Efficiency: Not fantastically important, perhaps, but some attention to it can get more work ~~done~~ done with far less people and fussing around. There are always a few around (of every age) with real gifts at office administration. Find out quickly who they are, work them there at least on a rotating basis. Are there a few 1st-class typists, mimeo-people, job-organizers? Why not a sort of "KP" detail, too, at least one at a time (half-day, maybe, or whole) who literally cleans up all the time, keeping jobs localized, marked, paper organized, grounds picked up and swept, living quarters and bathroom neat, attention to attractive and interesting bulletin boards, newspapers available to purchase, and other amenities which can be easily managed for the group, if someone -- or two -- is assigned.... An example: While the work is certainly not "beneath us," it hardly seems wise to have tied up all ministers and voter-director for a morning shuffling street-papers in totally unorganized fashion outside in the wind! Given one long table, one person could have done the whole sorting job in less than $\frac{1}{2}$ hour!

6. Recreation, Learning, Morale; While I'm against organizing everything for everybody, surely you'd have a happier crew if a couple of imaginative folk were assigned to plan a few evening activities (with security carefully plotted), picnics, group-sings, skits or shows, field-days, and weekend things-to-do. If they knew that "Friday night we're having a hootenanny," or skit-night, or something, I think you'd see youthful sagging spirits pick up!

With very little expense or effort, there could be reading matter related to civil rights all around and available for "breaks" and evenings.

(SORRY, DIDN'T KNOW THERE WAS
WRITING ON PAGE, SEE NEXT ONE)

July 10, 1964
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3. Security
4. Information
5. Workers
6. Volunteers
7. Equipment
8. Facilities
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It seems to me that kids as well as adults would welcome some early evening chance to share experiences of the day. Maybe some sort of friendship circle from 5:00 to 6:00 pm each night. This tends to tie a project together, give the kids new insights, whet their appetite for more, enlarge their horizons, and afford chances to talk out problems and doubts.

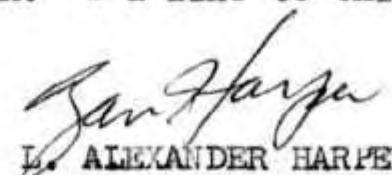
7. Freedom Registration:

a. Do forms, as presently written, commit signers to Freedom Democratic Party? (No) Shouldn't they? (Yes) Otherwise, how on earth can thousands be "waved" at the Democratic Convention in Atlantic City as committed Democrats in any sense of the word? At least one COFO worker (youth) says he's seen quite different forms in Jackson which have specific requests for "signing up" for the Freedom Party.

b. Are these forms legal documents? Possibly not. Many are signed in pencil. Many certifications are by kids under 21. No addresses of certifiers are given. And, anyway, what's certified? That So-and-so lives there, is this old, has lived here how long. Suppose Goldwater claimed they would vote for him? Who's to say him nay?

c. Thus I have serious doubts that these forms have any legal function in gaining delegates at the Democratic Convention. They may be only "Practice" in signing a simple, decent registration form -- which Mississippi does not yet have.

Well, this is enough. It's been fun. I'd like to think it's been useful to the cause.-



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