

MEMORANDUM

TO: CORE Group Leaders

FROM: James Farmer

Events in Selma and throughout the nation have been moving very quickly in the past few days. CORE Chapters have responded quickly and effectively. We have been at the center of demonstrations protesting Alabama brutality, and denial of voting rights and the failure to secure federal protection for peaceful demonstrators.

I have canceled much of my schedule to participate in Selma, to meet with other civil rights leaders and to pressure the government for further action. This has been a major staff activity involving George Wiley, Carl Rachlin, Jim McCain and Marvin Rich at many levels of activity.

The voting rights bill to be sponsored by the President will represent substantial improvements insofar as it calls for automatic action rather than being dependent upon slow court procedures. It will cover all of six states (Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana) and many counties and election districts in other states. Examiners will continue to operate for a 10 year period.

It now seems clear to us that the major confrontation must continue to be made on the battlefield -- the streets of the south. The demonstrations in Selma will continue to test the willingness of the federal government to protect citizens peacefully attempting to exercise their constitutional rights. CORE will begin major projects in Bogalusa and Jonesboro, Louisiana. A fact sheet on Bogalusa is enclosed. In Jonesboro, on Thursday of this week, local police and state highway patrolmen cordoned off the Negro section of town and prevented Negroes from entering or leaving. Four Negroes were beaten and CORE Task Force Worker, Charles Fenton was arrested. The roadblocks were withdrawn only after tremendous pressure from our national office on the FBI and the Justice Department. I will go to Louisiana next week to work with our people in developing a major thrust.

A March on Washington at this time may well develop only into another side show, diverting the energies and resources of thousands of our most active workers from the job to be done in their own community.

At present, therefore, we are not issuing a call for a March. If circumstances should change sufficiently to warrant such a call, you will be notified promptly.