

MEMORANDUM

CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY
38 Park Row
New York, New York 10038
February 2, 1965

TO: NAC Members and All Staffs

FROM: George Wiley

SUBJECT: Southern Staff Work Shop, New Orleans, Louisiana,
January 21 - 23

I shall make no attempt here at a comprehensive report on the Southern Staff Conference but wish to record a few observations and spell out some decisions that were made. In addition to the work shops and the general discussion sessions, I had opportunities to meet separately with the staffs of the three major state projects - namely, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Florida.

I discussed with the state project directors the need for better fiscal control on expenditures. They identified a number of problems including the fact that they seldom see the bills relating to their projects, which are sent to the National office. I agreed to arrange to get an identifying number placed on each gasoline credit card. Once this is arranged the Bookkeeping Department will then make a summary breakdown of the expenditures for each credit card, each month and send it to the Southern office, the state director and the project director. It was also decided that these costs presently billed to the National office will be a part of the budget of the local project. Dick Jewett indicated that the limit of 1500 miles per month placed on the use of leased cars was not realistic for our operation in rural areas. In future leases, arrangement should be made for about 1000 miles per week.

With respect to telephone credit cards, it is difficult to break down the calls to send to individual staff members. However, someone in bookkeeping will check the calls made on each credit card against the calls listed by the individual staff member on his weekly log sheet. If there are major discrepancies, he will be notified. Otherwise, he may assume that the information submitted on his telephone log sheet is substantially correct.

Ike Reynolds' transfer to California was discussed with him. He will be leaving for the West Coast shortly.

Ways of strengthening the Southern office were discussed. Once budgets are established at the February 6th NAC meeting, all Southern staffs and projects will draw advances and operating expenses from the Southern office. Direct requests to the National office will not be honored.

The program discussion which was the major emphasis of the conference seemed to be quite meaningful to the staff. I was struck by the degree of similarity between the problems of community organization and community involvement in the South to those in the North. I was interested in several features of the organizing effort. First, the trend seems decidedly away from going into a community and starting a Freedom School or a community center. Both of these operations are increasingly being thought of as being developed in response

to an expressed community interest in these activities. This interest would have to be expressed in the form of willingness on the part of community residents to contribute some of their own efforts and resources to the development of the center or school. The result is that in many areas the local people are sustaining major financial responsibilities for the projects in their area.

There was also a dominant feeling that whereas the 1964 summer project in Mississippi had many important virtues, it suffered from the fact that many people came down from the North for short periods of time with their own program and ideas and initiative and this actually inhibited the involvement of local people in the program. As a result, local people did not feel a close identification with the centers and the projects in certain instances. The result was that there was frequently very little left of the program when the people left at the end of the summer. Some centers and schools have subsequently been closed.

I also got the impression that another summer project of the type done in 1964 would not be desirable in Mississippi.

I found the morale of our Southern staff to be quite good considering the difficult conditions in which they must work. I think most of them gained new insight into their work from this conference.