

# PROPOSAL FOR A FREEDOM INFORMATION CENTER

## INTRODUCTION

As the Movement in Mississippi has passed from its birth, through the 1964 Summer Project, to its present enjoyment of a power status (at least among some Negroes and whites), deep problems and frustrations have grown. They are now at the point of possible explosion. This is hardly news to anyone in the Mississippi Movement or to anyone who will be reading this proposal. The widespread depression and confusion among workers here, the petty suspicions and general distrust, the money-hunger, the power-hunger is now at such a point that they must be recognized as a significant challenge to the survival of the Movement itself. They must be met with the same determination as that which we now feel for the issues of voting and poverty. This may seem a rather extreme estimation, but it is nevertheless valid. Many people who have been in the movement since its beginning either agree with this idea or prove it by their personal discouragement which no Head Start, no 6-question form, no integrated school grades can lift.

Whether this is extreme or not, the situation persists, the symptoms persist at the organizational and personal, state and local levels. The result is that very little is now being accomplished. It seems that very few people are participating in or coming into the movement in a dynamic and concerned way.

The Movement has become fairly efficient at dispelling the local black man's attitude that "Nothing can be done here;" but it has unknowingly replaced it with the tendency to "Let George do it". We have heard sharecroppers demand to be "canvassed" by a white volunteer. We have heard an active teenager express satisfaction that, although she didn't know what the FDP was doing, Guyot did. And we have had prolonged contact with Freedom Corps personnel, whose inability to think of thinking for themselves has been a constant source of unhappy surprise.

Very few local people even understand what you're talking about when you say that they not only should but can make decisions for themselves.

It is possible that this problem is insoluble - that a community of strong, independent, cooperating individuals cannot exist among human beings. But we believe that such a community can and in fact must begin to live before we can say that there has been any change here.

But what can be done and how? We believe that there is a direct and significant relation between knowledge, sense of involvement and real power. It is the local Mississippian's sense of involvement, his concern for his world, his respect for his

own real power and inner resources which we want to increase. Perhaps we can do so by increasing his knowledge - that is, begin to actually share with him the information, experiences and ideas which keep us three jumps ahead of him in his own fight and perpetuate us as his leaders. And perhaps we can do so by inviting him to join us in forming the ideas and interpreting the experiences which are at the basis of our own decisions. Perhaps we can give him a way to speak and think and creat without being at the top of any organization.

As it stands now, one must not only join an organization, but must give it a great deal of time and attention before he knows enough to be "in the Movement". By the time he is in, he is also in a organization and his thinking is already speacialized to the goals, the structure and the style of that organization. This is very good for the organization, but other goals, ideas, talents, experiences are simply wasted; because there is no way and no one to share them with.

What is needed here is a way for people to freely give and take information from each other, from the country and the world. What is needed is a two-way system of communications which will carry all possible information to and from all the people of the state.

We would like to make it possible for the Movement to move - out of its discontented stage and into whatever the next stage might be. We feel that this can best be accomplished by sharing all the experiences and ideas we have so that all of us will be ready for what is coming. For this reason, we make this proposal and trust that its execution will enrich the knowledge of everyone who has anything to do with it. We hope that it will help solve the problems and ease the bad symptoms which pervade this stage of the Mississippi Movement.



## PROFOSAL

For the last four or five months we have been working with what we call the Freedom Corps. During that time, many ideas have been tossed around about what Freedom Corpsemen could be involved in that would be most advantageous to the Mississippi Movement. There are a multitude of needs, but we feel that the following program can be most profitably (to the state) incorporated into Corps activities with only a few additions (about five) to the present staff.

A great deal has been done, thought, theorized and speculated since the civil rights movement began here. Many records have been kept, some quite faithfully; but people have generally been too busy getting on with the business at hand to gather materials together into one place, organize them and make them available to other people in the state. Consequently, the information- gap between movement leaders (the people who have the most personal knowledge about the movement) and followers has grown very large. This gap is reinforced in the regular communications system in the state, which is almost medieval.

If this gap is to be closed, if leaders and followers - people - are going to share what information they have or know about, someone must now make it his business to structure and establish an efficient communications system wherein all relevant ideas and experiences could be gotten from and to the greatest possible number of needful Mississippians. Knowledge, efficiently shared, could become one of the basic tools of the whole movement for organizing, recruiting, acting with the people of the state.

### I. IT IS THEREFORE PROPOSED:

#### A. THAT WORKSHOPS BE ESTABLISHED IN COMMUNITIES WHICH WOULD PROVIDE AN ENVIRONMENT WHEREIN PEOPLE COULD BE EXPOSED TO:

1. Discussions on topics relevant to the movement as a whole and as it exists in the particular community, using all the resources which the Information Center (see I.B. below) could provide - written materials, films, resource people, etc.
2. Creation of various kinds of materials about their own ideas and experiences having to do with the movement at any level.

#### B. THAT A CENTER BE ESTABLISHED TO SERVICE THESE WORKSHOPS AND OTHERS BY PERFORMING THE FOLLOWING FUNCTIONS:

1. Maintain a library of relevant materials
2. Publish a periodical bibliography of library materials and important information available elsewhere.

3. Maintain a file of sources of materials to be found in books, magazines, films, film strips, pamphlets, tape recordings, resource people, other libraries, etc.
4. Reproduce and distribute current materials and composite background information and original articles.
5. Incorporate writing, film strip production, tape recordings done by people in the workshops into original and theoretical and background materials.

## II. SOME DETAILS OF OPERATION:

### A. INFORMATION CENTER - COLLECTION, ORGANIZATION, DISTRIBUTION

- 1 Collect and update Mississippi county notebooks, add WATS copies, summarize background of area and project into easily readable form and prepare for distribution.
2. Collect government publications relevant to civil rights, ASCS, welfare, poverty program, agriculture, etc., including present collection of Jesse Morris.
3. Collect news releases and publications of FDP, COFO, CORE, SNCC, MFLU, other groups throughout the nation with similar concerns.
4. Collect relevant books, magazines, films, film strips, slides, photographs pamphlets, tapes, records, posters, leaflets, buttons, stickers, etc, produces in or out of the state.
5. Collect all available new materials produced by Mississippians which are relevant to the Movement.
6. Establish a speakers bureau of resource people available to speak on various topics relevant to the Movement.
7. Distribute any materials or information available in the center to individuals, projects or workshops upon request.
8. Probably send in conjunction with bibliography (see II.B. below) requests for donations to Northern groups and individuals asking to be on mailing list.

### B. BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Periodical publication listing materials available in the Center and in other collections and listing important articles in other publications.
2. Mailing list, which will be headed by workshops and existing projects around the state.
3. (Request from subscriptions or donations of publications.)



### C. FILE OF SOURCES:

1. (Movement sources)
2. Survey public libraries, private collections, offices, especially for material not available for the center and keep record of where it can be obtained.
3. Collect lists of materials available from other sources, as catalogues of government publications, films, SDS writings, etc.

### D. NEW MATERIALS:

- 1 Encourage writing on development of movement in various project areas, problems encountered, methods used, learnings.
2. Encourage individual evaluations of persons, trends, events, development, prospectus for the movement.
3. Encourage writing on relationship of civil rights movement, particularly in Mississippi, to other movements, political and economic systems.
4. Encourage original works on political and economic theory, especially as applied to Mississippi movement.
5. Create handbooks on specific topics, places, aspects of the movement by using excerpts from other materials, old and new available to the center.

### E. SERVICING OF WORKSHOPS:

1. (Bibliography and file of sources will be sent to all workshops and projects in the state.)
2. Other materials will be sent to workshops and projects upon request.
3. Exchange of materials between workshops and center will be regulated through the use of the "Workshop Order Sheet" (see attached).

## III. PARTIAL LIST OF MATERIAL NEEDS:

### A. EQUIPMENT:

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|--|---|
| 1. Mimeograph machine                      | 5. Pica typewriter, preferably electric   |
| 2. Possible rent of electric stencil maker | 6. Electric fan                           |
| 3. Three-drawer file cabinet, legal size   | 7. Shelves                                |
| 4. Large stencil storage cabinet           | 8. Vertical holders for tapes and records |
|  | 9. Film projectors                        |
|  | 10. Tape recorders                        |

B. SUPPLIES:

1. File folders
2. File cards, 3 X 5
3. Rubber cement
4. Stamps
5. Mimeograph ink
6. Stencils
7. Envelopes, various sizes
8. Scissors
9. Stapler and staples
10. Mailing labels or addressograph
11. Lighter weight paper for clippings
12. Mimeograph paper, 8½ X 14,  
8½ X 11, as much as possible

C. MONEY FOR:

- 1 Subsistence for personnel (\$10.00 per week via Delta Ministry)
2. Mailings and transportation
3. Purchase of publications not available otherwise