

## NESHOPA PROJECT REPORT

## I General Remarks

The Neshoba Project presents a changing and perhaps disappointing picture: there is now neither a Freedom School program nor a community center program; there is no day-care center, no food and clothing distribution, and the voter registration program is at a virtual standstill. Of the four areas of the county in which large numbers of Negroes live, only one, the rural Stallo community, is deeply involved with the Project; in Philadelphia itself, there are perhaps two or three dozen people really committed, these out of a total population of 1,500; activity in the other two areas, both of which are rural, is confined to a handful of families.

Perhaps disappointing because, in fact, the Project, which was opened on 15 August, has at last begun to deal with the crucial post-Summer Project issue--namely, its own conception of its role in the life of the Negro community of Neshoba County. In the past two months, the Project has had to face the problems of shortage of staff, (there is only one worker in the county at present), insufficient funds, lack of transportation, and most critically, lack of comprehension. Thus, a genuine and exciting effort is now being made to destroy the distinction between the Neshoba Project and the people of Neshoba County. For example, local persons are being asked to assume responsibility for the voter registration program, federal programs, and administration of the Project office. Again, the Project is well on its way to being funded locally: all interested persons are being asked to pledge a monthly "freedom tax" which will be used to pay overhead expenses, fund FDP activities, and eventually, pay staff salaries. The collection set-up will correspond to the local FDP structure and will serve as a channel for information as well as funds. Finally, and here honesty is crucial, an attempt is being made to destroy the concept of the "staff" decision, or even "executive committee" decision. The extent to which decision-making can become a community wide activity is less clear than that it must become one.

## II Programs--Current and Projected

Poverty Bill. An attempt will be made to involve the entire Negro community in planning a Community Action Program (Title II, Economic Opportunity Act of 1964). Prospects for actually getting such a program appear negligible, but if for no other reason, the education that will take place will be significant. Also, many types of loans are available under the act and there is already some interest in obtaining these.

Negro Businesses. Inquiries have already begun on the mechanics of setting up a laundromat to be operated by Negroes in Philadelphia. An attempt will also be made to secure an SBA loan to build a super market in Philadelphia's Negro section.

Schools. A group of teen-agers and parents has been discussing the impossible conditions at the Negro schools in the county. Out of these discussions may come some real interest in desegregating the school system.

Day-care Center. A highly successful center was operating in Philadelphia until the worker who organized it left the Project. Interested mothers are being encouraged to reopen the center under the supervision of a local person or persons.

Freedom School. Negro History and Politics classes will resume shortly--people are requesting them.

FDP. Every attempt is being made to ensure the widest possible attendance at workshops, institutes, etc. Our principle problem has been transportation, not lack of interest. The renewed voter registration drive will be a major FDP activity.

Keamer County. The resources and organizing ability of the Neshoba County FDP will be used to help organize the Negroes of adjoining Keamer County.

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