

Holly Springs project --- Letters from Cleveland Sellers.

"Hattiesburg Conference"

Dear Jesse

I am not sure how this letter is supposed to be written, since you were caught in the same situation that we (Holly Springs project) are caught in now. We have reached the point where we must close up shop here until we are able to produce. And we don't mean just getting by. We are financially unable to function after December 3, 1964.

We are anticipating a working relationship between Jackson and H.S. now that you have decided to clean up and out. We think that now we should be able to work out some type of arrangement that could keep the Holly Springs project open. Enclosed is a letter to the same effect written to Jim Foreman. It is a little more in detail because I want him to weigh the situation carefully this time. I hope that your decision concerning this matter will be as honest and serious as your decision to close the Jackson office. Let me know what you think.

Cleveland

Dear Jim,

I guess you thought our financial problem was settled, but, in fact, we are farther away from a solution than when we first started bitching. We are presently getting \$200 a month from Jackson. If you look at the list of our expenses below, you'll see that it is quite insufficient; For us to comply with Betty Garmen's memo which forbids soliciting for individual projects would be tantamount to closing shop.

- Auto repairs:
 - Kendall's VW \$320.37
 - Merrill's VW 355.87
 - Ford Sta. Wagon 433.95
- additional minor repairs for all cars, averaging \$30./month
- Gas for 8 cars averages \$75/month each, or a total of \$600/month
- Legal
 - Bond for Elwood Berry \$500
 - Bond for Cleve Sellers 500
 - Fine for Charlie Scales. . . . 900
- Truck rental to pick up food and clothing sent to Memphis \$43.84
- Telephone bill: \$90.00/month
- Utilities: \$20.00/month
- Autopsy for man who was thought to be poisoned: \$150
- Rent:
 - office \$75./month
 - girls' dorm 50./month
 - storage 10./month
 - community center. 25./month total \$160./month
- Repairs to office \$200.00
- Repairs to comm. center. \$100.00

The list is incomplete and does not include nonessential expenses such as food. We have receipts on all of the above except for gas. None of this money has been replaced by either Jackson or Atlanta.

We have estimated that it takes \$20 a day to run this project, covering nine counties. So far the only way that we have been able to get food and clothing is to make appeals to the North for it to be sent directly to us. We have asked for food and clothing

from Savings Dept

from Jackson since the last of August but have received nothing yet.

We are also trying to get money to set up a branch office in Oxford and another about 10 miles south of Oxford near Yalobusha. The one south of Oxford is an old school that we plan to turn into an office and a community center.

We have a weekly publication that costs about \$13.00 to print because we can't get stencils, paper, and ink from Jackson. Enclosed is a sample copy.

Local people also use our northern contacts to raise money for their programs. The Wayne Yancy Community Center in Benton County has raised almost \$3000 so far. It is scheduled to go up in the spring and they want to have about \$20,000 by then. The Holly Springs Freedom School students are going to tour New York with the play based on the life of Medgar Evers which they wrote and directed last summer. This tour, which will take place during Christmas vacation, has been arranged by one of the summer volunteers. They had to solicit money in the North to cover their \$1,500.00 travel expenses. Marshall County people are also trying to get Northern support for their supermarket which will be the first in a projected chain. Arrangements are also being made in the North for rebuilding the church that was burned in Tippah Co.

The H.S. project along with local citizens are in the process of trying to work out an economic program for our nine counties. Our next political programs will be: 1. Pay your poll tax campaigns. 2. Massive freedom days, and 3. a political education program.

Getting back to our project needs, we have not had a lawyer since August 12, and may have to hire our own in Memphis. Perhaps because of lack of communication with Jackson, we have been repeatedly slighted in the provision of such services. The Freedom Singers were here for one night (for nine counties?), a couple of folkies that nobody ever heard of were here for one night (Barbara Dane, the only name folk singer scheduled for us was cancelled at the last minute). We've had but three speakers since June, we had a photographer here on October 26 for the first time since June, and IN WHITE AMERICA never made it to our project. We also desperately need reliable cars and additional reliable workers.

We are in need of a lot of things that are possible to get if someone in Jackson or Atlanta would become responsible. Let me make myself clear. I had little to say at the staff meeting about structure because the structure doesn't matter; the service the structure renders is what counts. And until some people become responsible, the structure, regardless of what it might be, will not render service.

Now, Jim, we have weighted all of this carefully and feel that we should not be held responsible for some one else's irresponsibilities. Therefore, I am thinking seriously of resigning as project director of the Holly Springs project if there cannot be an understanding between the project, Jackson and Atlanta. There should be no need for Frank and I to have to turn over our checks to the project treasury to help keep it going. Therefore, we have decided to close down the project on Dec. 4, the first day of the

Sellers Correspondance with Morris and Forman
3-3-3

Mississippi staff meeting, and reopen as a COFO project when we have some guarantee of support from COFO and SNCC. Otherwise, we will assume the role of an autonomous local group. Then we will know exactly where we stand.

Yours in freedom,

Cleveland Sellers.

cc: Stokely Carmichael
Jesse Morris
Bob Moses
Ruby D. Robinson
Betty Garman
Courtland Cox
Jim Forman