

CORE

ACTS ON VOTING

Sumter CORE . . . A Planning Session



Left to right: Rev. H. P. Sharper, Rev. Donald Rice, Rev. J. H. Nelson, James T. McCain (CORE national field secretary) and Rev. Edward Frazier. Similar committees to mobilize Negro registrants have been set up by McCain in four counties. Rev. F. C. James, chairman of the Sumter county committee, is not in the picture (he took it).

. . . An Instruction Session

James T. McCain, national field secretary, instructs a group on how to fill out application blanks for registration. Following such sessions, he accompanies the people to registration offices and remains with them until they receive their certificates, which are required for voting.



South Carolina Registration Campaign

Blueprint for Winning Full Citizenship in the South

Early in 1958, James T. McCain, national CORE field secretary, started organizing a registration campaign in an area of South Carolina where he has lived and worked for the major part of his life. Aim of the campaign is to translate the new Civil Rights Bill into reality by getting Negroes to exercise their right to vote.

SET UP COMMITTEES

McCain's procedure is to establish in each county a committee which instructs persons on how to fill out application blanks, accompanies them to registration offices and remains with them until they receive their certificates for voting. These committees are called Committee on Registration Education (CORE).

Within the first two months, four such committees were established—in Charleston County; Sumter County, where McCain's home is located; Richland County, which includes the city of Columbia, and Clarendon County, where the first school desegregation suit originated.

ACCOMPANY REGISTRANTS

"Since the formation of Sumter CORE, several hundred persons who ordinarily would not have gotten registration certificates received them," McCain reported in February. "Each day the registration office is open, a committee representative accompanies a group there. Applicants who fail to receive certificates because of any error on the blank are given further instruction by CORE and are taken back to the registration office to re-apply. At present over 50 volunteers are assisting the committee."

In Sumter County, registrars did not resort to using technicalities to bar Negroes from registering—a practice so widespread in the deep south. However, in Clarendon County, an applicant reported back to the CORE committee that she had been refused a certificate because she mispronounced the word "indict" in reading a portion of the state

constitution. She reapplied and obtained her certificate. Four women in Clarendon County were registered on their third visit after being rejected on the first two visits.

OVERCOME OBSTACLES

In Williamsburg County Negroes—some of them teachers and college graduates—were summarily refused registration certificates because in the registrar's opinion they could not read and write.

On the other hand, one registration office in Sumter was kept open on a weekday evening at the request of trade union representatives in a local mill—in spite of the knowledge (1) that a great many of the union members are Negroes and (2) that previously few mill workers, Negro or white, had been voters.

While one purpose of South Carolina's 1957 election law was to discourage Negroes from exercising their voting rights, its effect has been to discourage whites. While Negroes, aided by the CORE committees, are making a point of registering, regardless of inconvenience, many whites are unwilling to spend the half-hour required for registration under the law's procedure.

CAMPAIGN SUCCESSFUL

The success of the campaign in arousing Negroes to their citizenship rights was dramatically indicated on the evening of February 21, 1958: for the first time since Negroes have been permitted to participate in the Democratic Party in South Carolina, they took over all Party offices in Sumter's Precinct 3-B and elected 16 of the 17 delegates to the Democratic County Convention.

Cooperation between the various groups working on Negro registration in South Carolina has been excellent. CORE works with Martin Luther King's south-wide Crusade for Citizenship, the NAACP, and various local groups such as the Palmetto Voters Association.

In line with its policy of concentrated action, CORE opened its registration campaign with intensive work in South Carolina. This work must be spread throughout the Deep South where voting is the paramount issue. Indeed, the ballot is not only the first step in the struggle for full citizenship in the South; it is the prerequisite for expanded democracy throughout the nation.

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