

6-29-1964

## Correspondence, John C. Stennis, June 29-July 1964

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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

July 6, 1964

### MEMO FOR THE SENATOR.

We have several newspaper reports about the activities of the National Council of Churches in Mississippi racial matters. Some of these reports are confusing and even conflicting. Generally, however, the newspaper accounts paint this picture:

The National Council of Churches is sponsoring a task force of men and money into the Mississippi Delta to wage war on what it calls persistent poverty and racial injustice.

The project has a budget of \$250,000 which will pay for 15 field workers, a director, and general administration. This amount will be paid as follows: 60% by the National Council of Churches and 40% by the World Council of Churches.

When the program was announced on February 26, it seemed to be primarily directed at poverty and want among the negroes in the Delta. Since that time, other news stories have tied this program in with the over-all "Mississippi Summer Project" being sponsored by COFO, CORE, SNICK, and others.

Within the last day or two, the National Council of Churches has defended its role in training volunteers for voter registration projects in Mississippi this summer. The reports are that the National Commission on Religion and Race (a commission of the National Council of Churches) actually conducted the training school at Oxford, Ohio for those going to Mississippi. In addition, it has announced it will provide 50 ministers to serve as chaplains for the invaders and will provide lawyers and set up a system for supplying bail bonds.

Beyond the information above about the \$250,000 budget and the 15 field workers and director, we have no specific information about payment to other workers. Those participating in the over-all Mississippi Summer Project were instructed to bring \$150 for living expenses and be prepared to raise up to \$400 as bail bond, if arrested.

The attached newspaper stories discuss this program and the role of the National Council of Churches.

[REDACTED]

PICAYUNE, MISSISSIPPI

June 29, 1964

[REDACTED]

JOHN S. STENNIS

Senator John Stennis,  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator:

I wonder if it would not be interesting to find out exactly the role of the National Council of Churches in the "long, hot summer" movement in Mississippi. Did this group originate this scheme or is it a front? Does the church normally participate in domestic politics, and if so do its member affiliations agree to this? What are the participating students being paid, and how much expenses? How was this whole thing put together, and how did the Council of Churches get into it?

It strikes me that perhaps the National Council has invaded a field here which was not authorized, and that member churches may disagree strongly with the role.

It strikes me also that this scheme may well be an extreme-left wing movement using this Church organization as a front; a tactic the Communists understand very well through time honored usage.

I was in Spain in 1937-38 as Bureau Chief for The Associated Press and saw a lot of the famous Abraham Lincoln Brigade which was composed of American idealists and adventurous youths who had been recruited in the United States by a well hidden Communist Party front organization operating a movement under the name of Abraham Lincoln. I think that 99 per cent of the several thousand members of this brigade were non-Communists and not sympathetic with Communism, but they were drawn into a carefully planned movement directed from Moscow. This outfit, augmented with so-called volunteers from other countries, were well disciplined and trained and managed to stop the occupation of Madrid in November, 1936 and this prolonged the war there about three years. Eventually the so-called Republican government, managed by the Communists, was defeated and Franco took over after a million persons had been killed.

By that time most of the international volunteers had been killed in action, and it is hard to follow the story nowadays. But I knew many of them then and knew they were drawn into this futile, foreign fight by subterfuge, and regretted their action as soon as they learned the truth, which was too late.

The Communists use hundreds of good patriotic and religious names to hide their plans and purposes, and undoubtedly are doing so in this Mississippi movement. The purpose, as you well have said, is to provoke violence and hostility. Neither the negro or whites will benefit by this movement, but that is quite incidental to the main purpose which is to create chaos, on which Communism feeds.

The source of the financing of this movement probably would disclose where the direction is coming from, and I should think Congress might like to know about this. Has the National Council of Churches been used by a Communist-front group to do its dirty work? And if so, who approved this in that organization?

I suggest some of these things because I would like to know the answers.

Most sincerely,

[REDACTED]

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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

July 7, 1964

EVERARD H. SMITH, CLERK  
THOMAS J. SCOTT, ASST. CLERK

[REDACTED]  
The Picayune Item  
Picayune, Mississippi

Dear [REDACTED]:

This is a special word of thanks for your excellent letter. I certainly share your concern about the invasion of our State by outside agitators and the role the National Council of Churches seems to be playing in this movement.

Actually, the situation is somewhat confusing. Of course, at the moment I know only what has been publicly announced through the press.

Early this year, the National Council of Churches at its meeting in Baltimore said that it would send a task force of men and money into the Mississippi Delta to do what it called "wage war on persistent poverty and racial injustice."

I enclose herewith a copy of a New York Times article dated February 27, 1964, giving additional details about this movement. You will notice that the group said that a budget of \$250,000 would be required which would pay for 15 field workers, a director, and for general administration. Sixty percent of the money would be financed by the National Council of Churches and 40 percent by the World Council of Churches.

Since that time, other statements have been made and other activities noticed. The National Council of Churches is listed among the sponsors of the "Mississippi Summer Project" along with COFO, CORE, SNICK and others. Apparently, the Council took an active role in training the college students now participating in the voter registration drive in Mississippi. According to reports they helped plan the training school at Oxford, Ohio. Recently, it has been announced that the National Council of Churches will provide 50 ministers to serve as chaplains for those involved in this "crusade" and will provide lawyers and will set up a system for supplying bail bonds.

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Although there are no plans as yet, I do hope to get into the matter more fully and I think the entire matter should be investigated.

I am attaching hereto photostatic copies of a number of newspaper stories on this subject which will give you more details.

With warm regards and best wishes, I am

Your friend,

John Stennis  
United States Senator

Attachments  
JS/cw