

MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY  
926 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC

For Immediate Release

RE: Appointment of Ex-Governor J. P. Coleman of Mississippi to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals by President Johnson.

STATEMENT BY MRS. VICTORIA GRAY, MFDP CONGRESSWOMAN FROM THE FIFTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI.

Today we learned with great shock of the appointment to the 5th Circuit Court of appeals of former Governor J. P. Coleman, the political and legal architect of much of Mississippi's white supremacy program. As known to everyone, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals is responsible for rendering final decisions and for reviewing and guiding course and timing of most civil rights litigation in the deep south.

Throughout Mr. Coleman's long career he has held virtually every type of office in the state of Mississippi, all of which have been won only over the rights--and often the bodies--of the Negro citizens of that state. It was Governor Coleman who signed into the law the State Sovereignty Commission, that government agency designed specifically to maintain the racist system of the state.

The MFDP in the testimony taken in support of its Challenge to the five Congressmen from Mississippi has sworn statements from officials of the Sovereignty Commission and the White Citizens Council that the Commission has given about \$193,000 to support the activities of the Citizens Council. This is the evidence which under pressure from Mr. Coleman, as the lawyer for the Mississippi Congressmen and of other Southern Congressmen, the Clerk of the House of Representatives is now refusing to print.

How does a man so much a part of the state's racist establishment who stands totally for nothing more than trying to prevent the federal government from acting on behalf of the long denied Constitutional rights of Southern Negroes, gain the appointment as a federal judge who is responsible for protecting the civil and voting rights of every Southerner?

The only claim Mr. Coleman has to the appointment is his position in the power structure of Mississippi and the blessing of the illegally elected Senators Eastland and Stennis.

Here again it becomes evident that only through the successful conclusion of the Challenge to the Mississippi Congressmen will we achieve for the disenfranchised Negro the right to register, the right to vote, and the right to participate fully and freely in the political process which affects their lives. Only then will we have any say over who gets federal appointments. We are now calling upon every Senator who has admitted the fact of the state-enforced disenfranchisement of Negroes in Mississippi by voting in favor of the Voting Bill and to make that action meaningful by refusing to confirm the appointment of Mr. Coleman. It is time for this Congress to say by the unseating of the Mississippi Congressmen and refusal of Coleman's appointment that it will no longer tolerate the mockery of the democratic process in Mississippi.