

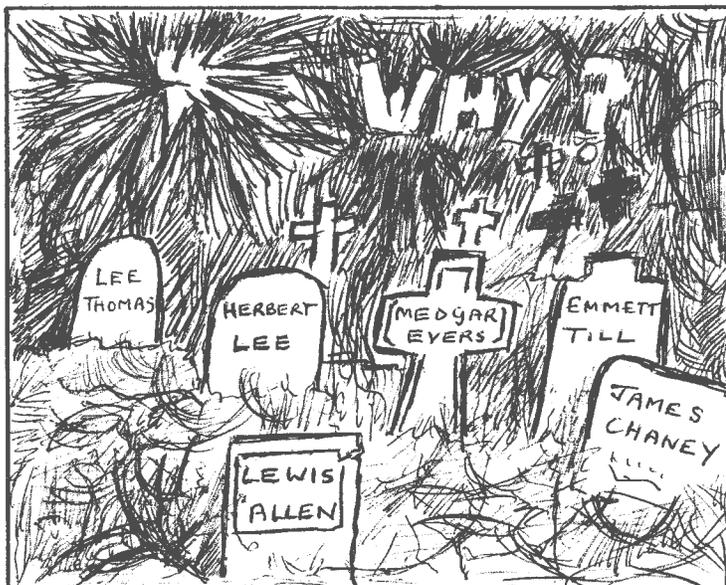
MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM / News DEMOCRATIC PARTY / Letter

Number 9

Jackson, Mississippi

November 5, 1965

WHY?



"FORTUNATELY FOR THE SOUTH, THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THE NEGROES HAVE LARGELY RESISTED ATTEMPTS BY OUTSIDERS TO GET THEM INVOLVED IN FEUDS WITH WHITE PEOPLE" - CLARION LEDGER, OCT 10, 1965.

Big Push In ASCS Elections

Last year in Madison County ex-Gov. Ross Barnett showed up at a polling station. Mr. Barnett had not come to vote, but to watch - like any other "public-minded" citizen - the results in the community ASCS election.

This year there will be no voting in person, and very likely no Barnett advising civil rights workers what was good for them.

Election procedures were changed after the intimidation at the polls, and other malpractices. In some areas where it seemed that a Negro would win, the wives of White farmers voted in strength.

This year some wives can legally vote, and balloting is to be by mail.

While some intimidation has gone on - mostly economic arm twisting - the overall picture is very different. Last year Negro farmers ran for ASCS posts

(Cont'd on page 3)

Evictions Follow Registration

There is no separation between the jobs of law enforcement and running plantations in Sharkey and Issaquena counties. Planters are law enforcement officers, and vice-versa.

Mr. J. A. Darnell, is Sheriff of Issaquena. He is a planter, and so is his brother.

The Register of the county has the feelings of the White community "at heart." She has called planters to tell them that "so and so," one of their worker's, has been in to register to vote.

There are no divided loyalties in those two counties. Quite frequently - it is rumored - they have met to decide how to "freeze out" certain Negroes living on their land.

"Freezing out" means evictions, and it is part of the old segregationist answer to racial problems. Crudely put, it is: "get rid of the Negroes and we won't have any more problems".

About a month and a half ago six families in the two counties were told to leave their homes. They were told the houses were going to be pulled down.

Some of these families had sent children to previously all-white school, and had done this in spite of threats from Planters. Almost all of them had attended F.D.P.

(Cont'd on page 3)

FDP Files Reapportionment Suit

Jackson, - The F.D.P. recently filed a suit in Federal court today asking for the unseating of the Mississippi Legislature. The suit also directed the court to take re-apportionment out of the hands of the Mississippi Legislature.

The suit goes far beyond reapportionment cases that have been fought in other states. The FDP is saying that not only are Mississippi legislators illegally elected because the present electoral system favors some districts more than others, but because Negroes were not allowed to take part in their election.

Judge Harold Cox ordered that the suit be heard by a special three-judge panel. He said that this would

(Cont'd on page 4)

MFDP News Letter

(Mrs.) Susie B. Ruffin, Editor

Editorial

ANOTHER BOOKER T.?

It is rumored that the Mississippi N.A.A.C.P. Field Sec'y aim is to steer the organization's members into the Mississippi Democratic Conference. If so it will be one of the greatest racial sellout since Booker T. Washington sold us into menial labor. I am wondering if the Sec'y's late brother is turning over in his grave.

NEWSLETTER FINDS FRIENDS

The Staff of The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party state wide Newsletter wish to thank the people who contributed the money that made this issue possible. We will be printing The Newsletter once every two weeks hereafter. Please send all Newsletter mail or funds to Newsletter, c/o Susie B. Ruffin, P. O. Box 3051, Jackson, Miss. The Funds will be used to produce and distribute The Newsletter.

KLAN SUPPORTERS

If the young people of Laurel, Miss., keep putting their money in K.K.K. Leader Sam Bowers Music Boxes, Pinball Machines and ect. in Negro Cafe's, the Negro people of the state and nation will know that you are in favor of financing an organization that is dedicated to keeping the Negro people in a place assigned to them centuries ago and perpetuated with Killings, Murder, Lynchings, Starvation, intimidation (and what have you?). Your money also have a chance of financing some of those violence schools sponsored by the Klan to teach its members the art of cross burnings, Hate, and bombs to throw into your Homes and cars! Think twice before you play a record at The Cafe on the Corner.

From the **Cap-Sule**

New Brunswick, N. J.

Mississippi Negroes lost their fight to replace the white racist congressmen as their representatives from Mississippi. Congress, for all its talk about civil rights decided that Negroes will have to wait for their freedom.

Many people know how the Negroes was being mistreated and exploited by the southern racist. Still many Northern politicians supposedly committed to racial equality, when the final vote was taken sided with the racist of the South. President Johnson, despite urgent pleas, refused to help those poor people from Mississippi. Fannie Lou Hamer, one of the leaders of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, said that the fight will be continued, but now we know that the problem is the same in the North as in the South.

FDP Asks Face-up

--The National Committee

Politicality - or the art of listening attentively to everyone at once, is special to the core of the Democratic machine, its national committee.

On October 6th Mr. Bailey's committee called up to Washington representatives of all the civil rights organizations working in Miss., together with the F.D.P.

The purpose of this was a hearing into the discriminatory practices of the Miss. Democratic Party. The subcommittee, one headed by ex-Gov. Lawrence of Pennsylvania, gave each representative 40 minutes.

Very broadly the committee's question was: "Has the traditional Democratic Party of Miss. attempted to integrate itself?"

Mr. Lawrence Guyot, chairman of the FDP, extended the question. He said: "The MFDP raises today a simple but irrefutable proposition, namely that the traditional Miss. Democratic Party which controls the State from top to bottom has forfeited any legal, moral, or ethical right to Party recognition."

One reason the committee knew well. It rested in the walk-out of the Mississippi delegation at last year's Democratic Conference in Atlantic City.

Two other facts, more recent, were output before the committee. One was a statement by Gov. Paul Johnson on Sept. 14 when he said "he didn't foresee any participation by Negroes in the Democratic Party of the State" - the other, the court action begun by Att. Gen. Patterson to prevent Negroes registered by Federal officials, from voting in State elections.

Guyot argued that if the committee recognized the illegality of the "traditional" Mississippi Democrats, it would have to stop them conducting next year's Congressional primary elections, and turn over to the M.F.D.P. this function.

No answer has yet come from the national committee.

The request looks staggering. Yet, in fact, the Democratic party has once before (during Truman's Administration) taken away recognition from the Mississippi Democratic Party.

If it was to do so again, in 1965, it would be surprising.

Politically, the national committee, and Pres. Johnson's administration, have weighed the extent to which they could go in "reforming" the deep South. Politically, the formula is to be one of keeping one bloc of votes (White) and winning another (Black).

For the time being the committee is showing every indication of being a good listener, while it quietly urges and encourages: the pose is of a conciliator.

Sometime during the last six weeks the committee met with members of the Mississippi Democratic Conference - an integrated political group formed in Jackson in April of this year.

The group has no programs, and has worked, if at

all, underground. But its importance to the national committee is not in "programs" but in its composition.

It is who the people are, and the interests they represent, that appeals to the committee. A group of moderate Whites and Negroes apparently working together, signals an advance in Mississippi politics.

That advance means nothing in real political terms - the committee knows this - but it gave them the chance to show the State in which direction it should go.

Evans and Novak, the columnists, echo at least a little of the national committee's thinking. So, when they wrote on October 28th that "the progress of the Democratic Conference is far better than hoped for some four months ago", they were not merely guessing.

In fact they were able to report that the national committee had offered the Conference substantial assistance - cash, not directly from the Party, but indirectly from other sources.

Overall the committees actions show the thinking of an adroit Southerner - Pres. Johnson, and it is to Johnson we owe the rise of Politicality.

--Mike Higson

Evictions (Cont'd from page 1)

meetings.

The latest evictions came last week. Four families - 23 people in all - living in Rolling Fork, were ordered to leave. Their houses were rented from a plantation

The Fight Uphill- 395,000 To Go

Bolivar County, Nov. 2nd. - "Perhaps, some day," said the sharecropper, a man in his sixties, "perhaps I'll go, go register."

Like this man, in the cotton fields outside Gunniston in Bolivar county, others "just" thought about registering this week. They didn't want to change being seen driving to the courthouse in nearby Rosedale with FDP workers.

Federal registrars came to Bolivar county with its potential Negro voting majority of about 5,000, three weeks ago. They left after a week, following an agreement with the county registrar that she would register illiterates.

The number of Negroes who knew that federal registration had begun was small. The news media, controlled exclusively by Whites, publicised the invasions by "the Feds", and then forgot about it.

It was in these circumstances that a mass registration drive by the FDP began last week.

Fifty workers moved into the county and began canvassing in Cleveland, Shaw, Rosedale and some of the smaller towns that dot the flat Delta country of huge plantations and a few Negro farms.

Up to this point roughly 1,000 Negroes from a potential figure of 15,000 had been registered. From the beginning it was hard work. Perhaps it was harder than

owner, a Mr. Jack Grumphrey.

Mr. Grumphrey's overseer said the houses were going to be pulled down.

While they look for permanent homes, the evicted families are living with relatives and friends. Again, they were people who had been active in the F.D.P.

Few people are under any illusion that these are the last of the evictions. During the winter there are going to be many more.

The question has been raised: How are people protected when they take advantage of the Voting Rights Act, 1965, and the desegregation of schools. There are, of course, "paper" laws governing protection!

ASCS (Cont'd from page 1)

in 14 counties - this year the figure is up to 23.

In Holmes county the FDP held workshops and began looking for candidates weeks ago. There are now 40 candidates whose names should appear on the ballot. If voting is heavy there is a chance that in this county, and in some others, a Negro will get on the county ASCS committee for the first time in Mississippi.

More than 53 (ASCS) communities are now being worked. The idea that a man, however small a farmer, or poor a tenant or sharecropper, can have a say in how much cotton he grows, is what ASCS is all about. But it is only that it is being allowed to work in Mississippi.

expected. In the first three days only just over two hundred people had been registered. Workers in Rosedale were followed by "crackers" - Whites with time on their hands, and guns on a rack or the car seat.

But in Rosedale some cotton pickers climbed out of the trucks carrying them to the fields, and went to the courthouse to stand in line to register. Some people had had enough of "Uncle Charlie".

It was last week that the Justice Dept. announced it was sending Federal Registrars into a further six Mississippi counties - Walthall, Jefferson, Hinds, Neshoba, Desoto, and Humphreys.

This increased to 15 the counties where Federal Registrars were now operating in Mississippi. In these counties, the FDP estimated, approx. 102,000 Negroes still had to be registered. (Overall, the figure was more impressive - 395,000 to go.)

The F. D. P. decided it would concentrate on registering people in these counties, and began with Bolivar.

In a real way the effectiveness of the Voting Rights Bill was under test. Would people register? Would they register under encouragement (by FDP workers?). Or would it again be a case of people seeing legislation as not much more than paper legislation.

In Madison and Leflore counties - two, with large Negro majorities - the answer was already clear. Fixed, and immobile, registrars had succeeded in attracting a little under half of the eligible Negroes. Registration had fallen off to such an extent that a week

(Cont'd on page 6)

Suit

(Cont'd from page 1)

be named shortly.

The proposals the panel will hear, include:

1. That the panel, itself, prepare a plan for re-apportioning the State.
2. That the Mississippi Legislature should be declared illegal, and new elections called.
3. That these elections should not take place until large numbers of Negroes had had a chance to register.

The suit suggests that to increase the rate of registration, the court order the establishment of mobile registration units, and longer hours for circuit clerks.

Legally, the court could rule in FDP's favor on every point. The question is will it? FDP lawyers expect, for example, that the court will try to avoid drawing up its own reapportionment plan. They expect that the Legislature will be asked to take up the matter, and told that its efforts would be reviewed.

The background to reapportionment in Mississippi dates back to the 1890 Convention, but more recently to the Legislative session in 1963. During this session it reapportioned itself, but did so unsatisfactorily. The last regular session (1964) recognized this; a new plan was drawn up, but it never reached the floor.

Some statistics given in the suit show the extent unequal representation. It cites one county with under 4,000 people, and another with 52,000 both sending only one member back to the State House of Representatives.

The suit points out that allowing the Legislature to complete its term - a further two years - would allow it further opportunities to push through Bills designed to curtail the rights of Negroes.

In 1964, alone, the Legislature considered 24 Bills aimed at suppressing civil rights work, and Negroes generally. Some, such as the notorious "Criminal Syndicalism" Bill were signed into law.

Like the Congressional Challenge, this suit strikes at the core of the power structure in the State. But unlike the Congressional Challenge it will win (or part of it will). The court is bound to find the State malapportioned, and tell the Legislature to do something about it.

The Jackson Daily News in an editorial, October 5th, referred to the "capricious" suit as the work of "very, very few". The suit has, in fact, been signed by FDP members in each Congressional District. It was voted for unanimously at the State Convention of the FDP on October 3rd, and will now be discussed at workshops throughout the State.

Gov. Paul Johnson has reapportionment at the top of his list of priority issues the State Legislature will deal with. In September he announced that he would call a special session of the Legislature this December to consider redistricting.

Not long after Gov. Johnson's announcement, the Sun-

day Clarion Ledger published a plan for reapportionment, the same one that came before the Legislature in 1964, and the one that will be deliberated in the special session.

The proposals call for equalisation of the District populations, and accomplish this by radically altering the shape and make-up of the 1st, 2nd, and 4th districts.

The 2nd district, with its present potential majority of Negro voters (159,000 to 145,000 whites), becomes under the State's plan a much reduced area, with a potential white voting majority of 20,000.

On its surface the State's plan is a simple one of re-adjustment, underneath it smacks of another instance of Southern gerry-mandering.

HOUSE BURNING - JONES COUNTY

The Burrel Currie home, located three miles south-east of Laurel, Mississippi, in Jones County, was completely destroyed by fire Sunday morning, October 10.

Mr. Currie's farm was the scene of a fight last year between civil rights workers and members of the K.K.K. who attacked the workers with chains when they attempted to use Mr. Currie's pool for swimming. The workers escaped to Mr. Currie's house where they were fired upon by the white men and they in turn fired back.

BILL WARE'S TRIAL

by Barbara Jean Shelly
Natchez, Mississippi

Natchez, October 13, Mr. William D. Ware was tried in the city court on drunkenness. He refused to have a lawyer to act on his part because he felt if there was a lawyer or not he would not get a fair trial.

Mr. Ware being a civil right worker in this town (FDP) has been the host in the city jail many times.

The first witness that was call to the stand was the arresting officer. Ware asked him could he show him how close was he standing to him to smell liquor on his breath and he answered by saying that "I don't know".

He went of farther to ask him to show him how he was walking down the street but he refused to show him.

Most of the questions that was asked by Ware were rejected and none of his witness that could say that he was not drunk.

Later on in the trial he took the chair to speak in his part and denied that he was drunk. He went on to say that he has been picked several times and he might be taken in on anything. He defended himself very well to say that he had not had any practice at law at all. He also conducted the manner very well in every way.

There were four officers that said that they smelled liquor on him.

In closing he said that he should be found not guilty because there was no proof that he was drunk except the officers that arrested him, and there was no proof that he was stragering because all negroes has a lot of rhythm and they walk with a dip and a bounce.

He was found guilty and was fined \$17.50.

Tuition Law Knocked Down

In a Belzoni school students were told that some of them would have to pay tuition, or not be allowed in school the next day.

This happened last month. But on the day some students would have been turned away, a Federal judge in Jackson, ordered the state law applying to tuition payments, be temporarily suspended.

Judge Cox's decision lifted the threat in Belzoni, and did much more. It allowed back into school perhaps as many as 5,000 Negro students.

They had all been refused entrance to school during late Sept. and early October - not because of misbehaviour - but simply because they had not brought tuition fees with them.

They were, in effect, the victims of a State law (passed in 1964) which said that children not living with their parents, or legal guardians, would have to pay school tuition. This was computed at about \$25 a month.

Action against the law was taken by the Inc Fund. A suit was filed in Federal court asking for the suspension of the law. Across the State, FDP members sent in affidavits, and complaints from people who were affected by the law.

Judge Cox's decision came very shortly after the Justice Dept. asked to take part in the suit.

His decision only suspended the law. Its (the law's) constitutionality will now be considered by a three judge panel.

Stamps For Food

The woman, a mother of four, was told she would have to buy \$40 worth of stamps. She was told she would have to spend \$40 before she could get food under the Government's Food Stamp program.

This is a common experience for Mississippi Negroes who have gone to their Welfare Dept. asking about the program.

So far it is being operated in six counties - Harrison, Jones, Chickasaw, Lowndes, Madison and Coahoma..... and it is puzzling many people.

While it is clear who should get the stamps - poor people - it is not clear how much money they should put down in order to buy stamps.

Government pamphlets say people should spend about as much on stamps as they would normally do for food. If family X normally spent \$40 a month then they would buy \$40 worth of stamps. These stamps would then be exchanged for a higher value of food - say \$50 worth.

In theory the program helps people to eat more varied foods than they did under the Commodities program.

But in practice?

In some cases the theory has proved itself. But they have been where people have had enough money to buy a month's supply of stamps.

Many cases are now coming to light where people are too poor to afford more than a few dollars for ALL their expenses.

This is almost certainly going to be the case in Coahoma county where the program began on Nov. 1st. Hundreds of sharecroppers families, who have to exist on credit through the long lay-off period between Nov. to April, will no longer get commodities. They will now have to find the money to buy food stamps.

In Harrison county the FDP called in a Federal official to explain the program. In the other counties work is being done to find out how the program is going. From this, a report will be sent to the Dept. of Welfare in Washington.

From Gulfport's FDP News Letter

High School Education For Adults

Good news! If you haven't finished high school and want to, you now have a chance to do so.

Jefferson Davis Jr. College is offering a night course that prepares students to take the GED and ACT tests. The GED (General Educational Development), if passed, will give you a high school equivalency certificate which is equal to a high school diploma.

The ACT (American College Test) is taken by high school graduates to determine if they are eligible for college.

The courses are open to all those who are over 21 and not in high school, and have a strong desire to complete the course. You do not have to have completed any certain grade.

JOB CORPS

Two more young men from Gulfport have been accepted into the Job Corps. Lawrence MaGee and Norman Millender have been accepted and have already left for their assignments.

Both have written back that they are having a good time. Lawrence MaGee is the son of Rev. Reuben MaGee, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church. Lawrence is in the state of Washington learning automobile body repair.

ONE PROJECT

There is now only one project in Gulfport. It is the Freedom Democratic Party Project under the direction of Mr. Yother Lee Keyes, County Chairman of FDP.

There is no more COFO or SNCC project. Everything has been put under the FDP.

The office at 3107 20th St. will be open Monday through Friday from 10am to 5pm. Mrs. Keyes invites you to come if you would like any information about the Freedom Democratic Party.

The staff includes Mrs. Keyes; Mrs. Yvonne King, secretary; Charles Wheeler; Peter Corr from Seattle Washington; and Peggy King.

People who have bought membership cards in the FDP are asked to come to the FDP meetings on the first and third Wednesdays at 8:00 pm at the ILA Hall. Others who are interested in being members are urged to come also.

New In Brief

WEST POINT--Five crosses have been burned in Clay County within the last month in Pheba and three at a Negro gas station in West Point. The Negroes are being harrassed on every Front. They were told they could not have bus service for their children; so the parents talked to the Superintendent and was awarded a scheduled bus.

The people of West Point is trying to set up a day care center. One thousand dollars is needed to fix up the building and to pay people to care for the children at the Center. * * * *

Federal registrars are now in Clay County and have registered 300 people in 11 days.

NESBITT

Complaints of Mr. and Mrs. Haywood Wilkins

The Welfare Check of Mr. Wilkins and their two grandchildren are being held up by the Welfare people on account of the children is attending the formerly all-white School at Hernando. The welfare check was to help support the children and they are in dire need of them. Reported by Mrs. E. L. Williams

P. O. Box 36, Nesbitt, Miss.

JONES COUNTY

Members of Jones County M.F.D.P. attended a P.T.A meeting at Nora Davis School recently.

Mr. McBride of the welfare Dept. was the Guest speaker. He spoke on the value of the food stamps to Negroes because they are underfed. He also said that all Negroes is diseased and that any Negro man or woman could get out and make the money to buy the food stamps, instead of complaining about the price. The people was very frustrated and said they was going to seek another Meeting with him and then petition the Health, Education and Welfare Dept. in Washington.

FDP for ALABAMA?

Saturday, the SNCC staff of Alabama presented to the SCLC staff the idea of organizing political parties on the county level. Residents of Lowndes County had asked for such work. Jack Minnis of SNCC did the research, and found that a political party would be recognized for any Alabama county where that party's candidate got at least 20 per cent of the vote in any election.

PHILADELPHIA

Two Negroes who integrated the formerly all white school in Philadelphia were expelled a few days ago for fighting. A fight between them and white students broke on a school bus. The whites involved are still at school. The parents of the Negro students went to see the Principal. He refused to discuss his decision with them. He only asked them "Why they brought their troubles to him?"

AMITE COUNTY

The M.F.D. P. has started to work in the western part of Amite County, the communities of Jerusalem, Antloch and Gloster. At a county M.F.D.P. Meeting last Sunday plans were worked out for people who had

registered to help with canvassing.

Farmers who lost their cotton crops during Hurricane Betsy have been to the F.H.A. office in Liberty asking for assistance. They were not given any help; almost every farmer was asked, "Who sent you here?"

Uphill (Cont'd from page 3)

ago the offices were only to open on Saturdays.

Federal Registrars - and Mr. Katzenbach might have perceived this - had become something of an institution. And , that, in Mississippi, is always something of a danger.

On Viet-Nam-WHY and BECAUSE

I chose this topic because of a lot of questions going around in my head and I don't know what to do with them. So I decided to put it into words so more people can see what I think about the world today.

Why does President Johnson keep sending more Negroes to Viet-Nam?

I don't think President Johnson has any business sending any of the white or black men over there in Viet-Nam. Maybe the white man has a right, but I do know that the Negroes don't have any business over there because how in the world can the Negroes fight for anything for someone else when they don't have it themselves? I think he (President Johnson) is doing it as a heroic act --if not that, something similar.

Why is it that Negroes, and not only Negroes but white men too, are afraid of going to Viet-Nam? Maybe the white men have a penalty to pay. They have their equal rights, but why are they afraid to go over there? Well, I tell you why: it's because they are not only afraid of Red China and the Viet-Cong, but they are also afraid of the Federal Government. If they refuse to go, they will have to go to jail, so they will have to go one way or the other so they choose Viet-Nam.

Why did those Congressmen vote against those three Negro women? I believe it is because they are either blind or don't care what happens to the poor people of Mississippi, both white and black. They don't care about anybody but the rich white people of this Deserted State. I say Deserted State because I bet that you or anyone else couldn't make some of those men come down here in Mississippi at gun point. I don't think any of those Representatives have any business in the House of Congress because they was not put there by a free election. I say free election because Negroes in Mississippi did not vote for them, I know my parents didn't.

As you can see, most of my questions are about Viet-Nam, President Johnson, and the House of Representatives. These are just a few of the questions I have stored in my mind, but I am afraid if I bring them all out I will bore you to your death.

Ruthie Reed, Issaquena County

Editors note: This article does not reflect the thinking of the FDP, or the Newsletter.