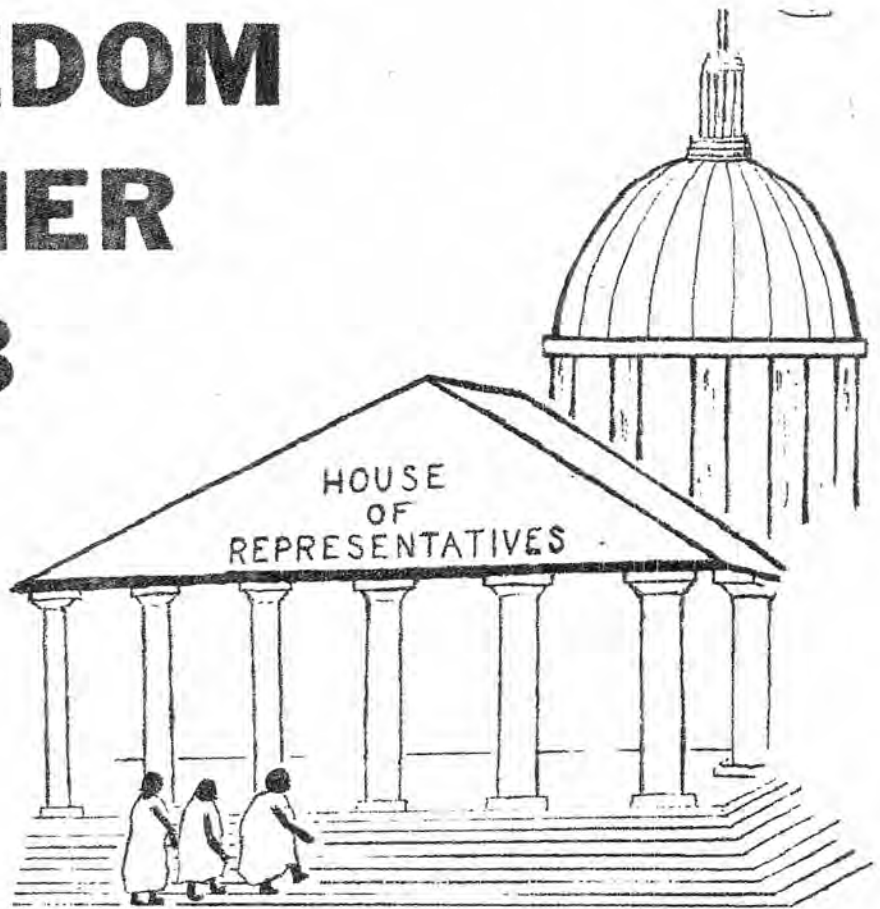
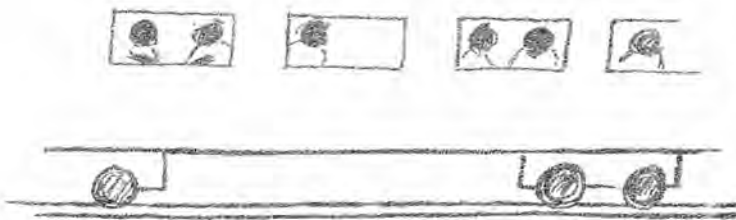


**FREEDOM  
PRIMER  
NO. 3**

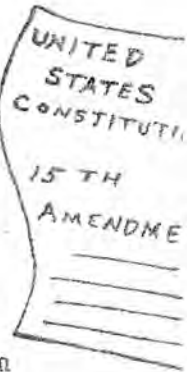


**The Right to Vote  
and the  
Congressional  
Challenge**

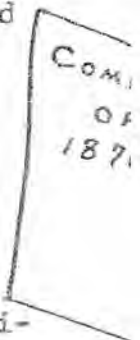


## WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO VOTE?

In Mississippi, as we all know, most Negroes are not allowed to vote. But they all have the RIGHT TO VOTE. They were given that right in 1870 when the 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution was passed. The 15th Amendment says that no one can be denied the right to vote because of his color. So when Mississippi keeps Negroes from voting, it is violating the Constitution of the United States.



Mississippi is also violating an agreement it made in 1870 with the Congress in Washington. After the Civil War, Mississippi was not a part of the United States because it had fought against the United States in the Civil War. But in 1870 Mississippi again wanted to send representatives to Congress in Washington, just the way it did before the Civil War.



Congress said that Mississippi could send representatives again, but only if it promised always to support the 15th Amendment and the Mississippi Constitution of 1869. The Mississippi Constitution of 1869 said that anyone could vote who was 21 years old, who

lived in the state six months and in the county one month, and who was not insane and had not committed certain crimes. Congress wanted to make sure that Negroes, who were a majority of the population in Mississippi, would be able to vote. If Mississippi did not let Negroes vote, it would not be allowed to send Representatives to Congress.

Mississippi agreed to support the 15th Amendment, but it did not keep its word. Once Mississippi was allowed to become part of the United States again, it started to find ways to keep Negroes from voting. That is why some people say that Mississippi should not be allowed to send representatives to Washington until Negroes are permitted to vote.

### HOW DO NEGROES IN MISSISSIPPI SHOW THEY HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE?

Mississippi tries many ways to keep Negroes from voting. But Negroes vote anyway -- in FREEDOM VOTES. Freedom Votes are open to anyone who wants to vote. By voting in FREEDOM VOTES, people who cannot vote in the regular elections show that they have the RIGHT TO VOTE anyway.

The last FREEDOM VOTE was on October 30, 31 and November 1 and 2. In that election, almost 70,000 people voted.



They said they wanted Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer to go to Congress from the Second Congressional District, Mrs. Annie Devine to go from the Fourth District, and Mrs. Victoria Gray from the 5th District. They also said they wanted Aaron Henry to go to the Senate to represent the whole state. And they said they wanted Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey for President and Vice-President, rather than Barry Goldwater and William Miller.

So, in the FREEDOM VOTE people showed not just that they had the RIGHT TO VOTE. They also showed that they wanted to vote. And they showed that if they could vote they would choose candidates who are concerned with their problems and who would speak for them.

#### WHAT WILL THE FREEDOM VOTE CONGRESSWOMEN DO NOW?

The three Congresswomen are going to Washington. Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Gray are going to Washington to tell Congress that they are the real representatives from Mississippi. They are going to say that the men chosen in the regular election on November 3 should not be in Congress because so many people were not allowed to vote in the regular election. They are going to say that the FREEDOM VOTE was the only real election -- because everyone who has the RIGHT TO VOTE was allowed to vote in the FREEDOM VOTE.



Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Gray have an office in Washington, D. C. They are going to Washington to talk about your problems. They are going to go to many people in the government and talk about cotton allotments, commodities, tractors, schools and more jobs. They are going to talk about the FREEDOM VOTE and tell about how hard it is for everyone in Mississippi to vote. And they are going to ask Congress to let them sit in the seats for Mississippi and talk in Congress about the things you want.



### WHAT IS THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS?

The United States Congress is a meeting of people from each of the 50 states in the United States. Congress makes the laws of the United States. Congress is supposed to make laws that are good for all the people in the country. Sometimes Congress makes laws that are good for only a few of the people. That happens because not all the people are represented in Congress.

Congress is supposed to be a meeting of the representatives of all the people. Representatives are supposed to be chosen by voting. But in many states, like Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and Georgia, only some of the people

are allowed to vote. Therefore, in many states like Mississippi, only some of the people can help choose the representatives who go to Washington. And these representatives from Mississippi talk only about the problems of some of the people of Mississippi.

Congress was not always like it is today. For about ten years after the Civil War Negroes could vote. So Negroes could help choose the people who went to Washington to represent them. During that time Negroes were among those who went to Washington to talk about the problems people had

in Mississippi. But after that ten-year period, Negroes in Mississippi, and states like Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia and Louisiana, were stopped from voting. No longer could Negroes help choose the people who went to Washington to represent these states. And no one in Washington talked anymore about the problems Negroes were facing in states like Mississippi.

Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Gray want to change this. They want to make Congress a place where all the people in the country have a voice. They want to represent all the people in Mississippi -- not just some of the people. And they want to represent the people who work on plantations and in kitchens, and the people who cannot get jobs at all -- not just some of the people who have





a lot of money.

Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Gray belong to the FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY. The FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY is open to all the people. The FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY is made up of people who want everyone to have a chance to vote in Mississippi -- so that everyone can help choose the representatives who go to Washington. And they want these representatives to talk in Washington about the problems all the people in Mississippi have -- so that Congress will make laws that are good for everybody.

### WHO DECIDES WHO CAN SIT IN CONGRESS?

When two people say that they should have the same seat in Congress, Congress itself decides which person should get the seat. So Congress itself will decide if Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Gray can represent the people of Mississippi. But several things have to happen first before Congress makes this decision.

### HOW WAS THE CHALLENGE MADE IN MISSISSIPPI?

The first thing Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Gray did was to challenge the seats of the men elected to Congress in the regular election November 3. Lawyers for the Freedom Democratic Party wrote a paper which told how most Negroes could not vote in Mississippi, and told how Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Gray had been elected in the FREEDOM VOTE.

On December 5, members of the Freedom Democratic Party took these papers to the five Congressmen



electd in the regular election. The papers told the five Congressmen that their right to sit in Congress was being challenged. And the papers told how the Freedom Democratic Party candidates would go to Washington and say that they were the representatives from Mississippi.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN CONGRESS OPENS?

On the first day of Congress, January 4, 1965, friends of the Freedom Democratic Party will stand up in Congress and say that the Congressmen elected November 3 should not represent Mississippi. They will support the challenge of Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Gray. And they will ask Congress to say that no one should represent Mississippi in Congress until Congress has time to listen to both sides and decides who should represent the people of Mississippi.

WHY WILL LAWYERS COME TO MISSISSIPPI?

After Congress opens, lawyers for the Freedom Democratic Party will come to Mississippi. They will want people to tell about how Negroes are stopped from voting in Mississippi. And they will want people to tell about the



Freedom Vote and how Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Gray were elected. They will want to know whether the men elected in the



regular election November 3 really are your choice. And they will want to know whether these men make the kinds of laws which help you.

The lawyers will make records of what people tell them, and then they will go back to Congress and tell Congress what they have heard.

When the lawyers come to Mississippi, it will be a very good chance for everyone in the United States to learn what Mississippi is really like. The lawyers will be able to ask questions to people like Sheriff Rainey in Neshoba County. And they will be able to ask Registrars about voter registration procedures. They will ask them why Negroes cannot vote in Mississippi, and why so many Negroes are thrown off their jobs, and why their homes are shot into, and why they are beaten and killed.

The lawyers will also listen to us. They will let us tell our own stories. They will let us tell what kind of job we have, and what kind of sheriff we have, and what it is like to go to the courthouse. And everyone in Mississippi can hear what we say, because the meetings with the lawyers will be open to everyone. This is the first chance that most of us will have to talk about Mississippi in public.

When the lawyers go back to Congress, they will give their reports to the CLERK in Congress. The Clerk will publish large parts of the reports. Then everybody in the country will have a chance to read what the report says, and to learn what Mississippi is really like.

### HOW WILL CONGRESS DECIDE WHO CAN REPRESENT MISSISSIPPI?

After the lawyers make their report, the Clerk will give the report to a Committee. The Committee will decide who they think should represent Mississippi in Congress.



Then Congress will vote on what the committee says. Congress can vote to seat the men elected on November 3. Or, Congress can vote to throw out the men elected in the regular election November 3. And then Congress can decide to have a new Regular Election in

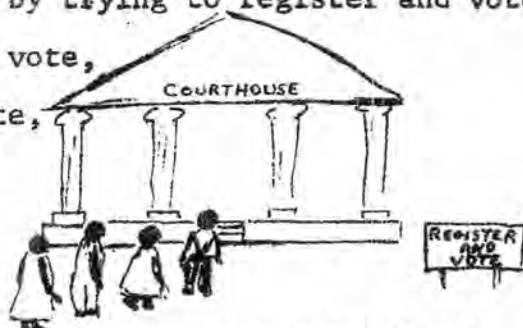
They can talk for us much better than the so-called "educated" men who are in Congress from Mississippi now.

WHAT MUST WE DO SO THAT THE CONGRESSWOMEN WILL REPRESENT US?

It is not enough that we helped choose Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Gray in the FREEDOM VOTE. They cannot really represent us unless we tell them what we want them to talk about in Washington.

There are many ways we can tell the Freedom Democratic Party Congresswomen what we want them to say for us. We can write to them, and we can visit them in Washington, and we can send them petitions and reports which tell them what is happening in Mississippi.

We can tell them what to say by trying to register and vote. Because if we try to register and vote, they will know that we want to vote, and they will know that is one of the things they must tell the government in Washington.



We can tell them what to say by talking with the lawyers when they come to Mississippi. Because when we talk to the lawyers everyone will be able to come and listen. For many of us this will be the first time we have talked in public. And if we talk in public Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Gray will hear what we say and they will be able to say the things we want.

We can tell the Congresswomen what we want them to say by working with the FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY. Because if we support the FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY, they will know that we want them to tell the government in Washington what the FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY wants. And the FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY wants Votes, Justice, Jobs

and Education for everybody in Mississippi and in the United States.

### HOW HAS THE FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY GROWN?

The FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY grew very much during the summer. It grew in numbers, because thousands of people signed the FREEDOM REGISTRATION forms and now there are almost 80,000 people who are FREEDOM REGISTERED.

But the FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY has grown in other ways, too. Because the FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY is no longer just a few people who want to vote. It is no longer just a few people who go to Atlantic City while everybody else watches.

The people in the FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY are voting -- in FREEDOM VOTES -- and they are choosing their own representatives. And these representatives are not going to Washington to ask that they be allowed to represent us. They are going to represent us. And they will stay in Washington and represent us no matter Congress decides.

The FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY has grown because more and more people are going to precinct, county and state meetings, and because more and more people are helping teach other. And that is why Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Gra represent us. Because they know we are working in Mississippi to help ourselves, they will know what we want them to say. And they will say in Washington and all over the United States the things we would say if we were talking.

PRECINCT  
MEETING  
LIGHT



WASHINGTON →