

## NEGRO VOTING RIGHTS DENIED

Because of the racist restrictions on voting in the South, only about half of the 10.5 million Negroes of voting age in the entire U.S. in 1962 were permitted to vote. In his civil rights message, February 28, 1963, President Kennedy said a recent survey of 5 states showed over 200 counties in which "fewer than 15% of the Negroes of voting age are registered to vote." He proposed shortening of the procedures under which Negroes can become qualified to vote.

In 17 counties of the 11 southern states, known as the "Black Belt," only 3% (at most) of the Negro men and women voted in 1960 elections, while 97% did not vote.

Of the 18,900,000 Negroes in the U.S. (representing 10.5% of the total population) some 9,400,000, or about half, live in the 11 southern states. This is still the main area where Negroes are persecuted and denied their basic rights, such as their equal right to vote guaranteed under the 15th amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

In Mississippi, where the Negro population represents 43% of the total, the great majority of Negroes do not vote at all. Only about 5% of Negroes of voting age are registered to vote. In many counties with thousands of Negro citizens of voting age, not a single Negro is registered.

In March 1963 the Mississippi Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reported that a state of "terror hangs over the Negro in Mississippi." The report is a study of police brutality with

descriptions of unprovoked arrests, insults and threats, brutal and sadistic beatings.

**Registration Campaigns:** During 1962 the Congress of Racial Equality, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee conducted a joint education campaign with local organizations in several southern districts to encourage registration. They were assisted in some areas by the Voter Education Project (VEP). As a result of these campaigns, more than 40,000 Negro voters were added to the registration rolls in 1962.

Operation Freedom with headquarters in Cincinnati, Ohio announced in December 1962 that it was extending its work (previously centering in West Tennessee) into the Delta Area of Mississippi in order to assist persons harassed for registering to vote. In LeFlore County alone, 22,000 Negroes had recently been cut off from receiving surplus foods. The vast plantation of the racist U.S. Senator Eastland is in the heart of this Delta area, south of Ruleville in Sunflower County, "where Negro citizens have been wounded by gunfire, jailed and run off the land for registering to vote or for encouraging others to vote," Operation Freedom reported.

As the leading Negro organizations intensified their voter registration efforts in 1962 they were considered the most effective means of challenging segregation. As a leader in this campaign, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., said on June 2, 1962, "The central front . . . is that of suffrage." Later, after the November elections, he hailed the growing Negro vote as the strongest organized movement in the defense of civil rights in the South.

In Terrell and Lee Counties, Georgia, in September 1962 four Negro churches were burned during registration campaigns. In five other incidents in Georgia during the same month, night riders fired into Negro homes used by voter registration workers.

The U.S. Supreme Court, October 22, 1962, held that federal judges have the power to make state registrars put specific Negroes on the voting rolls. Alabama State had challenged an order by Federal District Judge Frank M. Johnson requiring the registration of 54 specific Negroes in Macon County. The Macon County case is especially significant because it is in the so-called Black Belt, with a predominantly Negro population.

In Montgomery, Ala., Judge Johnson, November 20, 1962, ordered 1,100 Negroes added to Alabama's permanent voting lists. He said that the county registrars in a recent 4-year period had registered more than 96% of the whites and rejected more than 75% of the Negro appli-

cants, including some who had college and higher degrees. Among them were 108 public school teachers.

By the end of 1962 the U.S. Department of Justice had in process 32 cases involving deprivation of Negroes' voting or registration rights. It had 60 others under investigation in the southern states, including Florida and Tennessee. (*Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 17, 1962.)

A suit was filed on January 2, 1963, to compel Robert F. Kennedy and J. Edgar Hoover "to take positive action to protect the rights of Negroes to register and vote and to exercise their constitutional freedom." It was filed on behalf of eight Mississippi residents who charged that Mississippi law enforcement officials were systematically and brutally intimidating, harassing and physically attacking them and other Negroes who have been registering to vote in the South. (*The Southern Patriot*, Jan. 1963.) The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in March 1963 asked the Government to station troops or marshals in Mississippi to protect the rights and lives of Negroes attempting to register.

## DESEGREGATION STRUGGLES IN GEORGIA

At Albany, Ga., a broad movement of Negroes in December 1961 began to press for an end to segregation in transportation, parks and libraries, and for equal opportunity in employment. During 5 mass demonstrations, December 11 to 16, about 750 Negroes were arrested. National Guardsmen were called out by city authorities. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rev. Ralph Abernathy were among those jailed but released after negotiations with Mayor Asa D. Kelley. Demonstrators were assured that the city would comply with Interstate Commerce Commission rulings against segregation in bus and rail terminals, but it complied only when newsmen were present.

For more than a year the Albany police carried out mass arrests and beatings of the Negro people demonstrating for their rights. The record for the first 8 months of 1962, as reported by the Southern Regional Council in *Albany: A Study in National Responsibility*, is given in the box on page 121.

The report noted that the Albany police, with no interference or protest from the federal authorities, had put into prison "every man, woman, or child who dared protest in any way the infringement of rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution."

First-hand reports from Albany in February 1963 showed that the terror had not stopped the Negroes' efforts to win their rights. The

## AMERICAN RIGHTS IN ALBANY

Students asking for library cards: questioned by police.

Girl sitting in front of the bus: arrested.

Two young men in the Trailways restaurant: arrested.

Four men picketing a store downtown: arrested.

Thirty young people trying to get service at lunch-counters: arrested.

Twenty-nine people praying in front of City Hall: arrested.

Ten people picketing stores: arrested.

Five people picketing: arrested.

Thirty-two people on way to City Hall: arrested.

One white and two Negroes in front of City Hall: arrested.

Group trying to use Tift park: ordered out by police.

Students trying to get service at drug stores: ordered out by police.

Seven sitting at lunch counter: arrested.

Eight students trying to use swimming pool: ordered away.

One hundred and fifty people on way to City Hall: arrested.

Seven people praying in front of City Hall: arrested.

Ten people praying at City Hall: arrested.

Eighteen praying at City Hall: arrested.

Sixteen praying at City Hall: arrested.

Fourteen praying at Carnegie library: arrested.

Six singing at City Hall: arrested.

Nineteen praying at City Hall: arrested.

Five asking service at Holiday Inn restaurant: arrested.

Eight trying to use bowling alley: arrested.

Two students picketing theater: arrested.

Three Negroes seeking to attend church service: arrested.

Seventy-five ministers praying at City Hall: arrested.

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was carrying on a voter registration campaign.

## SIT-IN CAMPAIGNS

For the right to have service at lunch counters and restaurants sit-in demonstrations by Negro students, sometimes accompanied by white youth, began in February 1960 and have continued during the past 3 years. The Southern Regional Council, a bi-racial organization in Atlanta, Georgia, has estimated that during this period up to the beginning of 1963, some 5,000 sit-in demonstrators have been arrested in the South.

**In New Orleans:** Typical of many long nonviolent action campaigns for desegregation, led by the Congress of Racial Equality, was the 2-year effort in New Orleans, La. The lunch counter sit-in movement in that city ended September 11, 1962, when 77 New Orleans lunch counters and restaurants desegregated. The campaign had started in September 1960 with 7 persons sitting in at the F. W. Woolworth lunch counter.

During the New Orleans campaign, over 350 participants were arrested. Some cases were still pending at the end of 1962; a few had been dismissed; and others were still on appeal. Jail sentences averaged around 60 days, with an additional 30 days in lieu of fines—and in many cases the full sentences were served in jail. The final success in New Orleans, CORE pointed out, was “testimony to the dedication of New Orleans CORE members, their attorneys and their friends—and to the effectiveness of nonviolent action under trying circumstances.” (Core-Lator, Sept. 1962.)

## FREEDOM RIDERS

In May 1961 CORE initiated “Freedom Rides” of Negro and white together, to challenge the policy of segregation in interstate bus terminals and restaurants. During the following months hundreds entered segregated buses and eating places in mixed groups, and many were arrested.

The first Freedom Riders in a regularly scheduled Greyhound bus were attacked May 14, 1961, at Anniston, Ala., by a mob of white men who set fire to the bus. The riders were forced out of the burning bus only to be clubbed by whites who had followed the bus in a 40-car convoy. A second group were also viciously attacked as they alighted at a bus station in Birmingham, Ala.

During 1962 as the struggle was pressed, there was considerable

progress toward integration in the South—in buses, terminals, soda fountains, restaurants and swimming pools. By mid-August 1962 James Farmer, national director of the CORE, reported that more than 80 restaurants along major highways in Florida, Virginia and North Carolina had been desegregated in the Freedom Highway campaign.

## MONROE FRAME-UP

A leading Negro militant freedom fighter, Mrs. Willie Mae Mallory, was indicted in Monroe, N.C. on a framed-up charge of “kidnapping” a white couple during racial demonstrations in August 1961. Escaping to Cleveland, Ohio, she was held from March 1, 1962, for more than a year in the county jail while her attorneys and others fought against her extradition to North Carolina.

If returned to Monroe she would face trial on the “kidnapping” charge also framed up against Robert F. Williams, former leader in the state NAACP, Dr. Albert Perry and others. They had defended themselves against a lynch mob of 5,000 led by state and local officials and the Ku Klux Klan.

Released on the excessive bail of \$15,000, March, 14, 1963, Mrs. Mallory was re-arrested a week later when her bail was revoked. The Circuit Court of Appeals in Ohio March 22 granted a 30-day stay of extradition after the U.S. Supreme Court had denied her a review of her case. Many liberal and labor groups on record in support of Mrs. Mallory's struggle have pointed out that in Monroe, N.C., there would be no possibility of justice for a Negro accused of a crime against whites.