

Jackson, Mississippi
August 14, 1963

NEGROES VOTE FOR FREEDOM - PROTEST DISENFRANCHISEMENT

Because the Mississippi Government refuses to allow Negroes to register and vote under the laws as applied to the white citizens, the Negroes are going to vote in their own election. In Mississippi, our vote will not count, but all Americans will know that if the Constitution of the United States was respected in this state, our votes would count. Our election will discredit the Mississippi vote; we will record as a matter of public record the results of the votes of unregistered Negro voters. All the world will see how many citizens of Mississippi are deprived of the vote, and how few citizens do actually choose the public officials.

By holding our own election, we will make it clear how different the results of elections would be if Negroes voted as they should. For example, if Johnson wins the election by 10,000 votes, but Coleman wins our vote by 40,000 votes, it will be obvious to all the country that Coleman should have won the election by 30,000 votes. It would be absolutely clear that the victor would hold his office only because of the existence of the unconstitutional and corrupt discrimination against Negroes.

Remember, too, that by putting the actual strength of the Negro vote on record, we may profoundly influence the attitudes of the white candidates who run for office in the next election. If Coleman sees that 40,000 Negroes voted for him in a protest vote, he will work hard to see that at the next election, those votes will be cast in the real election. On the other hand, Mr. Johnson will see very plainly that if he does not attract some of the Negro voters, he will not be elected to any office, when the Negro does get the vote.

This is going to be the last election in which the politicians can afford to ignore the Negro vote. Next time, they are going to have to promise us some of what we want in this state. The Freedom Vote is to let everyone know how many of us there are.

Furthermore, the VOTE FOR FREEDOM promises to win more publicity for our Movement in Mississippi than any other activity of this summer. At this critical point in the campaign for the Civil Rights legislation now in Congress, the impact of the VOTE FOR FREEDOM is of the utmost importance. We will show the Congress that the situation is bad, and that we want to do something about it. At the same time we will not be breaking any laws; we will not be

precipitating violence. This manner of solemn, but legal protest makes the greatest impression on the Congress of the United States.

THE MECHANICS OF THE PROTEST

The FREEDOM VOTE will take place on Sunday, August 25, We will create our own polling places at the central Negro Church, or at several important churches in each city. At the polling places, there will be a manager who will take the names of all persons who cast votes. No one will be prevented from voting, but we want a list of everyone who does vote. There will also be a ballot box. The ballots will be provided for the whole state by the Jackson Branch.

The FREEDOM VOTE will be on a Sunday so that everyone will be able to vote. It is also on Sunday, because every one will be together for church. The ministers from every Negro Church must play a vital role in the FREEDOM VOTE. Everyone must be led from the churches directly to the polling places for the FREEDOM VOTE after the 11 o'clock service on Sunday morning. While all the people are together for church, we must go to the polls; if we let people go home, it will be much more difficult to get them to the polls later that day.

In Jackson, we think that we can turn the FREEDOM VOTE into a holiday celebration. At the polling places there can be picnic lunches; there can be speech-making. In places where it is difficult to organize voter registration workshops, they can be conducted right at the churches which are the voting places.

It is important to emphasize that there will be no risk of arrest in this protest. Everything will be carried out on the property of the churches. The votes will not be given to the state authorities, but to the persons who are managing the FREEDOM VOTE.

ORGANIZATION DETAILS

The plan of the FREEDOM VOTE must be spread in every possible way. The time is short; there must be a great deal of work done to put this plan over.

There should be one leader placed directly in charge of all plans and co-ordination.

There should be full schedule of mass meetings with programs devoted exclusively to the FREEDOM VOTE. We will get nationally known speakers if possible.

The ministers, must be persuaded to place their entire support behind the action, if this is at all possible.

Jackson will be able to supply flyers to distribute to explain and publicize the FREEDOM VOTE. Youth will have to be organized to canvass and distribute the material.

Telephone committees should be organized to round up support and encourage participation.

This is a brief sketch of the possibilities; all arrangements will have to be adapted to the conditions in each city. The main thing is to take some appropriate steps rapidly to make the plan successful. From Jackson, we will try to be in touch to complete further details of planning.
