

MISSISSIPPI VOTE FOR FREEDOM

Policy Directive No. 2

Jackson, Mississippi
August 16, 1963

Planning Details for the Vote for Freedom

1. The Ballot: The ballot will be prepared and distributed by the Jackson organization. The only office on the ballot will be the office of Governor of the State. There will be only two names on the ballot: J.P. Coleman and P.B. Johnson. There will be no third Negro candidate on the ballot.

2. The Polling Places: In order to collect as many votes as possible, we will provide polling places throughout every city. Whereas it was previously announced that we would have polling places only in the central or important churches of the Negro community, it is now decided that we will try to have polling places in every church and in any other community meeting place. The numbers and locations of the polling places must be worked out in each community by the local organization.

A polling place will be set up outside of every church. As people leave churches, they will cast their votes in the ballot boxes.

It is suggested that some communities will be able to greatly increase the number of voters by the use of mobile voting units, a Votemobile. An automobile with a ballot box would travel throughout the Negro residential areas to gather the votes of the persons who did not vote at the churches.

3. Polling Procedure: The process of casting a vote involve two steps. First, there will be a recorder. All persons will give their names and addresses to the recorder. The recorder will also keep a count of the total number of persons who have voted. The records will be strictly confidential, and will not be released to the state authorities. No one should be afraid of reprisal; the names will be taken as a check against any person voting twice. Persons so recorded will be given a ballot. Second, there will be the Vote. The ballots will be marked, folded, and placed in the ballot box by the voters.

4. Personnel at the Polling Places: There will be a Manager of the Election at each polling place. It will be his responsibility to rule on any questions which arise during the election. It will also be the duty of the Manager of Election to prevent any person from voting twice. The Manager will telephone to the Local Director of the Campaign, the final number of voters who cast votes at his polling place, and will carry the ballot box to the Local Director. There will be a Recorder at each polling place. It will be his duty to record the names of the persons who apply to vote, and their addresses. There will also be an observer. It will be his duty to guard the ballot box, and to prevent tampering with the box. The Observer will distribute the ballots to the voters, being sure that no voter gets more than one ballot. The Observer will receive the ballots from the Manager of Election, and will return surplus ballots to the Manager and make account of the number received, used, and returned.

Other personnel may be used freely to keep order among the persons waiting to vote, or to canvas the neighborhood to encourage persons to go to the polls.

The Local Organization should recruit responsible persons to run the polls, and bring them together for instruction before the election. The Local Organizations must record the number and locations of the separate polling places. Records should be kept to make the procedure simpler if we should repeat this vote on election day in November.

5. Appearance of the Polling Places:- It may be appropriate to have a large sign above the polling place to announce: VOTE FOR FREEDOM POLLING PLACE. There should not, however, be any signs or information about any of the candidates at the polling place. If such information is to be given out, it should be distributed at least 30 feet from the polling place. It may be possible to decorate the polling places with some red, white, and blue crepe paper.

If it is possible, wooden ballot boxes should be used. If wooden boxes are not available, cardboard boxes may be used.

6- Publicity for the Freedom Vote:- The Jackson office will use the radio and perhaps the newspapers to publicize the Freedom Vote. The Jackson office will make available to the other offices in the state flyers and notices of the votes.

Because the Vote will be held on Sunday, it will be extremely important to announce the Vote in the Churches, and to urge the people to vote on coming out of the churches. If it is easier, personnel from the Voting Campaign could vote instead of the ministers.

Mass meetings should be used to spread enthusiasm for the Vote. In Jackson, we have found that mass meetings are the most effective means of stimulating a campaign. We have found, however, that the attendance at mass meetings is drawn for the most part from the community where the mass meeting is held. Therefore, we urge the larger communities to have a mass meeting in each part of town. In Jackson, we expect to have simultaneous mass meetings in different parts of the city. If the times of the meetings are staggered slightly, one speaker will be able to speak in different parts of the city in the same evening. If possible, mass meetings should be devoted exclusively to the subject of the Freedom Vote.