

# OPERATION MISSISSIPPI

ONE MAN, ONE VOTE CAMPAIGN

BY:  
SNCC MISSISSIPPI STAFF  
SEPTEMBER, 1963

The Mississippi Staff  
 Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee  
 Greenwood, Mississippi  
 September 15, 1963

Dear Friends,

We write you from Greenwood, Mississippi, headquarters of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's Voter Registration Project. For the past year we have worked with Negro citizens struggling to exercise the right to vote. Events in Mississippi and the nation during the past year have indicated to us the feasibility of expanding our operations in Mississippi. The conditions we have encountered in the state, convince us of the necessity of immediate expansion.

There is a massive migration of Negroes from Mississippi every year. They flee northward, untrained and uneducated, filling the ghettos, making new ghettos, adding to an already explosive unemployment situation. This migration will not be stopped unless Negroes in Mississippi can be convinced that they must stay and solve their problems in Mississippi: the problems of finding work in the face of the mechanization and consolidation of farms, getting an education in the poorest schools in a poor school system, removing from political positions those who are preventing education and denying jobs.

The Negro in Mississippi has no money to offer the politicians who keep him so politically, economically, and socially deprived, but he has a significant potential voting power that has for the most part remained untapped. Less than 5% of the Negroes in Mississippi are registered to vote. Negroes constitute 36% of the persons in Mississippi 21 years old and older.

We have divided our personnel into five voter registration teams, corresponding to the five congressional districts in the state. These teams will be directed by experienced voter registration workers, and will be responsible for (1) getting 200,000 Negroes to vote in a mock election which will act as a trigger for a stepped up registration drive in every area of the state, (2) mobilizing local communities to exercise their right to register and vote. We are beginning to take steps toward the solution of economic conditions among Negroes which are a direct result of their impoverished political and social position.

We face resistance on every level, from the racist judges of the federal district courts to the poor white people, systematically manipulated by the political opportunists who control the state government. Having only our bodies and experience to throw into the struggle, we have estimated a budget of \$3,930 for the first month. We ask your support. Money for supplies and operating expenses -- such as emergency telephone calls -- is our first need. We also desperately need cars. Now we have less than a car per district; to move efficiently we should have a car for each city where a project is started. Some other needs are: reproducing equipment, typewriters, paper. The changes which make us feel an expanded registration program may be successful have been made with great help from people like you. Hungry people have been kept from starving and thousands have been carried to the courthouse to attempt to register. Because of your contributions in Leflore County over 1500 Negroes have tried to register this year, even though less than fifty (50) have been allowed to pass the test. We thank you.

ONE MAN.....ONE VOTE.....BY '64

*W. L. ...*  
 Director

Yours in the struggle,  
*W. L. ...*  
 The Mississippi Staff

In a mock election conducted by voter registration workers in Mississippi during the second Democratic primary held August 27, more than 38,000 Negroes---ineligible to vote according to the discriminatory voter registration requirements in the state-cast their ballots for gubernatorial candidate J.P. Coleman. Despite the limited area of the state participating (namely: Greenwood, Jackson and Clarksdale), Negro leaders felt that the response of Negro citizens was indicative of a strong desire among Negro citizens across the state of Mississippi for their voting franchise.

Apparently, the political potential of a voting Negro populace in Mississippi is being felt in state political circles; for, just recently, the Mississippi Democratic Executive Committee in stating their opposition to a two-party system in Mississippi said: "a two-party system would split white conservatives and open the door to Negroes holding the balance of power."

Voter registration workers, who have been conducting a vote drive in the Mississippi Delta, operating out of Greenwood, knowing the urgent need for a strong protest registered by Negroes across the state at: (1) the inherently discriminatory state voter registration requirements, which along with the misuse of these requirements by voter registrars, have consistently made it impossible for Negroes to register to vote, and vote; (2) the myth that Negroes "aren't ready", and don't want to vote; (3) the failure of the federal government to recognize that Negroes have long wanted to vote, but continuing economic

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and physical reprisals against Negroes attempting to exercise the right to vote, makes the decision of whether to register to vote or not virtually a choice between life and death as long as the federal government refuses to act to protect the right to vote.

Vote workers in Mississippi have begun laying plans for a state-wide mock election with the goal of getting 200,000 Negroes or more to vote for a Negro candidate running for governor. For the first time, there is a strong Republican gubernatorial candidate running, and with his bid for the governorship, there is a real chance that the conservative democrats voting bloc that has dominated Mississippi politics will be split. If the democrat's bloc splits, 200,000 Negro's votes (if they were registered) would probably be more votes than either candidate would get, and could (if registered) certainly swing the election to either candidate. With a showing of this kind by thousands of Negroes across the state of Mississippi, the myth that Negroes aren't "ready", and don't want to vote would be dispelled and could lead to the Justice Department pressing more forcefully the voting suits it has pending, particularly the one asking for the removal of the literacy test, poll tax, and good moral character requirement. Negroes would more clearly recognize their political potential through the reactions of whites-of the nature of the democratic Executive Committee's recent statement- and be encouraged to register to vote.

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The State of Mississippi was broken up into five different areas. Each area has a director and each director has a number of people assigned to work along with him. These area assignments were made to correspond with congressional district lines.

The breakdown facilitates efficiency and will provide a more diversified program making concentration possible. The various directors shall establish rapid communications systems and shall work in close contact with each other.

Each director shall also have a responsibility for finding and maintaining close relationship with the leaders in his district so that it will be possible to, at some points, ask the leaders to run for public office. He shall travel from one project to another, within his district, coordinating and helping in any way possible, the people working with him. He shall be responsible for ascertaining all of the available information pertaining to his district and meet with other directors frequently to map strategy and programs for the entire state.

STAFF OF MISSISSIPPI SNCC OPERATION

DISTRICT I

Frank Smith, Director Holly Springs (Marshall County)  
 a. Donald White - Columbus (Lowndes County)  
 b. Willie Blue - Batesville (Panola County)  
 c. Claude Weaver - Tupelo (Lee County)

DISTRICT II

Sam Block, Director Greenwood (Leflore County)  
 a. Charles Ray McLaurin - Indianola (Sunflower County)  
 b. Willie Shaw - Belzoni (Humphrey's County)  
 c. Mathew Hughes - Belzoni (Humphrey's County)  
 d. Willie Smith - Charleston (Tallahatchie County)  
 e. James Jones - Clarksdale (Cohoma County)  
 f. Dickey Flowers - (Tunica County)  
 g. Fannie L. Hamer - Ruleville (Sunflower County)  
 h. Amzie Moore - Cleveland (Bolivar County)

DISTRICT III

Mc Arthur Cotton, Director (Pike County)  
 a. Jessie Harris - (Hinds County)  
 b. Dick Frey - Natchez  
 c. Dave Greene - Vicksburg (Warren County)

DISTRICT IV

George Greene, Director Meridian  
 a. William Mc Gee - Mendenhall

DISTRICT V

Lawrence Guyot, Director  
 a. Carl Arnold  
 b. John O'Neal  
 c. Jerry Bray  
 d. Jimmy Lee Prewitt

GENERAL PROGRAM

The following general program shall be implemented, with slight modification to suit the particular area, in all five congressional districts in Mississippi:

I. Mass meetings shall be used frequently as the means of talking with large numbers of people at the same time. Meetings will be announced by word of mouth, leaflets, etc. Ministers will be organized to secure churches in which to hold mass meetings. Students will help to canvass and publicize mass meetings in other ways,

II. Block captains will be organized in cities to help advance the program of voter registration. They will keep records of all those of voting age in their block and keep track of those who are registered. These records will be handed over to the Field Secretary for that area. The block captains will urge people on their block to register and to participate in other activities in the ONE MAN, ONE VOTE campaign.

III. Organizing clubs, fraternities, churches, bars, etc. to work on the ONE MAN, ONE VOTE campaign will be done by the Field Secretaries. The initial contact will be between the Field Secretary and the head of the organization. The Field Secretary will get the leaders to take a personal interest in getting their members registered. Students will speak before the groups in an effort to get them working on the Campaign.

IV. Canvassing will be done by Field Secretaries, students, and adults. It is viewed as an educational process and as a means of publicizing meetings.

V. The Staff in each district shall be mobile and able to move into any area in the district in a matter of hours. Each staff member (and volunteer workers and block captains, too) shall have a person in the district where they work able to take over for them in case they have to leave. All members of Staff shall be familiar with all other parts of the district. There shall be a person in each area, responsible for all Staff to the National office.

VI. The Mock Election will be a central focus in the ONE MAN, ONE VOTE CAMPAIGN. The purpose of this project is:

- (1) Give people experience at the art of voting.
- (2) Make the world understand that we really want to vote, and if given a chance, we will vote.
- (3) Give the field workers a chance to observe the final process of organization in action.
- (4) Give an added feeling of pride to the persons exercising the right to vote, in a mock election.

ESTIMATED PROPOSED BUDGET FOR MISSISSIPPI  
ONE MAN, ONE VOTE CAMPAIGN

Monthly Expenses

Item	D I S T R I C T				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Transportation	\$100.00	\$ 20.00	\$ 60.00	\$ 20.00	\$100.00
Salary	\$ 40.00	-----	\$ 40.00	-----	\$ 40.00
Telephone Calls	\$ 20.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 20.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 20.00
Supplies	\$ 40.00	\$ 20.00	\$ 40.00	\$ 20.00	\$ 40.00
Room & Board	\$ 40.00	\$ 55.00	\$ 80.00	\$ 55.00	\$ 40.00
TOTAL PER PERSON	\$240.00	\$120.00	\$240.00	\$120.00	\$240.00
Number of projects in a district	4	8	4	7	4
TOTAL per district	\$960.00	\$960.00	\$960.00	\$840.00	\$960.00
<b>TOTAL MONTHLY \$4680.00</b>					

Desperately needed: Cars

The lack of cars at present means that a worker is going to be about half as efficient, because of the lack of transportation. If we had cars we could do twice as much work. We could get twice as many people registered to vote. The awesome problem of transportation which plagues virtually all SNCC workers, especially in Mississippi must be solved. We cannot walk all over these big rural counties.

Also needed: More good people for staff.

District I (Frank Smith, Director) needs three (3) people.  
District III (McArthur Cotton, Director) needs five (5) people.  
District IV (George Greene, Director) needs five (5) people.  
District V (Lawrence Guyot, Director) needs five (5) people.

If there are good young people, please direct them to Mississippi, the best project around. Apply directly to the Atlanta SNCC Office (8½ Raymond St., N.W., Atlanta 14, Georgia) for job applications.



TO: SNCC  
FROM CHARLES COBB  
RE: ECONOMIC NEEDS AND AIDS IN RURAL AREAS

KEY TO SUCESS of the vote drive in Mississippi is going to be our ability to handle certain pressing economic needs among Negroes in the state. Steps in this direction were made in at least two instances last year, with results that have been positive aids in the registration efforts as well as first steps toward the elimination of the widespread economic poverty among the Negroes in the state: (1) the sending of Negro farmers and sharecroppers to the National Sharecroppers Conference held at Brinks, North Carolina in November of 1962; (2) the food and clothing distribution program was a major factor in the significant breakthrough in the Leflore County (Greenwood) vote drive. With the increasing mechanization of cotton fields which is resulting in the deprivation of income for thousands of Mississippi Negroes, the feudal system which Negroes still living on plantations are forced to live under, economic reprisals against Negroes participating in the vote drive across the state, the consolidation of farms in the state forcing out the small farmer, and discriminating against Negroes seeking aid under certain federal programs, and the general lack of knowledge among Negroes of what aid they can get to help solve their economic problems. I believe that it is time for SNCC to begin to direct a part of it's energy toward the solution of these problems. Certain steps can be taken at once:

- A. Getting familiar with, and becoming ground in existing, and available government agricultural programs.
- B. Simplifying these programs in order that they might be effectively and comprehensively presented to Mississippi Negroes.
- C. Organizing, educating, and mobilizing local groups to utilize federal and state aid programs.
  - 1. State wide conference of farmers and sharecroppers
  - 2. Getting delegates from Mississippi to attend the NSF conference in South Carolina on September 22nd.
- D. Documenting discrimination in federal programs (which are administered locally).
- E. Documenting discrimination in state welfare programs (i.e. Leflore County, Sunflower County and Amite County).
- F. Keeping the Department of Agriculture informed of these discriminations, and seeing to it that pressure for the removal of discrimination is maintained.
- G. Documenting of economic reprisals that have occurred as a result of civil rights activities.

At least one staff person should begin work on this, and more should be added as the year wears on the job gets bigger.