

FREEDOM VOTE PLATFORM

Mississippi is a state in which the minds of the people have been enslaved by hysteria and ignorance, in which their bodies have been enslaved by an archaic and unfair economic system, in which their activities have been enslaved by a dictatorial political and law enforcement system. The candidacy of Aaron Henry for Governor of Mississippi is therefore based on the belief that our most important goal is to bring freedom to our state. We will accomplish this first by raising the issues which are at the heart of the problems of the state but which are never raised by conventional Mississippi politicians. These politicians have been able to maintain their power by burying the state's problems under a blanket of race hatred. As a result, the people have not this century had an opportunity to make their voices heard on the genuine issues. The present state in which Mississippi finds itself is testimony to the failure of the political system.

If freedom is to come to Mississippi, problems in four major areas must be solved. These areas are justice, voting, economics, and education.

I. Justice

Security in the belief that the laws will be fairly enforced and security of personal safety are necessary for freedom of mind and action. Negro citizens of Mississippi do not enjoy such freedom; they must live with a constant fear of private and police violence, and with the knowledge that the violence will go unpunished.

The roots of this problem go deep. Its primary cause is the segregation system, for it is this that condemns Negroes to second class status. Since they are treated by the law itself as second class, then it is natural that those responsible for the law's enforcement will treat them the same way. Negroes will not be treated equally until they are recognized by the law as being equal.

Official encouragement of the unequal operation of law helps to perpetuate it. By supplying the Citizens' Council with funds and by cooperating with its programs, the State Sovereignty Commission assures maintenance of the status quo. Extreme racists, seeing their views officially espoused, feel justified in continuing their violent operations. Furthermore, since the Citizens' Council has been able to control elections, and since judges are elected, Negroes are unable to get fair treatment in the courts. This evil runs through our entire state government, and is made possible largely through the existence of a "spoils system" which makes state positions dependent on politics rather than ability.

The police departments bear a heavy share of the guilt. They refuse to recognize police brutality as a problem, regarding it instead as another weapon to be used in keeping the Negro "in his place." By failing to hire Negro policemen, they intensify the racist aspects of Mississippi law enforcement.

Jail officials are likewise responsible. Our laws allow them to

use physical punishment. They have used it all too often, especially where Negroes are concerned. Many of our jails have become the personal kingdoms of petty and perverted tyrants.

The general operation of justice in our state is made difficult by the existence of an absurd legal hypocrisy. This is the "black market tax" -- the tax on liquor. Liquor is not legally saleable in Mississippi, but its sale is nevertheless taxed by the state and by local sheriffs. This hypocrisy and the lack of respect for law that it creates adds to the injustice of the system. It also gives local police another weapon they may use at whim: Negroes who register to vote or urge others to do so may find themselves arrested for selling or buying liquor when they might normally have not been bothered.

To counteract Mississippi's long tradition of injustice, it is proposed:

- 1) That segregation in all state facilities be abolished and that laws requiring integration in housing and places of public accommodation be passed.
- 2) That no more state funds be given to the Citizens' Council.
- 3) That the State Sovereignty Commission be abolished and that there be created in its place a State Commission on Equality. The new commission would have power to enforce laws requiring public integration and fair employment. It would act to mediate in cases of conflict resulting from racial hostility. It would also be responsible for investigating and reporting on cases of police brutality.
- 4) That a reasonable proportion of Negroes be appointed to state and local police forces, especially to high positions. That care be taken to appoint men of integrity, intelligence and responsibility of both races.
- 5) That physical punishment be outlawed in state prisons and that a systematic investigation of jails be undertaken to discover those of our jail officials who are unfit to hold office.
- 6) That black market taxes be abolished, and that the legality of the sale of liquor be made dependent on a state-wide referendum.
- 7) That the "spoils system" be abolished and that a civil service system be established which would insure the hiring of men of ability--regardless of race--and which would insulate them from political pressure.

II. Voting

It is essential to freedom that every man has the right to take part in his own government by voting. The fact that this right is denied to a large proportion of Mississippians is responsible for the tyrannical nature of our government. The right to vote has been denied in our state as a result of unjust qualifications for registration, intimidation of Negroes desiring to vote, and discrimination

It is because many Mississippians cannot vote that we have developed the "one issue" political system, the system that insures that only one viewpoint is heard. Restoration of the right to vote, coupled with freedom from physical danger, would lead to the emergence of a two issue system and a guarantee that elections would offer the people genuine choices.

To establish political democracy in Mississippi, it is proposed:

- 1) That a one-man, one-vote system be established, a system which would guarantee the right to vote to all adults.
- 2) That intimidation of voters be made a crime and that the State Fairness Commission be given the power to investigate all instances of intimidation.
- 3) That discrimination by registrars be made grounds for dismissal as well as being made criminal.

III. Economics

No one can be truly free unless relieved from the burden of economic insecurity. Huge numbers of Negro Mississippians are enslaved by an inability to gain meaningful, rewarding jobs.

In the cities they are the victims of unemployment, long hours, low wages, and discrimination. Because labor unions are persecuted, they are unable to help themselves, but are at the mercy of white employers.

In rural areas they are even now uncertain that they will have sufficient food and clothing to survive the winter. The present system of cotton farming yields large profits for the owners of the huge plantations, but pitifully little for those who do the seasonal labor involved. Although the raising of food crops could improve the Delta Negroes' lot, this would not advantage plantation owners, and hence it is not done.

Ironically, federal programs have worked to support the owners. They have not aided poor Negroes, principally because of discrimination in their administration. This has resulted in a federally supported system of exploitation.

The situation is continually getting worse. Increasing use of machinery has displaced numbers of former sharecroppers' jobs. Part of these problems result from the unfair system of cotton farming.

To bring economic freedom to Mississippi it is proposed:

- 1) That the state establish a small farm loan program which would provide long term loans on little interest for farmers with less than 300 acres.
- 2) That a progressive land tax be established which would fall only on tracts of over 500 acres and the rate of which would increase as the tract size increased.
- 3) That the state establish plans by which small farmers could

cooperate in farming if they so desired. These plans would include seed purchasing, marketing, and use of machinery.

- 4) That the state undertake a public works program that would create new jobs while providing sewage services, water works, and serviceable street systems.
- 5) That there be established a minimum wage of \$1.25 per hour and a legal working week of forty hours.
- 6) That a fair employment law be established to guarantee non-discriminatory hiring and that the State Fairness Commission be given the power to enforce this law.
- 7) That stable new industries be attracted on the basis of advantages offered by the state's real resources rather than by offers of free land, tax free operation and cheap labor.
- 8) That laws be established guaranteeing labor unions the right to organize freely.

IV. Education

Education is vital to freedom in two ways. First, it frees man from the dungeon of irrational fears that are created by ignorance and prejudice. Second, in a technological society such as ours, man cannot be free to seek meaningful employment unless he is properly educated.

The Mississippi educational system has failed to achieve either of these goals. The primary cause of the failure is school segregation. By cutting off communication between the races, segregation prevents students from discovering the universal humanity of man. Furthermore, segregation fosters the idea that the white race is superior to the black, and thus the state teaches falsehood instead of truth. Finally, it is segregation that allows the state to give Negroes an inferior education and thus make it impossible for them to compete successfully for jobs. The schools are also handicapped by frequent political interference with the process of learning. Teachers are fired for teaching, or even daring to discuss, controversial topics. Worse, Negro teachers who participate in civil rights, and in some counties register to vote, are in danger of dismissal. These restrictions eliminate any change for broad, lively education. And of course, they insure the perpetuation of present ways of thinking.

To improve education in Mississippi it is proposed:

- 1) That all schools be completely integrated as soon as possible.
- 2) That the state spend more money on education in all areas. There should especially be development of opportunities for vocational training both in high school and in state colleges and junior colleges. Such training should be based on the predicted present and future needs of industry.
- 3) That academic freedom be established by guaranteeing that teachers will not be dismissed because of political activity or because of their presentation of controversial ideas.