

THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY...

Three basic considerations underlie the development of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and its plans to challenge the seating of the delegation of the Mississippi Democratic Party at the 1964 National Democratic Convention. They are:

1. The long history of systematic and studied exclusion of Negro citizens from equal participation in the political processes of the state grows more flagrant and intensified daily.

2. The Mississippi Democratic Party has conclusively demonstrated its lack of loyalty to the National Democratic Party, in the past, and currently indicates no intention of supporting the platform of the 1964 National Democratic Convention.

3. The intransigent and fanatical determination of the State's political power-structure to maintain status-quo, clearly demonstrates that the "Mississippi closed society", as Professor James W Silver of the University of Mississippi asserts, is without leadership or moral resources to reform itself, and hence can only be brought into the mainstream of the twentieth century by forces outside of itself.

A. PARTY DISCRIMINATION:

The Mississippi Democratic Party controls the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the government of the State. All 49 senators, and all but one of 122 representatives are Democrats. Repeatedly, the State legislature has passed laws and established regulations designed to discriminate against prospective Negro voters. The 1963 gubernatorial campaign was largely directed towards restricting the Negro vote. The state convention is being held in the Jackson Municipal Auditorium and the Heidelberg Hotel, both of which are segregated. In its devotion to racism and suppression and oppression of minority expression, the Mississippi Democratic Party prevents Negro Democrats and white persons who disagree with the party's racist stance to participate in party program and decisions.

B. PARTY DISLOYALTY:

Mississippi citizens who desire to do so cannot support the National Democratic goals by joining the Mississippi Democratic Party. The Mississippi Democratic Party has declared in public speeches and printed matter that it is NOT a part of the National Democratic Party. The campaign literature for the election of Gov. Paul B. Johnson, in 1963 is a case in point, as the following excerpts show: "Our Mississippi Democratic Party is entirely independent and free of the influence of domination of any national party"....."The Mississippi Democratic Party which long ago separated itself from the National Democratic Party, and which has fought consistently everything both national parties stand for,..."

In 1960 the Mississippi Democratic Party failed to honor its pledge to support the nominees of the National Democratic Convention. Immediately after the convention the Mississippi party convened a convention and voted to support unpledged electors in an effort to defeat the nominees of the Democratic National Convention.

C. THE CLOSED SOCIETY:

"It can be argued that in the history of the United States democracy has produced great leaders in great crises. Sad as it may be, the opposite has been true in Mississippi. As yet there is little evidence that the society of the closed mind will ever possess the moral resources to reform itself, or the capacity for self-examination, or even the tolerance of self-examination," from "Mississippi: the Closed Society".

by James W. Silver

Civil rights groups working in Mississippi are convinced that political and social justice can not be won in Mississippi without massive interest and support of the country as a whole, backed by the authority of the Federal government. As the political leadership of Mississippi feel threatened by the winds of change, they devise new and more extensive legal weapons and police powers. Police preparations are now being made to harass, intimidate and threaten the educational and registration program scheduled to be conducted in Mississippi this summer. Five new bills, prohibiting picketing, banning the distribution of boycott literature, restricting the movement of groups, establishing curfews, authorizing municipalities to pool police manpower and equipment, and increasing penalties that may be assessed by city courts - have been hurriedly signed into law. Other similar bills are still pending.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY

To give Negro citizens of Mississippi an experience in political democracy and to establish a channel through which all citizens, Negro and white, can actively support the principles and programs of the National Democratic Party, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was conceived. The Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), a confederation of all the national and local civil rights and citizenship education groups in Mississippi, is assisting local citizens to develop the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. This party is open to all citizens regardless of race. It was officially established at a meeting in Jackson, Mississippi on April 26th; and the approximately 200 delegates present elected a temporary state executive committee, which will be responsible for setting precinct and other state meetings. These meetings will parallel those of the Mississippi Democratic Party, and every effort will be made to comply with all state laws which apply to the formation of political parties. Registered voters in the Freedom Democratic Party will attempt to attend precinct and county meetings of the Mississippi Democratic Party.

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party is presently engaged in three major efforts; (1) Freedom Registration; (2) Freedom Candidates; and (3) Convention Challenge.

I. FREEDOM REGISTRATION:

Official registration figures show that only some 20,000 Negroes are registered in Mississippi as compared to 500,000 whites. This represents less than 7% of the 435,000 Negroes 21 years of age in the state. The Freedom

Registration is designed to show that thousands of Negroes want to become registered voters. By setting up registrars and deputy registrars in each of the 82 counties of the state, 300,000 persons may be registered in the Freedom Registration. Last November some 83,000 Negroes were registered in a mock gubernatorial race. In the present drive, 75,000 are reported registered, and this will be greatly stepped up when the summer program officially begins at the end of June. This registration will use simplified registration forms based on voting applications used in several Northern States. Any person who registers in the Freedom Registration will be eligible to vote in the Freedom Democratic Party Convention and participate in party work.

2. FREEDOM CANDIDATES:

The four (4) candidates who qualified to run in the June 2 primary in Mississippi were nominees of the Freedom Democratic Party and in addition to their bid in the regular Democratic primary, they will also run in a mock election under the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in November. This will help to establish the fact that thousands of Negroes are deprived of citizenship participation because of the racist character of Mississippi's voter registration procedures.

The four candidates are, Mrs. Victoria Gray, opposing Sen. John Stennis; Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, opposing Rep. Jamie L. Whitten; the Rev. John Cameron, opposing Rep. William M. Colmer, and Mr. James Houston, opposing Rep. John Bell Williams.

The Platforms of the candidates of the Freedom Democratic Party articulate the needs of all the people of Mississippi, such as anti-poverty programs, medicare, aid to education, rural development, urban renewal, and the guarantee of constitutional rights to all. This is in sharp contrast to the lack of real issues in the campaigns of the candidates who won in the primary. Senator Stennis did not even bother to campaign in the state.

3. THE CHALLENGE TO THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION:

Delegates from the Freedom Democratic Party will challenge the seating of the "old-line" Mississippi delegation at the Democratic National Convention this August in Atlantic City, N.J. These delegates will have been chosen through precinct meetings, county conventions, caucuses in congressional districts, and at a state wide convention of the Freedom Democratic Party. The State Executive Committee will be ratified and the national Committeeman and Committeewoman will be chosen at this state wide convention.

All steps necessary to preparing and formally presenting the challenge of the Freedom Democratic Party are being taken. BUT WE NEED YOUR COOPERATION AND HELP!

*****We need convention delegates to champion the cause of representative government in Mississippi.

*****We need 'people' who will speak out in the credentials committee and on the convention floor.

*****We need hundreds of Democrats—individuals and organizations—to instruct their delegates, petition their representatives, party leaders and the President to face up to the fact that only a renegade democratic party exists in Mississippi which enjoys the benefits of national affiliation but spurns all responsibilities and can only continue to bring disgrace to the National Democratic Party.

Excerpts from:

PLATFORM AND PRINCIPLES of the MISSISSIPPI STATE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Adopted in Convention in the city of Jackson, June 30, 1960:

...The Democratic Party of Mississippi stands today where it has always stood with feet firmly planted on the solid foundation of the Constitution of the United States, pure Americanism and the traditional Southern American Way of Life.

...We are opposed to strong centralized government, national or state.

We believe in States' Rights and local self-government, and are unalterably opposed to any encroachment upon the rights of the states by the federal government, or any department or agency thereof, and upon county and municipal government by the state, or any department or agency thereof.

We believe in the three separate and distinct branches of government... and we expressly condemn the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Brown school case rendered May 17, 1954, and subsequent decisions of that court, and inferior federal courts, striking down state constitutions and laws providing for the conduct and operation of public schools and public education within the states, as gross abuse of its judicial authority, flagrant usurpation of legislative function and an unwarranted invasion of rights of the sovereign states...

We are opposed to any legislation, federal or state, setting up what is known as a Fair Employment Practice Commission...

We believe that every person shall have the right to work and no person shall be denied that right because he or she is not a member of a union or other labor organization...

We are opposed to the enactment by the Congress of the United States of the so-called anti-poll tax measure as being in violation of the rights of the states to fix the qualifications of electors and in violation of the provisions of the U.S. Constitution. We favor the poll tax and are opposed to any attempt to abolish it either by federal legislation.

We believe in the time-honored and cherished traditions of the South and oppose any legislation, movement or policy which would do violence to or destroy them...

We oppose the ratification by the United States of the Genocide Convention and of the United Nations, the proposed Human Rights Convention and the Civil Rights Convention...

We believe in the segregation of the races and are unalterably opposed to the repeal or modification of the segregation laws of this State, and we condemn integration and the practice of non-segregation. We unalterably oppose any and all efforts to repeal the miscegenation laws.

We believe in the doctrine of interposition as defined in the appropriate resolution adopted by the (Mississippi Legislature, 1956)

We believe in the separation of the races in the universities and colleges, in the public schools, in public transportation, in public parks, in public playgrounds, and in all spheres of activity where experience has shown that it is for the best interest of both races that such separation be observed...

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF MISSISSIPPI ...that we, acknowledging with humility the divine power of Almighty God, and standing fearless in our belief in constitutional government, the rights of the states, segregation of the races and preservation of your traditional Southern American Way of life, do hereby affirm and declare:

(1) that we reject and oppose the platforms of both national parties and their candidates...

(2) that we wholeheartedly approve the courageous and forceful minority report as to that portion of the National Democratic Platform entitled "Civil Rights" presented on behalf of the sovereign states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.

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Excerpts from:

CAMPAIGN LITERATURE, PAUL B. JOHNSON FOR GOVERNOR CAMPAIGN, 1963

Mississippi Republicans Endanger Mississippi With Two Party System

The "overnight" Republicans in Mississippi are playing with political dynamite by advocating a two party system in our state.

These inexperienced, so-called Republicans proudly boast that "they are not bound by any deep-seated taboos and prejudices handed down blindly from past generations" but they never discuss the real dangers of a two party political system in a state like Mississippi with a "black-voting" minority group that represents over 45 per cent of our population.

These self-styled "young men and young women and older people with young ideas" either do not know or they deliberately ignore the facts of life as they exist in Mississippi today.

A DIVISION OF CONSERVATIVE MISSISSIPPIANS INTO TWO POLITICAL CAMPS, as now being attempted by these self-styled Republicans, WOULD GIVE THE BALANCE OF POWER IN MISSISSIPPI TO OUR MINORITY GROUP. This would be the end of our way of life in Mississippi and the peace, tranquillity, law and order we now enjoy in all of our communities would soon come to an awesome end.

MISSISSIPPI HAS ALL THE BENEFITS WITHOUT THE VERY REAL DANGERS

...As Mississippi Democrats we are enjoying all of the so-called "benefits" of this two party system, through our State Democratic primary elections, without exposing the people of Mississippi to the disastrous events and conditions that would surely follow the division of conservative Mississippians into two political camps thus giving the balance of power into the hands of the minority.

Our Mississippi Democratic Party is entirely independent and is free of the influence or domination of any national political party, and it offers an adequate framework for candidates of widely varying views to offer their services to people. Mississippi has no need for a two party system that would divide our people and stretch our political campaigning over many additional months with resulting expense, confusion and disunity.

REPUBLICAN PARTY ALWAYS REJECTS THEIR CONSERVATIVE LEADERS

...The truth is that neither national party is "conservative." Both the National Republican Party and the National Democratic Party are the dedicated enemies of the people of Mississippi. The national leaders of both -- consistently, across the years -- have pursued courses of action which have moved our beloved country ever leftward -- which have threatened our citizens with ever more centralized power at Washington.