

7/19/64

EMERGENCY MEMORANDUM

TO: All Field Staff and Voter Registration Volunteers  
FROM: Bob Moses and the FDP Coordinators (Dona, Casey, Dick Jewett)  
RE: High degree of probability that we will not be prepared for the National Democratic Convention.

The various political programs which comprise the Freedom Democratic Party's Convention Challenge are in very bad shape all around the state. A further problem that the FDP coordinators have found is that in general, the staff around the state are either unconvinced of the importance of the convention challenge to COFO's work, or are not aware of the massive job which remains to be done in order to be prepared for the challenge. If we are to have any degree of success, everyone who is not working in Freedom Schools or community centers must devote all their time to organizing for the convention challenge. Some staff members have very honestly admitted that they were unaware of the urgency of the situation and therefore didn't realize that the Challenge should be given priority until mid-August. It is the feeling of the FDP coordinators that in part the misunderstanding is the fault of the Project and Program Directors, who did not properly stress the importance of the programs. At any rate, all of us must now pull together behind the program in order to make it at least a partial success.

What follows is a rather frank analysis of where we stand, where we hope to go, and what we must do in order to get there.

I. FREEDOM REGISTRATION:

A. Present Status  
(see next page)

7/19/64

PROJECT	COMPLETED STILL IN PROJECT	SENT TO JACKSON <u>THIS WK.</u>	SENT TO JACKSON <u>LAST WK.</u>	COMPLETED <u>LAST WEEK</u>	COMPLETED <u>THIS WEEK</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
<u>Columbus</u>	20	424		200	244	424
<u>Greenwood</u>	1,101	570		1,100	571	1,671
<u>Batesville</u>	500	175		500	175	675
<u>Shaw</u> <u>Mound Bayou</u>	375	219	120	500	474	974
<u>Clarksdale</u>	400	600	346	446	900	1,246
<u>Greenville</u>	250	675	671	850	746	1,417
<u>Holly Springs</u>	2,000	none		1,050	950	2,000
<u>Ruleville</u>	292	none		300	8	292
<u>Tchula</u>	625	none		200	425	625
<u>Jackson</u>	680	none	465	755	390	1,145
<u>McComb</u>	25	134	121	121	159	280
<u>Vicksburg</u>	1,151	341		445	1,251	1,492
<u>Canton</u>	2,000	none		?	2,000	2,000
<u>Carthage</u>	?	none		150	?	150
<u>Meridian</u>	750	775		?	750	1,525
<u>Laurel</u>	150	none		20	130	150
<u>Hattiesburg</u>	3,800	66		3,000	800	3,800
<u>Gulfport</u>	300	867		?	1,167	1,167
<u>Moss Point</u> <u>Pascagoula</u>	1,400	none		?	1,400	1,400
TOTAL	<u>16,384</u>	<u>4,276</u>	<u>1,726</u>	<u>9,726</u>	<u>12,464</u>	<u>21,431</u>

B. Rate at which forms would have to begin to come in in order to reach a statewide total of 200,000 forms in four weeks.

Breakdown by project according to size and how well the area appears to have been organized:

<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>WEEKLY</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Columbus.....	1,000.....	4,000
Greenwood.....	3,500.....	14,000
Batesville.....	2,000.....	8,000
Shaw and Mound Bayou.....	1,000.....	4,000
Clarksdale.....	3,500.....	14,000
Greenville.....	3,500.....	14,000
Holly Springs.....	2,000.....	8,000
Ruleville.....	2,000.....	8,000
Tchula.....	1,000.....	4,000
Jackson.....	4,000.....	16,000
McComb.....	1,000.....	4,000
Vicksburg.....	3,500.....	14,000
Canton.....	3,500.....	14,000
Carthage.....	1,000.....	4,000
Meridian.....	3,500.....	14,000
Laurel.....	1,000.....	4,000
Hattiesburg.....	2,000.....	8,000*
Gulfport.....	2,000.....	8,000
Moss Point.....	2,000.....	8,000
Pascagoula.....	2,000.....	8,000
Forms already completed.....		20,000
<u>Total.....</u>	<u>40,000.....</u>	<u>200,000</u>

\*( Hattiesburg is extremely well organized and out of 7,450 eligible Negroes they have registered close to 4,000. So that in order to reach their 8,000 quota they will have to work the entire county very well.)

C. Total we would reach were we to continue at the rate we've been going: (see 7/12 and 7/19 progress reports)

Weekly.....	10,000 (for the remaining four weeks)
Already in.....	20,000
<u>Total.....</u>	<u>60,000</u>

D. Some suggestions for emergency organizing. ( For complete description of how to organize for Freedom Registration refer to the five page memo sent out about 2 weeks ago by Dona Moses)

1) Freedom Registration Days

These will be days in which staff from other projects will be brought into one particular project for the purpose of flooding the city with Freedom Registration canvassers. The project will have to be well organized before hand so that assignments can be handed out to the workers as they arrive. Some arrangements should be made for feeding the workers. Spot announcements on the radio should be made for a couple of days before hand, naming one central location where people can come in order to Freedom Register, as well as preparing them for the canvassers which will be knocking on their doors. Dona Moses will begin calling around the state in an attempt to schedule Freedom Registration Days.

2) Freedom Registration Centers

Locations should be picked as soon as possible ~~which~~ people are likely frequent in large numbers.

Such places as; Stores, Barbershops, Garages, Bars, Restaurants, Beauty Parlors, Pool Halls, and Churches. People who are likely to be at these locations for most of the day should be made deputy registrars. (Store owners, beauticians, barbers, etc.)

3) Freedom Registration Folk-Sings

There will be some big-name folk singers coming into the state who will be better prepared to conduct "folk-sings". Admission to these "sings" could be a certain number of Freedom Registration forms - completed, or people could simply be asked to fill out forms before they go in, if they are old enough.

4) Spot Announcements about Freedom Registration

Spot announcements are being prepared by Martin Luther King about Freedom Registration for use around the state. Individual projects could also prepare their own tapes for local broadcasts. These announcements are essential if we are to reach the numbers of people that we need and interest them so that they will be coming to us and asking to be Freedom Registered.

## II. FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY CONVENTIONS: STATUS OF ORGANIZING

### A. Where we are now:

#### First District:

1. Lowndes (Columbus)  
Do plan to have meetings but we don't have dates or places.  
Status: ?
2. Lee (Tupelo--out of Columbus)  
No definite information.  
Status: ?
3. Clay (West Point)  
People have just moved in there from Columbus. Community is opening up.  
Should be able to have a county meeting.  
Status: slow getting started but fair prospects.
4. Monroe (Aberdeen)  
People just moved in from Columbus. Should be able to have small county meeting.  
No definite information.  
Status: ?
5. Attibbeha (Starkville, out of Columbus)  
No information.  
Status: ?

Rev. Merrill Lindsay will help with this district. Even where no large meeting is possible, our people should have a small meeting and we should draw them to the state convention as delegates.

#### Second District:

1. Leflore (Greenwood, Itta Bena, possibly other areas)  
Dates: precinct meetings July 21, County meeting July 23  
Places secured.  
Status: Good
2. Panola (Batesville)  
Precinct and county conventions July 27.  
Have legal notice and ad in local paper.  
Place secured.  
Status: Good
3. Bolivar (Cleveland, Shaw, Mound Boyou)  
Precinct meetings planned for Shaw. So far as we know nothing planned for Cleveland. No information on Mound Boyou. No dates of places in any town.  
Status: poor
4. Coahoma (Clarksdale)  
Precinct meetings July 21. County meeting July 28. Notice published.  
Publicity in paper. Places secured.  
Status: Good.



Third District:

1. Warren (Vicksburg)  
Precinct meetings July 28; county convention July 31. Notice published.  
Ad and spot announcements.  
Status: Good
2. Hinds (Jackson)  
Precinct meetings July 24; county meeting July 26. Notice published.  
Status: Good.
3. Pike (McComb)  
Precinct meetings July 27. County convention July 31.  
Status: Good.
4. Amite (out of McComb as of now)  
Nothing scheduled, but should be possible to have small meeting in home  
and/or to draw people to State Convention.
5. Adams (Natchez)  
People just now going in. May be possible to have a small meeting. People  
will probably be drawn to state convention.

Fourth District:

1. Madison (Canton)  
Precinct meetings July 22-24. County meeting July 25. Places secured.  
Publicity good.  
Status: Good.
  2. Leake (Carthage)  
Precinct meetings ?. County meeting July 26. Place?  
Status: ?
  3. Lauderdale (Meridian)  
Precinct meetings July 24. County meeting July 30. Notice in. Places ok.  
Status: Good.
  4. Kemper
  5. Clarke
  6. Neshoba
  7. Newton
  8. Jasper
- All are being worked out of Meridian. We have contacts  
but no meetings are set up yet. There should be at least  
some people coming to the Fourth District Caucus and the  
state convention. Status: ? to poor
9. Rankin (out of Canton)  
There should at least be a county meeting. No definite date or place yet.  
Status: Poor
  10. Scott
  11. Smith
  12. Simpson
- People just going into these counties. May be able  
to pull delegates out.  
Status: slow to poor

Fifth District

1. Jones (Laurel)  
Precinct and county conventions July 30. Place secured. Hampered by lack of workers for organizing.  
Status: Good
2. Forrest (Hattiesburg)  
Precinct meetings July 25; County meeting July 26. Places ok. Legal notice ok.  
Status: Good.
3. Harrison (Gulfport, Biloxi)  
Precinct meetings--Gulfport July 27; Biloxi July 28.  
County meeting July 29 (?).  
Places(?) secured.  
Status: Pretty good.
4. Jackson (Pascagoula, Moss Point)=  
Precinct meetings--Moss Point July 26; Pascagoula August 1. County convention August 1.  
Status: Good

B. Evaluation:

This means we have 16 counties that are sure things and 26 that are highly dubious.

C. Suggestions for organizing the FDP at this stage:

1. Developing what seem to be weak areas: (counties around Columbus, some of the Fourth District counties, Northern Second District---)  
In these areas meetings should be held if at all possible. This doesn't mean a big meeting necessarily, but a small one on someone's home maybe. These meetings should select delegates to District and State Conventions, even if it means that all the people at the meeting come as delegates. The important thing may be to draw people into a statewide organization that can support them in some way as we continue to organize those areas. Don't give up because you can't pull a big meeting off. Round up a few people for a meeting or if necessary just bring them to the District or State Convention.

Perhaps someone from Clarksdale can get up to Quitman and Tunica. Jones seems to have contacts there. If necessary we'll rent a car for this purpose.

Cobb can consult with Greenwood about Tallahatchie.

Anyone with ideas or contacts in those areas that seem weak let Jackson or Greenwood know.

Please anyone from any of these areas let us know what you need to pull off meetings and we will try to get you some help. None of the counties on this memo should go by default.

## 2. Getting lots of people out to scheduled meetings:

- a. Sound truck--we have a sound truck and an operator available, so let us know if you need it.
- b. Radio spots--anyone who has not been contacted about radio announcements should call Emmie Shrader in Jackson.
- c. Ads in paper--we can help pay if you want to get a newspaper ad.
- d. Announcements at churches, other meetings--the week before you meetings you should cover every meeting in town with a speaker
- e. Canvassing--which you all know about.....
- f. TV show--  
 King, Henry, E. King, Mrs. Gray will be on a tv show out of Jackson--WJTV--on Friday from 8:30-9:00 pm.  
 This station will reach Vicksburg, McComb, Hattiesburg, Laurel, Meridian, Carthage, Canton, Holmes, Greenwood, Greenville, Itta Bena--and maybe Ruleville and Columbus.  
 SO--these projects should immediately begin posters, leaflets, spot announcements, mass meeting announcements, loud speaker cars, etc. etc. etc. etc. about the tv show.  
 They will be explaining the FDP and FR and it is a chance to reach a really large base with this information. It should start people coming to you wanting information.

## 3. Keeping records:

An earlier mailing gave you information on the records that had to be kept at meetings and what had to be done. Don't forget to do these things---and keep records. Be sure you have a secretary and that she keeps minutes and that minutes are sent to Dave Wolfe in Jackson right after the meeting.

## 4. Individual contacts:

Bring from any county not in this memo any contacts you have to the state convention.

III: The need for reevaluation of Freedom Days and traditional Voter Registration techniques in view of the present circumstances

The staff is supposedly agreed as to the value of organizing the Freedom Democratic Party and challenging the delegation of the Mississippi Democratic Party to the Democratic National Convention, as opposed to expending all of our manpower to the end that inconsequential numbers of Negroes become officially registered. In view of this fact it is our feeling that-

1) Freedom Days which require the energies of the staff to organize and execute, and in which they might be arrested, should not be held. This is because they are not directly geared to getting people Freedom Registered and therefore the arrest of key staff in this activity cannot even be used as an argument for the seating of our delegation. Mass arrests during Freedom Registration Days are good grounds for the challenge. They present a reason as to why we were not able to get 425,000 people on the Freedom Registration books.

2) Time should not be spent taking people down to the courthouse - unless they ask to be taken down. After August 20th or so we will have ample opportunity to try to convince people to register - if we feel that the psychological value of getting a few people "to try" is worthwhile. We cannot do everything at one time and the Challenge, which we have sommitted ourselves to, is by itself an overwhelming task for our limited staff.

3) We do have time to partially rectify the Freedom Registration situation, but the Precinct organization must be done immediately - and if it is done correctly there will be no time to do regular voter registration work.

4) The FDP is not a "special interest group", but, in fact, a program on which all of the staff and the VR volunteers (upwards of 400 people) should be working full time. All staff members and VR volunteers are FDP organizers and are responsible for the status of the party's organization.