

**LEADERSHIP  
CONFERENCE  
ON  
CIVIL RIGHTS**



*Freedom Democrats*  
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TO: Cooperating Organizations  
FROM: Arnold Aronson, Secretary

MEMO NO. 45  
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**CIVIL RIGHTS DECISION AT ATLANTIC CITY**

The most significant controversial issue before the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City beginning August 24 will be the seating of the Mississippi delegation. The Convention's decision will have an important bearing on civil rights developments--both North and South--for months and perhaps years to come.

Freedom Democratic Party

Two delegations from Mississippi have been designated; the "regular" Democrats at a convention in Jackson on July 28; and the Freedom Democratic Party at a Jackson convention on August 6. The Freedom Party has been painstakingly organized over a period of months through the efforts of organizations affiliated with COFO, the Council of Federated Organizations. These include the NAACP, CORE, SNCC, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Party membership is open to both races. At its first convention, with about 500 delegates and alternates present almost all were Negro but there were a good number of white participants. On the delegation elected there are 64 Negroes and 4 white. Also elected were the National Committeeman and Committee woman; Reverend Edwin King, a white Methodist minister who is chaplain at Tougaloo College; and Mrs. Victoria Gray, a Hattiesburg housewife who is a long-time fighter for Negro voting rights in Mississippi. The Chairman of the convention and of the delegation to Atlantic City is President of the Mississippi NAACP and Chairman of COFO, Dr. Aaron Henry.

The "regulars."

The "regular" Democratic Party has traditionally excluded Negroes from its delegation and has actively resisted--with force and intimidation over the years the participation at any level--including the polls--of Negro citizens. It is this systematic exclusion by the "regular" party that is the basis of the determination by Mississippians who believe in human rights to build a party open to members of both races. The Freedom Party further asserts that the "regular" Party has demonstrated its consistent disloyalty to the candidates and platform of the National Party and therefore is not entitled

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to participate in the affairs of the National Convention nor lay claim to represent the National Democratic Party in the state of Mississippi. These are the basic issues which will be laid before the credentials committee at Atlantic City.

Adhered to Rules

The Freedom Democratic Party faithfully adhered to all the rules and regulations governing the operation of political parties in Mississippi. It established its party structure and conducted its elections at precinct, county and state level to conform to the same rules governing the "regular" Party. Nevertheless, less than a week after the convention, the Attorney General of the state of Mississippi secured an order from a Chancery Court Judge banning the Freedom Democratic Party from using that name and its officers from functioning. This order has been challenged by the Freedom Democratic Party. Joseph L. Rauh, Jr. who is acting as counsel for the Freedom Party has stated that it is "compounding unconstitutionality" to exclude Negroes from the Democratic Party and then deny to them the right to participate in the creation of a Democratic Party which they may freely join.

While the Leadership Conference has not taken a formal consensus of its constituent organizations on the question of the seating of the Mississippi delegation at Atlantic City, so many Conference organizations have indicated support of the Freedom group and opposition to the "regular" party that we are sending out this Memorandum for the information and guidance of those organizations who have a concern in this matter.

Time to Act

There is still time to wire or phone the delegates to the convention to support the Freedom Party, and especially to contact delegates who will serve on the Credentials Committee. You may want also to wire the White House; the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, John Bailey; and David Lawrence of Pennsylvania, Chairman of the Convention Credentials Committee. The convention opens on Monday, August 24. The Credentials Committee will open hearings at 2 P. M. on Saturday, August 22, in Atlantic City.

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NOTE TO WASHINGTON REPRESENTATIVES: There will be a meeting of the Leadership Conference early in September to make plans for future program. You will be notified of time and place.

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