

THE VOTING RECORD OF THE CHALLENGED

CONGRESSMEN FROM MISSISSIPPI

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party is challenging the constitutional validity of the elections which returned the five Mississippi Congressmen to the House of Representatives in 1964. One of these Congressmen, Prentiss Walker, is a Republican without previous experience in the House. Walker defeated long-time Democratic Congressman Arthur Winstead in the November general election. He celebrated his victory for the party of Abraham Lincoln by making his first public appearance after the election before the Americans for the Preservation of the White Race in Brandon, Mississippi, on November 24, 1964. APWR is a white racist-terrorist organization which was organized to suppress by force and violence the civil rights activities of Mississippi Negroes.

There is no past legislative record upon which can be based an estimation of what Walker's being accepted by the House of Representatives as a bona-fide Congressman might mean for future legislation. However, if his first public appearance means anything, it may very well be that Walker will develop for the Republican Party the same kind of racist image which has disgraced the Southern Democratic Party during the past 100 years.

There is a considerable background of legislative experience on the other four challenged Congressmen, from which can be drawn quite dependable inferences about their future course if they are seated.

They are all Democrats, and each occupies committee positions of considerable importance.

Thomas G. Abernethy, 1st District, is from Okolona, Miss. He is 61 years of age and has been in the House since 1942--22 years. He is fifth in seniority below the Chairman on the House Agriculture Committee. (This committee handles matters of agriculture and forestry in general; farm credit and security, crop insurance, soil conservation and rural electrification). Abernethy is third below the chairman on the cotton subcommittee; first below the chairman on the dairy subcommittee; first below the chairman on the poultry subcommittee; fourth below the chairman on the Special Subcommittee on Departmental Oversight and Consumer Relations; and chairman of the Special Subcommittee on Research and Extension. Abernethy is also first below the chairman on the Committee on the District of Columbia. (This committee handles all measures relating to municipal affairs of the District of Columbia except its appropriations).

Jamie L. Whitten, 2nd District, is from Charleston, Miss. He is 54 years of age and has been in the House since 1941--23 years. He is fourth in seniority below the chairman on the House Committee on Appropriations. He is Chairman of the Subcommittee on Department of Agriculture and

Related Agencies; 3rd below the chairman on the Subcommittee on the Department of Defense; and last in seniority on the Subcommittee on Public Works. (The House Appropriations Committee originates all appropriations of Government revenues).

John Bell Williams, 3rd District, is from Raymond, Miss. He is 46 years old and he has been in the House since 1946--18 years. He is first below the Chairman in seniority on the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. (This committee handles regulation of interstate and foreign commerce and communications, regulation of interstate transmission of power, inland waterways, railroad labor, civil aeronautics, Weather Bureau, securities and exchanges, interstate oil compacts, natural gas, and public health). He is chairman of the Subcommittee on Transportation and Aeronautics. Williams is also fourth below the chairman on the House Committee on the District of Columbia.

William M. Colmer, 5th District, is from Pascagoula, Miss. He has been in the House since 1932--32 years. Colmer is first in seniority below the Chairman of the Committee on Rules. (This Committee handles the rules and order of business of the House. It determines how much time any bill will be debated on the floor of the House, how much time each side will have to debate, whether or not the bill can be amended on the floor, etc.). The Rules Committee has no standing subcommittees.

Clearly, then, the position these four Democrats take on a given issue is more than routinely important. Because of their seniority (which, of course, is based on the disfranchisement of Negroes in Mississippi), these men occupy committee posts of considerable power. When they are vitally interested in a piece of legislation, they can bring that power to bear on other representatives who do not have their seniority, and who might, otherwise, vote against the positions of the Mississippians.

Six organizations rate the voting performance of Congressmen from the viewpoint of the interests the organizations represent. Three of the organizations are usually thought of as liberal, and three as conservative. The liberal organizations are: The Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), the Committee on Political Education of the AFL-CIO (COPE), and the National Farmers Union (NFU). The conservative organizations are: The Americans for Constitutional Action (ACA), the National Associated Businessmen (NAB), and the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

Here are the ratings each of these organizations give to the four Mississippi Democrats whose right to be seated in the House is being challenged by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party:

	ADA	COPE	NFU	AFBF	NAB	ACA
Abernethy	0	0	13	50	79	70
Colmer	8	0	13	75	75	73
Whitten	12	0	25	63	74	67
Williams	4	0	8	63	80	82

When interpreting these ratings, it is important to remember that Mississippi is, in every respect, the poorest state in the Union. The material needs of the people of Mississippi are being less adequately dealt with than are those of the people of any other state. The per capita income of Mississippi is lower than that of any other state; the Mississippi education system is the least adequate in the nation; Mississippi's housing needs are greater than those of any other state; wages are lower and jobs scarcer there than in any other state. In other words, Mississippi has a greater need for liberal or welfare legislation than does any other state. The liberal organizations mentioned above back such legislation and rate Congressmen according to the way the Congressmen vote on such legislation.

On the other hand, the conservative organizations are opposed to all welfare legislation even to the point in the case of the Farm Bureau Federation, of backing the repeal of all child labor laws.. The conservative organizations represent the interests of the wealthy and powerful people of America--the banks, the utilities companies, the large corporations. It is apparent, then, that the Mississippi congressmen, rated as they are, high by the conservative organizations, and low by the liberal organizations, are simply not representing the people of their state. This is what happens when almost half the people of the state, and that the most deprived half, are disfranchised. This is what the constitutional requirement of the vote for everyone is designed to prevent.

This is why all persons and organizations who are interested in constitutional government, and in the welfare of their fellowmen, should support the MFDP challenge to the seating of the Mississippi congressmen.

Following is a listing of how the Mississippi Democrats, Colmer, Abernethy, Whitten and Williams have voted on specific issues between 1946 and the present. No listing has been made of their votes on civil rights issues, because it is common knowledge that they vote unanimously and consistently against all measures designed to relieve the plight of Negroes.

1946

(Williams not in office.)

Colmer, Whitten and Abernethy voted for the Case Anti-Labor bill which was designed and written and supported by the National Association of Manufacturers.

The same three voted to remove existing ceilings on rents and thus wreck the whole structure of rent control, leaving tenants to the tender mercies of the landlord's conscience.

Whitten and Abernethy voted for a price control provision which permitted a vast increase in prices.

All three voted in support of the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

All Three voted to draft the railroad workers who were on strike, thus breaking the back of the strike.

Whitten and Abernethy voted to exclude agricultural processing workers from the rights accorded workers under the procedures of the National Labor Relations Board.

1947

All four voted for a resolution giving the House Labor Committee additional subpoena powers which the committee wanted to use in its red-baiting and witch-hunting of the labor movement.

All four voted for the Gwynne bill, outlawing portal-to-portal pay suits and seriously weakening the Wage-Hour Act.

All four voted for a bill cutting the appropriations of the Labor Department, and thus seriously curtailing the services the Department could provide for the nation's workers.

All four voted for the Taft-Hartley Act, which seriously curtailed the ability of workers to organize in labor unions.

All four voted for exempting natural gas production and distribution from the jurisdiction of the Federal Power Commission, thus permitting the petroleum industry to increase the price it charges for the gas you use for cooking and heating.

All four voted for the Rees Loyalty Bill, providing that government workers could be investigated for evidence of disloyal thoughts and ideas.

1948

All four voted in support of the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Whitten and Abernethy voted to turn tidelands oil over to the states, so that these valuable resources could be exploited by the big oil companies for their own profit.

All four voted for the Mundt-Nixon bill, which seriously abridged the civil liberties of all Americans.

All four voted to exclude outside salesmen, industrial home workers, taxi drivers, loggers, tailors, etc., from coverage under the social security act.

All four voted to eliminate low-cost public housing and slum clearance from the 1948 housing bill.

1949

Whitten, Abernethy and Colmer voted in support of the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities.

All four voted to remove rent controls at the discretion of local officials, thus enabling real estate interests to apply their great power locally to increase the cost of rent.

All four voted twice to retain the provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act severely restricting the ability of workers to organize labor unions.

All four voted to eliminate low-rent public housing from the 1949 housing bill.

All four voted to relieve natural gas producers and distributors of government control over the prices they charge to consumers.

All four voted to remove over a million workers from the protection of the minimum wage laws.

All four voted to weaken the anti-trust laws and legalize unfair price discrimination.

1950

Whitten voted against appropriating funds for a mobile public library service for rural areas.

All four voted to kill loans for cooperative middle-income housing.

All four voted in support of the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities.

All four voted to exempt natural gas companies from certain federal regulations, thus permitting the companies to charge increased rates to consumers.

All four voted to cut funds for low-rent public housing by \$3 million.

Abernethy and Whitten voted against the extension of rent controls for an additional six months.

All four voted to provide concentration camps for aliens. The bill later became part of the McCarran Internal Security Act.

Whitten, Colmer and Abernethy voted for the McCarran Internal Security Act.

1951

No recorded votes.

1952

All four voted to cut the number of housing units provided in the 1952 housing bill from 50,000 to 5,000.

Abernethy, Colmer and Whitten voted to give states title to tidelands oil reserves thus opening the way for the exploitation of these valuable public properties by private companies for their own profit.

Colmer, Whitten and Williams voted to amend and rewrite the immigration laws to set up discriminatory restrictions against immigrants and endanger the rights of already naturalized citizens.

Colmer, Whitten and Williams voted to request the President to invoke the Taft-Hartley injunction provision to break the steel strike.

1953

All four voted to give to the states ownership of the tidelands oil reserves.

Whitten and Abernethy voted to extend for three years the importing of foreign labor to work on farms. Previously the house had rejected by unrecorded votes attempts to guarantee minimum wages, working, and living conditions (to prevent depressing American wages and working conditions).

All four voted against authorizing funds for construction of 35,000 low-rent public housing units.

All four voted to sell government-owned rubber-producing facilities to private corporations.

Abernethy, Whitten and Williams voted to permit the use of unemployment compensation funds for political patronage purposes and to reduce the contributions of employers to the funds.

1954

All four voted in support of the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities.

All four voted against authorizing 35,000 new housing units.

Abernethy, Whitten and Williams voted to permit the use of wiretap evidence in Federal Courts in certain criminal cases.

All four voted against increasing the amount of unemployment compensation benefits and extending the period of coverage.

All four voted to apply concepts of espionage and sabotage to certain labor union activities and to provide the death penalty for peacetime espionage for the first time in American history.

Abernethy and Colmer voted to prohibit the use of the fifth amendment before congressional red-baiting committees and grand juries.

Abernethy, Whitten and Williams voted to require that labor unions be "cleared" by the Subversive Activities Control Board and to outlaw a political party, the Communist Party, for the first time in American history.

1955

Abernethy and Williams voted to sell 88% of U.S. rubber facilities to 4 rubber and 3 oil companies.

All four voted for Universal Military Training of the nation's youth in peacetime.

All four voted to exempt natural gas producers from federal regulation thus increasing natural gas rates to consumers.

All four voted to eliminate from the omnibus housing bill provisions for public housing and provisions affecting housing for elderly persons, cooperatives, students and farmers.

1956

All four voted to eliminate public housing provisions from the omnibus housing bill.

All four voted against federal aid to education.

All four voted in support of the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

All four voted to cite playwright Arthur Miller for contempt of Congress because of his refusal to become an informer.

1957

All four voted against the use of federal funds to build public elementary and secondary schools.

All four voted to limit the right of an individual to defend himself against informers.

All four voted to cite radio announcer Louis Earl Hartman for contempt of Congress because he refused to submit to the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

1958

All four voted against providing 16 additional weeks of benefits for

workers covered by existing unemployment compensation legislation and against providing 16 weeks of benefits to workers not then covered by the legislation.

Williams and Whitten voted against increasing funds from \$100 million to \$2 billion for construction of public works to relieve unemployment.

All but Colmer voted against providing federal funds for redevelopment of localities suffering chronic unemployment.

Williams and Abernethy voted to permit airlines to retain all capital gains from the sale of equipment so they could use it to modernize their equipment. This was, in effect, an exemption from taxation for the airlines.

All four voted for a bill which instructed the U.S. Government to build two passenger steamships at a cost of \$201 million and then to sell the two ships to private companies for \$81 million. The bill further instructed the U.S. Government to guarantee the companies 10% profit on operating costs before the companies would have to return any of this money.

Abernethy, Williams and Whitten voted to permit police officials to arrest and detain indefinitely any person on mere suspicion that the person might have committed some crime.

All four voted to extend the Government screening program to all federal workers, whether or not their jobs had anything to do with national security.

1959

All four voted to cut public-housing out of the omnibus housing bill, and to cut the authorization for urban renewal by \$200 million.

All four again voted to give police officers authority to arrest and detain a person for an indefinite period on mere suspicion.

All four voted to permit the President to declare certain areas off-limits for travel by U.S. citizens; they also voted to give the State Department power to deny passports to Communists and others whose presence abroad it thought might endanger U.S. security.

All four voted for the Landrum-Griffin anti-labor bill. The bill curbed secondary boycotts, outlawed organizational picketing.

1960

All four voted against encouraging home buying by low and middle-income families by making it easier to obtain government-guaranteed loans.

All four voted against giving federal aid to chronic unemployment areas.

All four voted against providing federal funds, to be matched by state funds, for school construction.

1961

All four voted in support of the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

Abernethy, Colmer, and Whitten voted to give police officers authority to arrest and jail for an indefinite period persons suspected of crimes.

The same three voted to speed up the deportation and exclusion procedures of the Immigration & Naturalization Act.

All four voted against the omnibus housing bill which provided \$4.9 billion to begin meeting the housing needs of the nation.

All four voted against authorizing \$325 million to build schools, \$90 million for student loans and \$201 million to aid schools in areas crowded because of federal activities.

Colmer, Whitten and Williams voted against providing funds for construction of generating facilities to produce electricity from waste steam from a new atomic reactor. The private power companies were against further extension of government-owned generating capacity.

1962

All four voted to establish an industrial screening program to deny to workers employed on national defense work the right to due process under the law and the right to face their accusers when charged with being a "security risk."

All four voted against a \$262 million, two-year program to aid unemployed workers whose jobs were eliminated or made obsolete by automation, runaway plants, etc.

All four voted against authorizing \$900 million for emergency, short-range public works to provide jobs for unemployed workers.

All four voted to turn over ownership and control of the communications satellite system to American Telephone and Telegraph. The system had been developed by the government at a cost of \$25 billion.

1963

All four voted to support the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

All four voted to discontinue the first of the anti-poverty programs, The Area Redevelopment program.

Abernethy, Colmer and Whitten voted against the first income tax cut granted to working people in many years.

All four voted to discontinue the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, which did such able work in preparing the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and the institution of the "hot line" between Washington and Moscow.

1964

All four voted to outlaw any federal action which might relieve the mal-apportionment of state legislatures and give city dwellers a more equitable representation in state law-making bodies.

All four voted against an amendment to the mass transit bill which protected pension rights, working conditions, etc., of transit workers whose jobs will be endangered through installation of automatic equipment, mergers, etc.

Abernethy and Williams voted against the Food-Stamp Act, authorizing \$400 million in a four-year period to expand the program giving aid to poverty-stricken families in the form of supplemental food.

All four voted against the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which provides training programs, work-study groups, etc., for both long-term unemployed workers and youths entering the labor force for the first time.