

MINUTES OF THE FDP STATEWIDE CONVENTION, Sunday, January 2, 1966, in Jackson, Mississippi

The meeting was held in the Masonic Temple on Lynch Street. About 300 people attended. At first the meeting broke up into District Caucuses. Following are the minutes of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th District Caucuses. The 1st District did not hold a caucus because there were very few people from the 1st District in attendance.

2nd District--7 counties were represented. The caucus was chaired by Mr. Miles, Chairman of the FDP State Finance Subcommittee, and most of the discussion was on the value of supporting the Jackson State Office. Mr. Anderson from Washington County said we haven't got any support from the Jax Office. He said we should know about all debts before they are made. We should discuss them in our local meetings. I don't feel we should pay for anything we don't know about.

Carroll Co. reports they get all their information through the Jax office, and feel the need for Jax.

One man said to get your name on the mailing list. Sharkey Co. thought we should support the Jax office.

One lady asked a question, should we take the money we raise to finance the Jax office? The answer is, your local meeting will decide. We are not compelling anybody, says Mr. Miles. Be it little or much, ask your people about this matter. We don't want to demand.
(Taken by Mrs. Elmira Williams, Panola Co.)

3rd District--People from Adams, Amite, Jefferson, Pike, and Hinds Co. were present, as well as a few folk from Alabama. There were about 30 people altogether. County reports were given. Mrs. Rankin from Jefferson Co. said they had a very successful Black Christmas. Amite Co. said they needed Federal Registrars to get more people to go down to register, and were planning discussions on the ASCS elections. There was also discussion on whether or not people should help other counties, or should work in their own.

Rev. Ed King was endorsed to run for Congress, by unanimous vote.

(Taken by Mrs. Hazel Palmer, Hinds Co.)

4th District--Rev. Collier called the meeting to order, and made some remarks that were enjoyed by all. The 4th District will meet again the third Sunday in Jan (Jan. 16) in the Philadelphia FDP Office. Then they discussed boycotting stores, and school integration. They also talked about how to raise money to support the local offices. They decided to put out leaflets to every family in the 4th District, and ask them to pay \$1 each, and that way try to raise enough money to pay for the local offices.
(Taken by Mrs. Birdie Lee Woods, Neshoba Co.)

5th District--Meeting was attended by representatives of Harrison, Hancock, Forrest, and Jackson Counties. They took names and made up a Speaker's Bureau for Guyot's Congressional Campaign. Each county is responsible for raising money for their own campaign. Motion was made and seconded that the next Fifth District meeting will take place on Sun., Jan. 9, in Hattiesburg, to elect a campaign manager, a finance committee, and to re-elect district officers.
(Taken by Mrs. Ann Taylor, Forrest Co.)

The entire gathering was then called together. Rev. Kirkland delivered a prayer, then Freedom Songs were sung.

Then MFDP Chairman Lawrence Guyot spoke. He talked about how 1965 had been a year of big fights and small victories. He mentioned several of the activities the FDP was involved in, including the Holmes Co. Suit against the Parent-Guardian Law, the Reapportionment Suit, the fight for mobile registrars and federal examiners in every county. He said we shouldn't have that much faith in the Federal Government, but more and more of what we do will be done through the Federal Courts. He stressed the importance of political activity, and talked about how the FDP was organizing people who had never before had a voice. He called for people to work together, despite personality clashes. He repeated how important it is for us to fight to win our rights.

Then the Chairmen of the Subcommittees gave their reports.

First was Mr. Robert Miles, Finance Committee. He said an important ^{question} was if people felt there was a need for the Jackson office, because if they thought it was needed, they would try to raise funds for it. He said they were asking for a monthly pledge from each county.

Next speaker was Mrs. Annie Devine, Health and Welfare Committee. A copy of her report is on another page of this mailing.

Mrs. Peggy Jean Connor, Personnel Committee, discussed the Personnel of the Washington and Jackson Offices, and their duties. She also said that if people needed workers, they should let the Personnel Committee know by notifying the Jackson office. She also announced a Personnel Committee meeting that was supposed to take place on January 16, but this meeting has been cancelled.

Next speaker was Mrs. Catherine Crowell of the Education Committee, who hadn't gotten started yet.

Next speaker was Mr. Carr of the Agriculture Committee, who asked for interested people to send their names in to the Jackson Office.

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Mr. Jeremiah Blackwell also spoke for the Agriculture Committee representing his wife. He told about how the FDP and Congressman Resnick had put pressure on the FHA so that now we hope they will not discriminate against Negro farmers who ask for loans.

Guyot then introduced Lawyer Ben Smith, who discussed the suit we have planned to throw out the ASCS elections, as well as a suit to desegregate all the hospitals in Mississippi. Smith said that for the two suits we'll probably call lawyers in to take depositions from all around the state, like we did last January for the Challenge. He said if the right work is done, these suits will have to win.

James Mays from the National Sharecroppers Fund talked about the new cotton bill. He said that landowners can't put people off their land without sharing some of the money with them that the government pays.

Next was Guyot, Political Programs and Voter Registration. He asked for people who wanted to serve on his subcommittee to submit their names.

A woman from Sunflower Co. got up and said that the people themselves should be allowed to register voters.

Next speaker was Mrs. Victoria Jackson Gray, Political Education and Organizing. She stressed how important her program was--a voteless people is a voiceless and powerless people. We have to know our rights and then do something about it.

Next speaker was Lee Dilworth, Poverty Programs/ He made three proposals:

1. Chairman of the Poverty Programs Comm and the Health and Welfare Committee appoint a study committee to investigate all the poverty programs in the state, and to find out how the FDP can get on them.

2. Have a Statewide Workshop on Poverty Programs on the week of Jan 16-17.

3. Organize a committee at this workshop that will make sure the FDP has full representation on all Poverty Programs.

Last speaker was Rev. Ed King of the National and Foreign Affairs Committee. He had several proposals. Among them was that we send a telegram to President Johnson commending his efforts to end the War in Vietnam. There was a great deal of heated discussion on this, and finally it was decided that first we would have an educational program on the war before we made any public statements from the FDP. Guyot suggested that we invite to the state one or more of the three men (Staughton Lynd, Tom Hayden, or Herbert Aptheker) who had gone to Hanoi. This suggestion was accepted.

Rev. King also mentioned that next year there will be a fight to save the Poverty program. Some Senators and Congressmen will try to have the Program cut so that money can be used for the War in Vietnam instead. He also mentioned that Bill Ware and Hunter Morey will work on an African Program.

Then Lawrence Guyot announced the 5 candidates FDP will endorse for the 1966 elections:

Congress, 2nd District--Ralthus Hayes, Holmes Co.

Congress, 3rd District--Rev. Ed King, Hinds Co.

Congress, 4th District--Rev. Clint Collier, Neshoba Co.

Congress, 5th District--Lawrence Guyot, Harrison Co.

U.S. Senate--Rev. Clifton Whitley, Monroe Co.

Mr. Ralthus Hayes then suggested that the FDP vote to support the Compulsory School Law, and the body voted to approve the suggestion.

Then Mrs. Devine read the following letter from Mrs. Fannie Loy Hamer:

"I deeply regret that I cannot be present with you today but due to something that could not be avoided I will be unable to attend but, if you listen real close you will hear me singing "This little light of mine" because I am still dedicated to the MFDP and will be doing all that is in my power to change the political structure in the State of Miss. Yours for God and Justice for all men. Fannie Lou. One of the best boycotts in the state now going on in Ruleville, Miss. The town looks like a ghost town."

Meeting adjourned.

Note: This is just a summary of the meeting, If anyone wants a more detailed account of what took place, contact Barbara Brandt in the Jackson office. Thank you.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT: Mrs. Frances Warner of Hinds Co. has 40 acres in Attala Co. that she is offering to people who have been thrown off plantations. You don't have to pay rent, and gas and electricity can be easily supplied. People can farm the land. For more information, please contact the FDP State Office.

ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT LAWYERS: At present there are two Lawyers Groups that will handle civil rights cases (arrests, etc.). They are the LCDC, 603 N. Farish St., Jackson (948-4191) and the LCCRL (President's Committee), 233 N. Farish St., Jackson (948-5400). Sometimes people call one lawyer, and then if they are not satisfied, they call the other lawyer. Please do not do this. If you call one lawyer, please stick with him. To call both lawyers just causes confusion, so please just call one lawyer for each case.