

To Friends of SNCC:

January 30, 1965

Re: Freedom Democratic Party Petition Campaign
(Please write to the MFDP office, 1353 "U" Steeet, NW
Washington, D.C. for further information and
report to them, as well, on your activities.
Please send carbons to Atlanta where possible)

At the MFDP organizing meeting on Sunday, January 18th it was decided by all the supporting groups of FDP represented and the Mississippi representative that a massive petition campaign would be launched throughout the North. The purpose is to involve the public at large in the Challenge and through that to bring pressure on congressmen. The petition is a request of the congressmen to make a committment to vote for unseating of the Mississippi representatives. Accompanying that would be a pledge card for congressmen to sign announcing their committment on the challenge.

The following is the text agreed upon for the petition and pledge card:

SAMPLE PETITION

Dear Congressman _____ :

We believe that the honor of the House of Representatives of the United States and the integrity of our system of government is deeply compromised by the presence of congressmen from the State of Mississippi who are there by virtue of elections that are conducted in blatant and notorious violation of the requirements of the Constitution of the United States of America.

We, therefore, urge you to do all in your power to support the Challenge brought by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and vote to unseat the congressional delegation sent to the US House of Representatives from the state of Mississippi until such time as a delegation elected in free elections, open to all and conducted in accordance with the Constitution, is sent to the Congress from Mississippi.

SAMPLE PLEDGE CARD

I pledge to vote for the unseating of the Congressional delegation sent to the US House of Representatives from the State of Mississippi until such time as a delegation elected in free elections, open to all people and conducted in accordance with the Constitution, is sent to Congress from that state.

Note -- At this very moment and until mid-February, lawyers for the FDP are in Mississippi taking depositions from Negro citizens, civil rights workers and state officials. This material will eventually be used as evidence to support the statutory phase of the MFDP challenge. We'll be sending out summaries of the deposition taking within a week or so.

Please remember that support for the challenge is no less important now than it was earlier this month. We must get enough people committed and enough pressure on Congressmen to ensure that on the next House vote we will have the 70 additional Congressmen that were needed to defeat the Albert resolution to seat. We must organize waves of letters of congratulations to those Congressmen who supported the Ryan resolution by saying Nay to the Albert resolution. We must persuade the Northern backsliders of the error of their ways. It is also important to reach those Northern Congressmen on the Sub-committee on elections, so that there will be support for the challenge inside the committee. We are attaching for your convenience and use lists of the membership

of the Committee on House Administration (from which the Sub-committee on elections is drawn). It will be crucial that a great deal of national interest and concern is expressed to the Chairman of the Sub-committee and to all Northern members. We will have to enlist the support of state political organizations and local groups across the country for this effort. It is because of the excellent job done by the local organizers for the FDP what we were able to get a third of the House to support the Ryan resolution in the face of leadership opposition and minimal support or indifference from the liberal power groups. Our job must be to accelerate this effort. The following is a list of the Administration Committee of the House. Members of the Elections Sub-committee are underlined. Supporters of the Ryan resolution are starred. But if any committee member is from a Congressional district in which your group has any influence he should be contacted whether or not he is on the sub-committee.

DEMOCRATS: Burgeson (Texas); Friedel (Maryland); Ashmore (South Carolina); Chairman of the sub-committee; Hays (Ohio) Jones (Missouri); Rhodes* (Pennsylvania); Thompson* (New Jersey); Abbitt (Virginia); Everett (Tennessee); Waggoner (Louisiana); Perkins (Kentucky); Dent* (Pennsylvania); Sam M. Gibbons (Florida); Nedzi (Michigan); Davis (Georgia).

NEW DEMOCRATS NOT ASSIGNED TO SUBCOMMITTEES YET: Brademus* (Indiana); Gray (Illinois); Hawkins* (California); and Bingham* (New York).

REPUBLICANS: Corbett (Pennsylvania); Lipscomb (California); Chamberlain (Michigan); Goodell (New York) Curtin (Pennsylvania); Samuel Devine (Ohio) and Skubitz (Kansas).

None of the nine members of the elections sub-committee voted with us. But, as indicated above, seven Committee members did support Ryan's resolution. So that gives the FDP a base on the Committee. It is possible that one of the new appointees to the Committee who voted for us will be placed on the Sub-committee.

Our job from now until the final vote will be to communicate to the entire country the fact that through the challenge there is a chance for every individual to contribute to doing something specific and positive about really changing conditions in Mississippi in a very basic way. While doing this, it will also be our job to channel the popular interest into the most politically strategic kinds of pressure on the Committee and the general membership of the House.