

March 24, 1965

To: Friends of SNCC

From: Betty Garman

Re: VOTING, VOTING LEGISLATION AND THE FDP CHALLENGE

Enclosed in this mailing are a variety of things relating to voting:

1. A copy of the voting bill
2. A memo done by Courtland Cox and Jack Minnis on the voting legislation (blue paper, entitled "the new voting bill, rhetoric and reality".
3. A paper done by Jack Minnis entitled "The President's 1965 Voting Bill" (white paper)
4. The now famous "February 27th memorandum" which the FDP sent out and which Evans and Novack refer to in their column.
5. A statement issued by CORE, SMCC and the FDP on Free Elections, etc and on the back of that a leaflet used during the Washington lobby.
6. A copy of The General Condition of the Alabama Negro which includes all statistics as well as voting figures. This is available in limited numbers of copies and we encourage you to sell them for 50¢ if you request others.

It is important to note the analysis of the voting bill for while it does not touch on all sections of the bill, the two memos taken together highlight the weaknesses in the legislation. Again, it seems, we are faced with the alternative for lobbying for an inadequate bill or for obtaining no legislation at all.

Thus, in the coming weeks (since it appears as if the legislation will be pushed quickly in the House and Senate and that major legislative decisions in Congress on amendments, etc. will be made by late April) it is important to build an informed community in your area which will understand the weaknesses in the bill -- and will understand that the bill is not what it is "cracked up to be" -- and that, in fact, it does not really extend voting rights very far.

A massive petition and letter campaign should be begun in each area of the nation calling for, among other things, an unrestricted wage figure, ie. if people in any area petition the government for a federal referee to administer the registration procedure, a federal registrar should be assigned. A voting bill, to be effective, must be 1) all inclusive and 2) must have effective enforcement provisions written into the bill which this one clearly doesn't.

Several other points: Some statements might be made to Congressmen in your area regarding the need to have those people who are disenfranchised actually called to Washington to testify. So far Roy Wilkins and other civil rights leaders have been asked to appear....but no invitation has been extended to the challenging Congresswomen from Mississippi, to Alabama and Arkansas disenfranchised, etc. Ought not they, who have tried to register, be able to speak about what a bill must contain to allow them the opportunity to register -- and vote? Particularly pressure members of the House and Senate Judiciary committees.

Other memo's will be forthcoming/ further work is being done on what kinds of provisions should be included and/or what are the weaknesses of this bill. The enclosed information is a start -- but should move you all to raise issues about the actual importance of the bill as opposed to continual pressure and movement for a favorable vote in Congress on the FDP Challenge.