

March 29, 1965

Dear Friends:

It is important to realize, during all the talk and praise from some circles, of the President's new voting bill, that it has many faults and many shortcomings. Several important things have been left out of the bill which should be included if it is to be an effective weapon for bringing first-class citizenship to everyone in this country.

We hope that by now you have had a chance to study the bill and read over the material which was sent last week. Enclosed is the testimony given by SNCC staffer Ralph Featherstone before the Subcommittee #3 of the House Judiciary Committee and Amendments to the bill proposed by Attorney William Higgs.

One of the most important omissions in the bill is that it does not provide for the calling of new elections in the South. We are asking all Friends of SNCC to begin an immediate letter writing campaign to their Congressmen to include an amendment in the bill which would provide for new elections. Unless this amendment is added, it will be a long time for people in most southern states before they are able to exercise their new-found freedom to vote.

SNCC IS ASKING SPECIFICALLY THAT YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS WRITE TO YOUR REPRESENTATIVES IN WASHINGTON DEMANDING AN AMENDMENT PROVIDING FOR NEW ELECTIONS. EVERY CONGRESSMAN SHOULD BE CONTACTED ABOUT THIS.

Perhaps one of the reasons important things like this were forgotten when the bill was written is that none of the real experts on the denial of the right to vote--black people from the South--were invited to testify before the subcommittee which is holding hearings on the bill. People who have first hand knowledge about police brutality and economic intimidation, the poor and the oppressed from Mississippi, Alabama, and Arkansas and other Southern states, should have a real opportunity to make their needs known to the writers of laws. So far this has never been done.

Enclosed are the names of the Congressmen on the House Judiciary Committee and on the Subcommittee #5 which is the subcommittee that is holding hearings on the bill. SNCC is asking that people who live in districts of these Congressmen BEGIN A TELEGRAM CAMPAIGN TO THEIR CONGRESSMEN DEMANDING THAT THE REAL EXPERTS ON DISFRANCHISEMENT BE ALLOWED TO TESTIFY AND TO PROPOSE AMENDMENTS. IT IS THEY WHO KNOW WHAT KIND OF LAW SHOULD BE IN EFFECT.

Because time is short--the bill will be reported out in two weeks--immediate action will have to be taken. Letters should be pouring in to Congress about this bill as soon as possible.

We are asking that Friends of SNCC groups across the country put out mailings concerning a new elections amendment, and if you live in the district of one of the Congressmen on Subcommittee #5, about both the new elections amendment and having Southern Negroes testify before that committee. Information for the mailing can be compiled from material we've sent.

Yours for Freedom,

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