

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
6 Raymond Street N.W.
Atlanta, Georgia

April 25, 1965

CAMPUS CONTACT NEWSLETTER

INJUNCTION AGAINST SUNFLOWER COUNTY REGISTRAR---

April 10 a Federal Court issued an injunction in Sunflower County, Mississippi which allows people to register without any literacy test except for copying down four lines of the Constitution. No interpretation is required.

This injunction will last a year, but we want to get as many people as possible registered for the June elections. Cars are needed immediately for this work; you should try to send down a car with a worker now. For further information contact Fred Winn, Box 30, Indianola, Mississippi, 1498, 1112.

MAY 9 - 16 DEMONSTRATIONS---

At the student conference in Washington D.C. it was decided that there would be coordinated demonstrations by students throughout the country in the week of May 9 to 16 calling for new and free elections.

You should start planning these demonstrations immediately, and you should begin an educational campaign among your campus and home communities, explaining the reasons for supporting new elections and the MFDP Challenge.

NEW ELECTIONS---

The passage of a voting bill without requiring new elections will directly lead to amounts of terror and intimidation yet unseen by the civil rights movement. For local law enforcement will remain in the hands of men like Neshoba County's Sheriff Rainey for four more years so that there can be a continuation of economic intimidation (firing from jobs, cutting off welfare checks, withdrawing surplus food) and beatings, bomb threats, and killings by local white racists.

Many of the states most affected by the bill will not hold state or local elections for two or more years, which means that the bill will be ineffective for the next few years.

1) In Alabama the terms of all state and some county officials will not expire until November 1966. All others expire in 1968.

2) Georgia county officers will not stand for election until November 1968.

3) The Louisiana general election for county officials will be held in April of 1968.

4) Mississippi county and state officials are re-elected in August of 1967. City officials are elected in May and June of 1965, just before the voting bill gets through Congress.

We call for new elections to be held no sooner than six and no later than nine months after the appointment of federal registrars. For within this time, with simple registration procedures and adequate personnel, thousands of southern Negroes can be registered.

THE CHALLENGE---

We believe that the issues involved in Southern suffrage are most clearly drawn in the Challenge by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. The House of Representatives has clear, constitutional authority to determine who shall and who shall not have seats in the House. The House by a majority vote can instruct the state of Mississippi just how its Congressional elections must be conducted if it wants its representatives in the House. The House can determine who shall and who shall not vote in such elections, under what conditions persons shall be registered to vote in those elections, and when and where the elections are to be conducted.

The final enfranchisement of Negroes depends much more on the effective pursuit of the Challenge than it does on the enactment of any new civil rights legislation.

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party contends that primary elections held in Mississippi June 2, and the general elections held November 3 are void. The FDP is also contesting the seating of the five Mississippi Congressmen.

Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer of Ruleville, Mrs. Annie Devine of Canton, and Mrs. Victoria Gray of Hattiesburg have asked the House of Representatives to refuse to seat their opponents. They have charged that the election "violates the Constitution and laws of the United States because Negroes throughout the state of Mississippi...were systematically and almost totally excluded from the electoral process...."

Technically the MFDP is "challenging" the election and "contesting" the seating of three representatives. That is, the FDP is "challenging" the state-run elections, contending they are null and void since they excluded Negroes from the electoral process. They are also "contesting" the seating of five Mississippi congressmen on the grounds the five were not elected in a free and open election. Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Gray charge that they are the only true representatives since their election was the only one "open to all citizens."

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE AND WHERE ARE WE MOVING---

Step One (December 2 - January 3): The challenges were filed with the contested representatives. The "regular" Democrats have 30 days to reply.

Step Two (January 4): On the opening day of Congress a group of Congressmen (149) challenged the right of the contested delegates to take their seats.

Step Three (January 2 - February 10): The MFDP had 40 days to take their testimony in Mississippi in public hearings.

Step Four (February 10 - March 20): The challenged representatives had 40 days to take their testimony; they took none.

Step Five (March 20 - March 30): The MFDP had ten days to take rebuttal testimony. The overall evidence was presented to the Clerk of the House and then forwarded to the public printer. The briefs were then presented to the Subcommittee on Elections and Privileges.

Step Six (May 1 - July 1): The challengers then have 30 days to file their briefs; the challenged have 30 days to reply.

Step Seven: At this point all the accumulated evidence, briefs, responses, etc., are handed over to the House Committee on Administration which will in all probability hand the case to the Subcommittee on Elections and Privileges.

WHAT YOU CAN DO---

Throughout step six you must keep working on educating the public on what is happening and in building support. For step 7 we want to have about 1,000 students in Washington D.C. where they will lobby for the MFDP. The Washington program is explained in the enclosed memo.

INTIMIDATION IN AMITE COUNTY---

On Easter Sunday in Liberty, Mississippi the sons of FDP member Reverend Alfred Knox were beaten by two white men. JB and Willie Knox filed warrants for the arrests of Dal Blaleck for assault with a deadly weapon and against Jerry Blaleck for assault and battery. When the complaint was filed on Thursday, Amite County Sheriff Daniel Jones arrested the Knoxes with a warrant sworn out by the Blalecks charging the brothers with assault with a deadly weapon. The Knoxes were bailed out immediately on \$300 each.

We are trying to put pressure on Sheriff Jones to arrest the Blalecks. Call Congressmen, professors, friends, etc. and have them pressure Sheriff Jones, Liberty, Mississippi (601) 657-2661 or (601) 657-2722.