

MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY

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May 24, 1965

Dear Friend:

Last Monday the MFDP held a press conference in Washington, which we know at least was covered by the major Washington and New York papers and all national radio and TV networks, to announce the submission of our 600 depositions to the Clerk of the House of Representatives. Joining with us were James Farmer, John Lewis and Dr. Martin Luther King (who, though not present, sent a statement) announcing their plans to launch all-out efforts to unseat the Mississippians.

To refresh your memory on procedure, the Clerk of the House is now to call a conference with both sides for the purpose of determining what material from the depositions should be printed. This conference is set for Wednesday, June 2. Our briefs will be submitted on June 1, which means that thirty days after that the Mississippians must submit theirs.

It appears that the Mississippi congressmen are going to begin using all kinds of delaying tactics to see that the challenges are held over until the next session, when they can try to argue that elections are less than a year away. Ex-Governor Coleman, who is representing the Congressmen, has tried to have the meeting on printing of depositions put off for a month. We are moving now to see that constant pressure is kept on the House and the Sub-Committee on Elections warning them that the civil rights movement will not tolerate such delay.

Indications from the House are that there is strong interest and growing support for the Challenge, but during the deposition stage there was little for Congressmen to do. Now, with the evidence in and open to inspection by any congressman, every representative should be revisited.

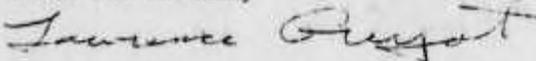
Also, the Congress is on its way to completing action on the Voter Registration Bill. We have worked, with other civil rights organizations, for as strong a Bill as possible, but, as the article by Ken Slocum in the Wall Street Journal points out, no matter how stringent, this Bill cannot overcome the violence and intimidation that the racists will use to prevent Negroes from participating fully in the political processes which govern their lives. The unseating of the Mississippi congressmen will be a clear warning to all those who wish to prevent Negroes from voting, not only in Mississippi but throughout the South, that no election will be considered valid until all citizens are granted access to the ballot and free use of the vote. Now that Congress has taken the first step, opening the registration rolls, it should be prepared to make this a meaningful act by unseating the Mississippi congressmen.

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We need, at this point, to estimate our strength in Congress so that we will know where extra pressure and work are needed. Letters should be written immediately and delegations sent to visit congressmen asking for their commitment to vote to unseat the Mississippi delegation and urging that they exert every effort to see that this matter is not bottled up in Committee. Please contact our Washington office after you have polled your local congressmen on their positions.

The second way we can ensure this matter being reported out of the Committee during this summer is by making this a national issue. The civil rights organizations, including SCLC, SNCC, and CORE are prepared to join in mass activities in support of the Challenge, and are working with all other local and national organizations to this end. We are working on a broadly based organizational coalition to ensure the success of the Challenge.

Yours for Freedom,



Lawrence Guyot
Chairman

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