

Several of us were in Washington for the week. The only reason anything is going on is because of the work you've already done. The taking of the depositions last winter, the sending of people up there last January, the demonstrations here in Jackson in June, and what you will be doing in September.

As things stand now, the challenge WILL be voted on. Some people in the government would like to avoid voting on this. They seem to think that the democratic way to handle things is to never let them be discussed or voted on. There's a possibility the U.S. House of Representatives is so frightened of you that the government will stop doing business just to avoid having to face you, and to protect the five Congressmen from Mississippi. The government may try to close the session of the legislature and stop Congress before the vote can come. The vote on the Mississippi Challenge is scheduled for the 21st day of September. Some people have rumors that Congress wants to adjourn the night of the 20th. We don't have to worry. We have friends; and anytime they hear that Congress is getting ready to adjourn - and Congress can't adjourn just like a meeting does - the Challenge will be presented on the floor. So it may come the 20th; it may come the 19th. I think we can safely say it will come to a vote between now and the 21st of September.

Now, we have friends in Congress, and those friends have issued a statement. ^{To date} Between 30 and 40 Congressmen have signed a statement saying they will present a matter of special privilege on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Challenge can come to the House in three ways. It could come from the committee, but the chairman of the committee is from South Carolina and we don't think he's going to support us. The liberal Democrats on the committee are from Kentucky, and we don't think they're going to support us. So we don't expect the committee to vote in our favor. The committee will probably stall and not issue a report. The first report could be from the committee on elections.

The second way we could get an issue on the floor is have a discharge petition. We've been running back and forth to Washington and learning a lot of things about government, because nobody knew ~~about~~ this until we got involved in it, but that's where we're headed now that people are getting the right to vote. We have to learn what it's all about.

The second way to get something voted on is for a majority of the members of the House to take it to the committee that's hearing it and insist that the committee ~~bring~~^{give} it to the whole House, & stop the committee hearings. Well, it takes a lot of votes, and people will sometimes say we won't do that, we think the committee should continue hearings - when what they really mean is we don't want to vote for you. This gives them a technical excuse.

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The third way something is presented is the way that our petition will be presented. And this is as a matter of personal privilege. Congressman Fitz Ryan, who's running for mayor of New York City, is going to present this. He will rise in the House, as he did the first day of Congress, he will rise on the 21st and say that he as a Congressman has a matter of high personal privilege to present to the House. He has to be recognized, because he will say in essence that he doesn't think that some of the gentlemen sitting in the House with him are gentlemen, and that five, or four, or three - or whatever the decision is at that point - that a certain number of gentlemen in the House are not dignifying the U.S. House of Representatives because they do not represent all the people of the state of Mississippi. And as a matter of personal privilege to the integrity and ~~xxxxxxx~~ decency and honesty of the House, these people should be asked to leave permanently. When a man says that, that is a personal attack on a fellow Congressman, and in such an important matter it has to be voted on.

Well, that's the way it's going to be presented if the committee doesn't do it. And of last week, Congressmen from California, Indiana, Michigan, New York, Minnesota, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Hawaii have already said that when Mr. Fitz Ryan stands they will stand. There probably will be 40 or 50 people standing, all of them shouting at the same time. If Mr. McCormack doesn't want to recognize Mr. Fitz Ryan, there will be at least 50 people saying, ~~we~~^I don't like to sit in the same room with so-and-so. They're not even going to ask that the five Mississippians be put on the back row. They're already sitting in essence on the back row. They're not really on the back row, but since January they've been sitting there with a little cloud over their head. It was a little dark cloud called Freedom Party, and they haven't been fully recognized as Congressmen. They've been allowed to vote, but they've been seated as temporary Congressmen. And Mississippi is the only state in the country that has five temporary Congressmen.

So they've already been kind of at the back of the bus and the back of Congress, and all we're doing now is kicking them out the back door. That will be voted. Now, we'll have 30 or 40 Congressmen ready to do it. We'll need several hundred if we're to win the vote when the vote is counted. We had 149 people in January. We'll need about 65 more votes. It's going to be hard to get those. We have a lot of people working with us. Tomorrow and the next day, statements will be released in Washington of groups of people who are supporting us, who are working for us. The American Civil Liberties Union, which is a lawyers' group, CORE, SNCC are working for us, these people you know. All of the civil rights groups are working for us, except one. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference is working very strongly for us. Dr. King is working behind the scenes, trying to influence Congressmen to vote for us. These groups are helping raise some money. The National Council of Churches, whose Delta Ministry projects we know so well in this state, the NCC is one of the strongest groups working in Washington to win this Challenge for us. As I said, most of the groups have been involved in the civil rights fight; most of these groups are working.

Now, it doesn't matter how many Congressmen work for us and it doesn't matter how many groups of good ~~xxxxx~~ people work for us. We're up against terrific odds. The Mississippians want to hold onto their seats. They're fighting to do so. They have a lot of power. How do they do this? It's not because the President likes the segregationists. It's because the President doesn't want too much trouble to upset other things that he's doing. It's because the labor unions would like to get rid of the Mississippians, but they don't want to upset things too much in government. And we represent upsetting things too much.

Let me just tell you about one of our dear Mississippians - Jamie Whitten. Mr. Whitten is second or third in line on the Agriculture Committee. He is threatening Congressmen from Kansas, from Iowa, from North Dakota, and telling them if they vote against him and he still wins, he will remember it. And if he becomes chairman of the Agriculture Committee in two years, which he may do, then he'll see that those farm states from the midwest get punished. Well, that's the way the government operates. We learned that in Atlantic City. But this means ^{some} that/people from Kansas and Iowa, who ought to support civil rights,

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and who would be friendly to the Freedom Party, are being threatened. And we know what it is to be threatened. There's not one of us involved in this movement and the Freedom Party who hasn't had to worry about his life, or his job, or his family at some point. And now what we've done is make this open to the whole country and the Mississippians are using what they've used here to threaten people all over the country who won't go along with them. And because they've been in Washington so long, they are powerful people.

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We owe it to the whole country to fight this through. The only people who can win this fight are you, the people in the Freedom Party, the people of Mississippi. And every civil rights group in Mississippi must support the Challenge even though the national civil rights group of one civil rights organization is not supporting the Challenge for political reasons. But the people of Mississippi must be united in this. It doesn't matter how many Congressmen, how many church groups, how many lawyers support us. Only if we work will we win. I think we can win. I'm very serious. Three weeks from now we can send those Mississippi Congressmen home. The only way we can do that is if a lot of Mississippi people go to Washington. We'll get a hundred votes, maybe a hundred fifty votes, where we are now. We won't get those extra 50 or 60 votes unless people ~~from Mississippi~~ can prove that Mississippians care. Not that the church in the country is helping us. Not that lawyers work for us. But that Mississippi people themselves care. We HAVE TO GO. The thing has been stalled and delayed. We thought we would go in July, we thought we would go in August, we thought we would go last week, we thought we would go next week. Now it looks like it's going to be the 16th to the 21st that we'll be in Washington. We HAVE TO BE THERE. We have to raise money for that in Mississippi. The Freedom Party can't raise a lot of money, because we're not a national group. Our main place for raising money is in your local town, in your local county. And every local county should count on sending 25, 30, 35 people to Washington. And you need to be there for three or four days and that is very hard for people who work. And it's especially hard during the cotton-picking time of the year for people who work on the farms and it's very hard for people who work in the schools because schools are just starting. There are a lot of reasons. And the southerners wanted this vote to come late in September because they felt we

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couldn't get as many people to Washington if they delayed it til
September.

I think for every 500 Mississippians who go to Washington, one
Mississippians will leave the U.S. House of Representatives. Can we
do that? I really think ~~that~~ if 500 people go and work and visit
northern Congressmen and work very hard, then 500 of us can put one
of them out of office. If a thousand of us go, maybe we'll unseat
two of them. If 5,000 go, we'll unseat all of them. If 10,000 of us
go, Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer will be the new representative from Mississippi
on the Agriculture Committee from the Delta.

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(Since the Deacons for Defense and Justice stand ready to protect
Negroes and take over the functions) of the police, when the organized
government doesn't protect the citizens, then maybe all the Deacons
have done is to organize an honest police force where there was no
honest police force. The Freedom Party will continue to bring people
like the Deacons, Dr. King, people from SNCC, people from CORE, some-
body from the NAACP. We want people in Mississippi to know what
Negroes are doing all over the United States and to know what white
people are doing who are fighting for freedom. The only way we can
learn is if we hear from somebody else. We hope sometime the Deacons
will invite some of the Freedom Party people down to Bogalusa. Maybe
we can tell you how to unseat your Congressmen. Thank you.