

A CONGRESSMAN SPEAKS
about Mississippi and Delta Ministry

"There undoubtedly are some leftwingers and other assorted characters agitating in Mississippi, anxious to turn the distress of the Negro to their advantage.

"But if this is true, it is only because of the almost total failure of America's respectable white middle class and political leaders to take the necessary initiative demanded by conditions in the Deep South.

"There are too few organizations like the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the National Council of Churches, which, through its Delta Ministry, has done a magnificent job in attempting to alleviate the misery of the Negro refugees.

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"The victims of the rural slums, the victims of this disaster, have moved north and west -- to New York, to Chicago, and to Los Angeles. A study by Mississippi State University has shown that some 114,460 Negroes left the State in the 1950's from 11 Delta counties alone.

"Many of them now live in the city of New York, and New York is proud that they are now her citizens. But the depressing fact is that, until we have massive programs in our cities, our cities cannot absorb this overwhelming immigration.

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"It is one thing for us to sit in Washington and establish programs and policies. It is quite another thing, however, to have them executed out in the field by individuals who were born and raised out in the local areas and are affected by the same local prejudices that their lifetime neighbors are.

"The Federal paycheck does not cleanse a man's soul, rebuild his character or change his allegiance.

-- Spoken on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, February 9, 1966,
by Congressman Joseph Resnick, Democrat, New York