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MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY  
802 G Street, S.E.  
Washington, D.C.

TO: Friends and Supporters of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party

FROM: Mrs. Victoria J. Gray, Washington Office MFDP

RE: Situation in the Mississippi Delta

February 10, 1966

The plight of the Mississippi Delta sharecropper and farm worker was graphically illustrated last week by a move of 100 of these people onto the deactivated Air Force Base at Greenville, Mississippi. Many of the people who moved onto the base have been displaced by the mechanization of agriculture and cutbacks in cotton allotments. It is estimated that by the spring between 10,000 and 12,000 agricultural workers and sharecroppers will be without jobs. Not only do those being displaced find no aid forthcoming from the state of Mississippi, but continue to find the state actively working against their interests.

The federal government has proved to be as deaf to the plight of these evicted people as the state government of Mississippi. An OED grant, announced last November 23, for the purpose of distributing surplus food, has still not gone into effect. Other poverty programs in the state consistently denied poor Negroes positions on their advisory boards and staffs. The single poverty program which reached the poor Negro — the much talked about Headstart — has been waiting to be re-funded since last September. Federal policies have done nothing but reinforce the inadequacies of the state welfare programs because of federal insistence on working through state structures rather than involving the poor.

Seeing that the present programs of the state and federal government were not dealing with their needs, the evicted and poor undertook an action that illustrated their drastic situation. On Monday, January 24th, a call was sent out to the poor people of Mississippi from the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, the Delta Ministry, and the Mississippi Freedom Labor Union to come to a conference to discuss food, land, money, and jobs. By Thursday night, 500 people had arrived at the Mt. Beulah Conference Center. By late Sunday, approximately 1,000 people had come to discuss these problems. But there was little reason to discuss people's needs; the question was — how to get the basics of life. Understanding that they had no weapons except their physical presence, the dispossessed of Mississippi decided to move onto federal land.

On Monday, January 31st, a group of 50 people moved onto the deactivated Air Force Base at Greenville. That evening, they issued a list of their demands, which is enclosed. By Tuesday, the number at Greenville had doubled. When asked why he was at

the Base, one man answered, "The man don't want me no mo'," and that he had been put out of his home. Then when asked where he lived, he answered simply, "here," indicating the Greenville barracks. Another woman who came to the Base with her children remarked that it was warmer in the abandoned building than in the home from which she had come.

After the evicted were removed from the Base by Air Police, they went to Tribbett (Tent City) to join people who had been evicted from the plantations last spring during the Freedom Labor Union strike. The population at Tribbett grew from 40 to 200 in a few days. The people at Tribbett represent many more because many of the adults had left their families behind with relatives. At present, men are building floors for two new tents and the women are starting a volunteer Headstart. There are many other people across the Delta of Mississippi who wish to join those at Tribbett. They see no future for themselves and their children in their present situation. They hope that by coming together with other people in the same condition, they can find some solutions.

Tribbett can no longer hold or feed all of those displaced by the state of Mississippi. Land and food are still needed. Those who came together at the Poor People's Conference are discussing programs to meet their needs but none can be accomplished until the bare necessities of life are supplied.

In Washington, Congressman Joseph Resnick has uncovered the fact that not only does the federal government refuse to face this "national disaster" by housing people on federal land, but now they intend to turn over the 13 million dollar Greenville Air Force Base to the City of Greenville. Resnick, yesterday on the floor of the House, called upon the government to turn the land and barracks over to the poor people of Mississippi and, since the state of Mississippi has already demonstrated its unwillingness to distribute government food surplus fairly, the Department of Agriculture to undertake the distribution program directly.

**YOUR HELP IS NEEDED NOW:**

1. Funds are needed for food and tents. (Make checks out to MFDP)
2. Funds are needed to purchase land since the government has to date refused to make federal lands available.
3. Telegrams and letters should be sent to the President, the Secretary of Agriculture, Sargent Shriver, Speaker McCormack, Senator Mansfield, and your own congressman, calling upon the federal government to make all federal lands in Mississippi available to the poor and to administer directly an emergency food program to meet the present crisis.