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## REPORT ON ALABAMA ELECTIONS

Primary elections were held in several states on May 3, but most political observers watched Alabama's race for an indication of the effect of the ranks of new Negro voters on the election. Most observers agree that the Negro vote had no significance on a state level. The most important races, from the point of view of Alabama Negroes occurred on a local county level.

In county after county across the soil-rich Alabama Black Belt where civil rights struggles took the form of demonstrators in the streets in previous years, Negroes poured into the voting places, thousands for the first time.

Farmers, sharecroppers and professionals, housewives and domestics piled into pick-up trucks, rode taxicabs and walked. At Hayneville in Lowndes County, a blind white man was led to the courthouse voting place by two Negro women. Federal poll watchers numbering about 300 stood by in seven counties to report any evidence of interference with Negroes seeking to vote. Assistant U. S. Attorney General John Doar took personal command of the vote watch, working out of the federal building in Selma.

Voters clogged polling places in Jefferson County (Birmingham), where Negro registration has more than doubled in the past year. More than 300 persons were in line at Bessemer City Hall when the polls opened. Lines 2½ blocks long were seen at two predominantly Negro voting places in Dallas County. Turnouts at other polling places ranged from about normal to "packed".

Because Alabama is the first state to feel the impact of mass Negro registration under the new Voting Rights Act, Southern segregationists and civil rights leaders were watching the election for clues to what may lie ahead for Louisiana, Mississippi and other Deep South states.

Negro registration did not have the effect Washington might have hoped for with the passage of the civil rights act. Negro voter registration in Alabama has been offset by white registration and the effect was evident in the voting, where on a state level, Wallace's segregationists forces scored an easy victory. The number of Negroes registered to vote, 235,348 is more than twice as large as the 113,268 registered prior to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Today they constitute almost half, 48.9

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per cent of the total number of eligible Negroes, compared to 23.5 per cent of those eligible last year. But the number of whites registered to vote has risen by more than 100,000 in less than a year, from 1,064,645 on the voter rolls last August to 1,175,122 now on the rolls. Today 86.9 per cent of the eligible whites are registered, compared to 78.7 per cent last August.

Despite the greatly-expanded Negro vote, no Negro will be in the State Senate. The only Negro seeking a seat in the upper house--Lonnie Brown--finished third in a three man race in Monroe, Conecuy, Wilcox and Clarke counties. Of 12 Negroes running for the legislature, only six gained run-off spots in close races where the white vote was split. The white vote won't be split in the run-off, to be sure.

The overwhelming support given Mrs. Wallace may prove embarrassing to Negroes loyal to the regular Democratic Party. 100,000 voters in Alabama banged away on voting machines all day Tuesday content only to vote in the governor's race in what "The Birmingham News" calls, "a massive protest that Alabama voters registered..." that could, "...be costly in the long run." The paper says, "The nation was to know thereby that Alabama stood firm--as ever--for causes which apparently are gone with the wind and for 'rights' that seemingly are irretrievably lost.

"The approximate 400,000 who thus cast a protest against past wrongs nevertheless, could be risking great wrongs for Alabama in the future years. By overwhelmingly nominating Mrs. Wallace Tuesday, they could be entrenching a Wallace dynasty which probably could far exceed anything that Arkansas Governor Faubus established after 1956...

"If Wallace could successfully mastermind the record shattering nomination of his wife today with present state government resources at his finger-tips, what could he do in the future with a considerable expanding political sphere?"

Mrs. Wallace, the 39-year-old wife of the incumbent racist governor, running in his stead because he could not run to succeed himself, piled up an early lead and ran steadily from there on. She commanded 54 percent of the vote in the early morning hours and slipped slightly to 52 percent in later returns. Mrs. Wallace swept the threat of nine male opponents--including two former governors and a former congressman--to pile up a lead in virtually every county. She led in the home counties of her nine opponents.

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Mrs. Wallace lost only three counties--Greene, Hale and Macon--which are predominantly Negro--and of course, was not nominated by the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (Black Panther Party), the most important political movement in Lowndes.

Wallace said his wife's try for the Democratic nomination was successful because "We have voiced the people's feelings." He said, "The Democratic primary in Alabama is a vote of all the people and I consider that the same people who voted in the primary will be voting for us in the general election." Wallace did most of the speaking during the campaign tour that criss-crossed the state and promised to "continue the present administration." He lashed out at the national administration, the national and state press and promised nothing more than to give another four years of the current administration in office.

As one Lowndes County farmer said, "We must use the vote to get out of the cotton fields, and we can't do that by voting for the boss man."

Negro candidates have gained run-off spots in 12 contests for county offices. There will be five run-off races for county sheriff--returns indicated run-offs for sheriff in Hale, Perry, Macon and Bullock counties. The second primary will be May 31.

Fred Gray, a 35-year-old Negro attorney from Tuskegee, has won a run-off for a seat in the Alabama House of Representatives. His district--the 31st House of Representative District--includes Barbour County, the home of Governor Wallace and Macon and Bullock Counties, both heavily populated by Negroes. Gray said if he goes to the Legislature, he would work hard to make sure his district gets its full share of taxes. "We need educational facilities," he said. "And I hope to bring more industry into the area."

A SNCC spokesman said, "It must be remembered that the voting bill, which accelerated the rate of Negro voter registration, came about because of militants marching in the streets and court suits. The White House gave us nothing. We had to organize and take our rights."

It was reported in the New York Times and in other press that SNCC personnel had urged a boycott of the election. Rev. Andrew Young of SCLC said, "I don't think SNCC ever urged the people en masse not to vote. That SNCC tried to do was get small groups of people in several counties to nominate independent candidates. I assume they were successful in doing this because in some counties only 10 to 20 persons were required to nominate



candidates."

LOWNDES COUNTY REPORT

A revolutionary change has occurred in Lowndes County, Alabama where only a year ago Sheriff "Brother Love" Jackson declared to the few registered Negro voters, "If you black niggers and white niggers start some mess, I'll get my shot-gun and kill all you people." For May 3rd, Lowndes County was the scene of the most controversial political race in Alabama. At the First Baptist Church on the outskirts of Hayneville, 900 Negroes met to nominate 7 freedom candidates who will run against Lowndes Democratic candidates in the November general election.

The Lowndes County Freedom Organization did not split the vote but instead solidly united the vote behind freedom candidates. Close to a thousand Negroes participated in the Freedom Party Nominating Convention and only a few hundred went to the poles to vote in the Democratic Primary. A Lowndes County Freedom Party spokesman said, "To join with the racists in the Democratic Party would weaken and split the Negro vote into frustrated factions and give the racists a new cloak of respectability to hide behind."

Hayneville Sheriff Ryals had forbidden the Freedom Organization to use a vacant space near the courthouse for the convention saying it would cause "too much confusion". Justice Department Representative Charles Nessem said if the meeting were held at the courthouse it would be a "turkey shoot." Concerned that they comply with Alabama law (title 17, Section 414), which says political conventions must be held in the vicinity of the courthouse, the Freedom Organization made plans to hold the meeting. Leaders of the freedom party told the U. S. Justice Department that they would protect their own political convention in Hayneville, May 3rd if help was not forthcoming from either the local or federal governments.

It was only with the assurance of Probate Judge Harrell Hammond and Attorney General Richmond Flowers that the meeting would be legal, that the Freedom Organization decided to hold it at the First Baptist church, a half mile from the courthouse.

Thus white officials quickly and justly interpreted the law when the rights of the Lowndes County Negroes were backed up with the power of organized and determined numbers. Violence was a constant threat, May 3. But in this black belt community where a Negro majority has for the past

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year acted decisively and with unity there has been less violence than in other Alabama counties like Jefferson and Macon counties where Negroes play coalition politics.

Mr. William Cosby, Freedom Movement representative and Lowndes businessman has said of the changes Lowndes County has undergone, "It hasn't been good all the time. I met my pastor in the street last year and he told me I was going to die." Speaking at a March 27 celebration of the Lowndes County Freedom Organizations' 1st anniversary, Mr. Cosby said, "Lowndes Negroes have found where they stand. We have no contacts with the political structure--not even the board of education."

A deep concern of the Lowndes County Freedom Movement is how to gain control of the political machinery in the county; to take it from the hands of a minority of white landowners and place it in the hands of a majority of black landless. But there is serious question about the efficacy of the vote for the landless, the poor, those average income Negroes who earn about \$1,000 a year. In Lowndes County, the chairman of the county Democratic Committee, Robert Dickson, is a defendant in a federal court suit charging that he has evicted Negro tenant farmers from his land because they registered to vote. This same man, who controls the Democratic Party in Lowndes raised the qualifying fees for candidates in the primary from \$50 to \$500. It is questionable whether the right to vote can effectively counter such sheer power as persons like Mr. Dickson represent. Lowndes county is, in a profound sense, a test of American Democracy--Lowndes asks the question, is America also a democracy for the poor?

Mr. Cosby said that an important change in the Lowndes County atmosphere is that "whites are releasing information we couldn't get before about politics and farming. The movement has opened the eyes of many Negroes and whites. We're not willing to accept tokens anymore."

The Freedom Party's Convention, the first such convention since reconstruction, was held at 3:00 May 3 in a little church on the outskirts of Hayneville. The wooden pews, sticky with the hot weather, had never held a more serious congregation as seven persons were nominated in secret balloting of the thousand present. Those sharecroppers, laborers, educators, housewives and businessmen present had organized into one of the most controversial political groups in the nation. The cameras and batteries of lights of countless newsmen were grinding away.

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There was a Sunday afternoon quiet as the results of the balloting were read. Nominated were: Mr. Sidney Logan (42, Mr. Logan operates a truck farm on his own 80 acres.) for sheriff with a vote of 492. His opponent, Mr. Jesse Favors received 381 votes. Mr. Henry Ross ran unopposed for coroner, receiving 715 votes. Miss Alice Moore, 40, won the race for tax assessor with 852 votes. Miss Moore was born in Hicks Hill.) Mr. Frank Miles Jr., 35, (born in Lowndes county, he works for a furniture company dealer) was nominated for the office of tax collector with 489 votes. Mrs. Josephine Wagner, his opponent polled 362 votes. Mr. Robert Logan, 48, will run for board of education position #3. He works for Sears and Roebuck). Mrs. Bernice Kelly, his opponent received 330 votes. For board of education position #4, Mr. John Henson, 35, (born in Montgomery, he's a bricklayer who's lived in Lowndes County for 8 years) received 511 votes to his opponents', Mrs. Virginia White, 327. In board of education position #5, Mrs. Willie Mae Strickland received 604 votes ( 38 years old, Mrs. Strickland was born in Whitehall and is a housewife) to her opponents', Mrs. Fannie Bell Scott's 241.

Mr. John Hulett, LFO chairman, lead the meeting. Votes were deposited in cardboard boxes on tables in front of the church and as the votes were counted, the results were announced to the people. Reverend Willie Ricks gave an extemporaneous speech on the church steps about why you can't be black and be a democrat. The meeting peacefully adjourned.

#### WILCOX COUNTY REPORT

Three persons were nominated by the Wilcox County Freedom Organization. Mary Lee Allen was nominated for tax collector, James Austin for Road Commissioner and Alex Pettaway for tax assessor.

The SNCC staff arrived at the school house in Boykin where regular balloting was taking place about 9:15. People came over to the car to ask questions--if they had signed the petition for independents, could they vote in the freedom primary. If they held their vote, could they vote in November? After answering questions, the freedom party members proceeded to go into the school house and find out if they could hold the meeting of the Wilcox County Freedom Organization in an empty room which was not being used, for balloting. Daniel Taylor, who said that he had been temporarily appointed by the Justice Department to oversee the elections, told us that we had to be thirty feet away from the regular balloting, which would have been the

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case. He showed credentials and they showed him a copy of the Alabama Code which makes no such stipulation. After going over the code with him, he then told them that the room was now going to be used for people to mark their ballots in. They decided to hold their meeting right outside the door of the schoolhouse.

#### GREENE COUNTY REPORT

William Lee, Greene County's gun-less sheriff for years, has overcome an almost three-to-one Negro majority to win the Democratic nomination for another term in office. Lee was opposed by Thomas Gilmore, a 25-year-old Negro worker for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. It was Gilmore who often met Lee face to face during demonstrations in the Black Belt county. Since all the Negro candidates in Greene lost, the Negroes may be expected to support the freedom party candidates in the November elections.

A meeting to nominate freedom candidates was held in the courthouse on May 3, 1966. The meeting was opened by Mr. Wiley Bell, acting president of the Greene County Freedom Organization. When entering the room the probate judge's secretary remarked "The Panthers are here." Percy McShan was nominated for the office of tax assessor, Mrs. Alberta Branche was nominated for the office of tax collector. Rev. Thomas Gilmore was nominated for the office of sheriff. Mr. Pete Kirksey was nominated for the office of board of education. The certificates were signed by Mr. Wiley Bell and Miss Wynette Ball, recording secretary.

#### DALLAS COUNTY REPORT

The Dallas county race between Wilson Baker and Sheriff James Clark may be decided in court. The ballot counting was stopped when Clark challenged six boxes which he claimed he had found unattended. The boxes were locked in an office of the probate judge while attorneys representing the two candidates discussed the issue. Whoever wins the democratic primary will face Samson Crum, 44 year old choice of the Independent Free Voters Association of Selma, Alabama. Crum, who commutes daily to Birmingham to his post office job says "I had long hoped for the day when Alabama would drop its racial barriers so that any person qualified to run would be able to do so."

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The officials at the courthouse refused to let the Dallas County Freedom Organization hold their meeting there so it was held in the SNCC office.

Donald Jelink, Lawyer, said that according to Alabama Law, people who voted in the May 3rd democratic primary could have also voted in the Freedom primaries. They can vote in the November 8th, general election.

Sheriff	Samson Crum
Tax Assessor	Addie Lily
Tax Collector	Mr. Horace D. Griffin
Selma District	Mrs. Agatha Harville
West Dallas District	Mr. Roosevelt McElroy
Southside District	Mr. Wilmer Walker
Fort District	, Mr. A. D. Bush
County School Board	Mr. George Sallie Mrs. Nona N. Day
Coroner	Mr. Nathan Payne