

The White House Conference

About two weeks before the White House Conference "To Fulfill These Rights"; FDCM was approached by several students from Howard (some of whom had been very active with Free D.C.) about a program that they wanted to carry on during the White House Conference. They proposed a 66 hour marathon (plan was attacked). The idea was to distribute literature, talk to delegates about the lack of the right to vote for D.C. and sell Free D.C. Buttons. After much discussion, Free D.C. decided to support the project. Not to support it meant that we would have lost the only possible inroad into Howard because these were the most active and radical students there.

In the meantime, I had received an invitation to the White House Conference. There was much discussion as to whether I should go. Some people felt that there was an advantage in going as a representative of the Free C.C., while making it clear that I supported the national SNCC's position. Others felt that the conference was no good; therefore the people there were no good. After much discussion, it was decided that FDCM would have no delegate to the Conference (attack is first page of press release). After this was settled, there was a great deal of discussion as to whether I should even be on the premises. I felt that my presence on the premises would give the Howard students support. Moreover, a number of us felt that if 6 or 700 delegates wore Free C.C. buttons, this would be a victory over Joe Rauh, Jr. (of MFDP fame). In addition, there was discussions as to whether to join Julius Hobson's picket line. (About a month before the Conference, Hobson had said that he would have a 1000 man all-black

picket line). Many of us felt that if we were going to picket the Conference (the Sheraton Park is one of the worst places to picket because of layout and size) we should have started planning two or three weeks earlier. Moreover, the SNCC boycott had brought forth very little positive response. Most of the sentiment was negative, even among grass roots people. After thorough discussion, the majority of people in Free D.C. decided that FDCM would not join Hobson's Thursday morning picket line. FDCM also decided that during the picketing, no one would cross the line to even enter the Hotel to sell buttons.

Julius had a picket line of about 75 persons (40 from New York and about 30-35 from Washington).

On the opening night of the Conference FDCM had a rally across the street from the Conference. About a hundred delegates showed up. I attended the Conference in body only. I never registered, nor did I attend any of the sessions. I mostly lobbied for the delegates going on record supporting the "Right to vote for Washington D.C."

Joe Rauh and others were trying to get "their" resolution through each of the twelve panels. We wanted to get a "Free D.C. Voting Rights" resolution through. After much lobbying, the Rauh forces threw in the towel and Free D.C. got its resolution through 11 of the 12 panels. This in my opinion was a local political victory.

The Howard students collected about 1500 signatures from the delegates and sold about 500 buttons.

Marion Barry, Jr. and Washington SNCC
Free D.C. Movement (FDCM)