

BOLIVAR COUNTY

Handbook

for

Voter Education

Produced by
Bolivar County Education Committee

WHAT POLITICS IS ALL ABOUT

Politics is about our lives.

It is about whether the roads are any good.

It is about what our kids learn in school.

It is about what the sheriff does.

It is about whether we have work to do.

Politics is about who has power.

The President listens to people who have power.

So does the sheriff.

Power is votes to elect people, or not elect them.

Power is money to pay for election ads.

The people with power get what they want.

Now just a few people have power.

They get control of government money.

They get government contracts for their factories.

They get the tax assessor to list their land at a low value.

We do not have money.

Our power must come from ourselves. From our numbers.

From us being together.

We must have power for us.

So we control Bolivar County.

So the President listens to us.

So that we get what we need.

This is a book about how things work. It is a book about how power is used to keep us down.

And how we can use power to lift ourselves up.

BOLIVAR COUNTY

There are 54,464 people in Bolivar County. 36,663 of them are Negroes, 17,521, and 280 are others (Chinese, etc.). Two people out of three, in other words, are Negroes.

By beats, the population breaks down like this:

Beat 1 - 995 whites	2752 Negroes	(Gunnison)
Beat 2 -2820 whites	9444 Negroes	(Alligator, Duncan, Shelby, Md. Bayou)
Beat 3 -1796 whites	8988 Negroes	(Merigold, Pace, Cleveland)
Beat 4 -8866 whites	10092 Negroes	(RoseGale, Beulah, Benoit)
Beat 5 -3044 whites	5387 Negroes	(Boyle, Shaw)

Bolivar County is a cotton county. Nearly 10% of the state's cotton crop is grown in the county. Large plantations owned by whites take up most of the land. Of 300,000 acres of cropland harvested, only 20,000 is owned by Negroes.

Of 8681 Negroes employed in 1960, 5297 worked in farming, as farmers or day workers, and 1291 worked as domestics. Only 236 had manufacturing jobs. Because of the cotton economy, most families are very poor. Half the Negro families made less than \$1200 a year. Some 42% of them lived on plantations. And half of them had less than 4.7 years of education.

The County Government of Bolivar County

The county government is elected every four years. The next general election for county officers will be on Nov. 7, 1967.

At this election, Bolivar County will elect a sheriff, five supervisors, the tax assessor, the circuit clerk, the chancery clerk, the superintendent of education, constables and justices of the peace, a state Senator, and three state representatives.

The Sheriff enforces the law and collects the taxes. C.W. Capps, Jr. is Sheriff of Bolivar County. He is not allowed to succeed himself. Capps is President of the Mississippi Association of Sheriffs. He owns a 2,000 acre plantation, and he is a Director of the Delta Council. Being Sheriff pays a lot of money, because the Sheriff gets a percentage of the taxes he collects.

The Board of Supervisors consists of five members, one from each beat. Each supervisor must own \$300 dollars worth of property. The supervisors set the property tax for the county. They decide how much money will be collected for roads, schools, and running the county government. The board of supervisors sets election precinct boundaries.

Each supervisor has charge of keeping up the county roads in his district.

The Tax Assessor lists a value for each piece of real estate in the county, except for railroad and power company properties which the state assesses. The plantation owners want their land assessed very low so that they won't have to pay high taxes on it. Since they run the county, cultivatable farm land with improvements is listed at an average value of \$38.71! (In Jackson County the average value is listed at \$1150 an acre!)

If we could elect a tax assessor, he could list the land closer to its sale value. Then we could use the money to pay for good school, roads and bridges.

The Circuit Clerk keeps county records and also is appointed by the Governor to register voters. The Circuit Clerk of Bolivar County wouldn't obey the Voting Rights Act of 1965 until Federal Registrars were sent to the county.

A new state law allows the Circuit Clerk to spend one day a month registering voters in each precinct.

The Superintendent of Education must be a licensed teacher with four year's experience. He sets policy for the county schools.

The Constable is elected by the voters of each beat. He is a law officer. He also serves legal papers for the Justice of the Peace. There are no special qualifications for being Constable. The Constable is paid \$4.00 for each case he handles.

The Justice of the Peace handles small lawsuits, and criminal cases where the penalty is only to the county farm, or a fine. He does not have to be a lawyer or have any special qualifications. The 3rd, 4th, and 5th Beats each elect two J.P.s; the 1st and 2nd only elect one each.

The names of the county officers who are serving now are:

Sheriff - C. W. Capps, jr.

Chancery Clerk - Hubert B. Boykin

Circuit Clerk - Mrs. Walter Lewis

Superintendent of Education - Lewis I. Myers

Tax Assessor - G. D. Criss

County Attorney - John White Valentine

Coroner and Ranger - John F. Fletcher

Supervisors

1st Beat - O. J. Scott, jr.

2nd Beat - W. A. Welshans

3rd Beat - Max L. Dilworth

4th Beat - Milton Smith

5th Beat - Elmer L. Prewitt

Justice of the Peace

1st Beat - Leo H. McGee

2nd Beat - Oma J. Reams

3rd Beat - Alex J. Hively, Joseph Jeffreys

4th Beat - J. D. Wiggins, L. T. Michie

5th Beat - Uriah Ray, Wayman Reel

Constable

1st Beat - John L. Coleman

2nd Beat - Earl Drurey

3rd Beat - P. H. Raiford

4th Beat - Otis L. Hill

5th Beat - Stanley H. Weeks

COUNTY ELECTIONS

There are two ways to get your name on the ballot on Nov. 7, 1967. You can run as an independent, or you can run in the Democratic party primary and win it.

If you run as an independent, you must give the election commission a petition by June 9th. This petition must be signed by 10% of the registered voters in the election district you are running from. But if there are more than 5,000 registered voters in the election district, you need only to have 500 signatures on your petition.

The names of the county election commissioners are: Jewel Pace (Pace), John L. Hatcher (Cleveland), John L. Pearson (Rose Dale).

CITY AND TOWN GOVERNMENT

The City governments are elected every four years. The current governments were elected in June, 1965, so new officers will not be elected until 1969.

Most town governments consist of a mayor and five aldermen. The town may elect a clerk and a town marshal, or the board of aldermen may choose them. Cleveland has seven aldermen because it has more than 10,000 people, and Rosedale has seven aldermen because it has more than 10,000 people, and Rosedale has a special form of government.

The board of aldermen meets with the mayor on the first Tuesday of each month. They are elected by all the voters of the town so that Negroes won't be able to elect an alderman unless they take all the city offices. In city elections, if there are five aldermen positions up, you must vote for five men or none of your votes count.

The board of aldermen make laws for the town, called ordinances. Ordinances cover building, plumbing, electrical codes for public safety; contracts made by the city; the tax rate of the city; and minor laws.

The mayor can vote to break a tie in meetings of the board of aldermen. He can veto measures the board passes. He also acts as judge in most small towns.

There are many small towns in Bolivar County. Here are the officers for each town.

Alligator

Sol Kline, Mayor

George Anderson, Billy Ross Butler, jr., R.L. Burchfield,

Y.T. Eggleston, Robert Kaplan - Alderman

P. D. Alston - Clerk

Benoit

W. W. Rotchild, Mayor

A.F. Estes, H.R. Wilson, W.L. Davidson, Aubrey Walker,

Roy D. Dresher - Aldermen

Beulah

William D. Arnold, Mayor

James E. Frazier, George A. Hale, Max J. Davidson, G.W. Scott,

Edmund Yung.

Boylal

W. F. Tims, Mayor

Preston Riley, Mills E. Rogers, T.H. Jones, Edgar R. Jones,

George L. Evans

City of Cleveland

Nattie Bishop, Mayor

Mrs. Luper Cole, Clerk

W.C. Dempsey, Marshal

Homer L. Sledge, W.E. Murphy, B.Q. Davis, K.C. Simpson,

Neven Sledge, Clayton West, Wiley Felts - Aldermen

Duncan

T.H. Boschett, Mayor

T.L. Fullilove, jr., J.R. Kelly, W.F. Erwin, E.L. McMurchy, jr.,

M.D. Dunn.

Gunnison

E. B. Scruggs, Mayor

John Glorioso, Mrs. C.E. Haag, E.M. Hale, sr., N.M. Jacobs,

Joe Romando - Aldermen

Merigold

C. M. Clark, Mayor

Hoyt C. Daves, Wm. Latham, John J. Meyer, T.E. Pemble,

James A. Westerfield - Aldermen

Mound Bayou

Wesley James Liddell, sr., Mayor

R.W. Jones, Herman Johnson, Mrs. Legora A. Reed, Mrs. Sallye

W.Griffin, Rev. C.L. Woodley - Aldermen

Miss Minnie L. Fisher, Clerk

Matthew Harvard, Marshal

Pace

O. M. Souter, Mayor

J.O. Box, Clerk

W.S. Redden, W.P. Skelton, Floyd Thornhill, R.J.Glaze,

J.V. Newman - Aldermen

Rosedale (Private Charter)

J.L. Wilson jr., Mayor

H.H. Lawler, W.A. Welshans jr. - Councilmen

Shaw

P.M. Bennett, Mayor

J. H. Little, Clerk

W.H. Griffin, Marshal

Earnest Greganti, H.M. Jordan, Raymond Sandroni, Roy Simpson,

Louis G. Vaise - Aldermen

Shelby

C.S. Morrison, Mayor

Sam C. Demarco, C.E. Denton, W.G. Phillips, E.G. Shelby,

W.J. Toler - Aldermen

H.B. Rose, Clerk

Winstonville

Will Byndum, Mayor

Arthur Holmes, Steward Mason, Meddie Bedford, Bertha W.

Sanders, Flotilla S. Norman - Aldermen

Will Coleman - Marshal

THE SCHOOL BOARD

There is an elected county school board. There are six school districts in the county, each of which has its own trustees.

The board may either buy supplies and equipment itself, or may appoint school officials to do the job.

The board gets federal, state and local funds to pay for the cost of the education.

The board has the power to change or do away with any of the school districts.

This year, only the member of the board of education from Beat 5 will be elected. The board members serve for six years.

The members of the school board are:

E.B. Scruggs

J.L. Wilson, jr.

Oscar O. Wolfe, jr.

S.F. Douglass

M.L. Turpin, Jr.

In order to get Federal money, the school district must sign a compliance form saying it will let Negro children into the formerly all-white school. The county can get money under Title I of the Education Act of 1965, for each child whose family makes less than \$2000 a year.

Mississippi spends less on the schooling of each child than any other state in the country.

THE POWER STRUCTURE

Besides the county officers, there are some men who are very important in the county who may not hold any office.

Delta & Pine Land Company is the largest plantation in the Delta. It was founded by Charles Scott, who served in the Confederate Army. Scott brought Italians over and encouraged them to buy small farms. But now Delta & Pine Land is owned by Fine Spinner & Doublers, Limited of Manchester, England. Minor S. Gray is the President of Delta Pine. He is Director of the Delta Council. This is an organization of the leading men in the Delta. In 1962 Gray helped Jamie Whitten win a seat in Congress over Frank Smith, because he thought Frank Smith supported John F. Kennedy too much.

Walter Sillers, jr. was the most powerful politician in the county for years. He died this year, but he kept the state backwards by fighting against all change for many years. When Sillers' father was in the legislature, the other Representative from Bolivar County was a Negro. Although Sillers lived in a small town, the largest corporations in the state paid him to do legal work.

William B. Alexander, jr. is a lawyer in Cleveland. Like Sillers he took his father's seat, in the state legislature. Now he is running for Congress as a Republican. Alexander is a director of Misceramic Tile Co. in Cleveland. He was for Goldwater for Pres. in 1964.

THE STATE GOVERNMENT

The State Government includes the Governor and other state officers and the State Legislature, as well as the State Courts.

The Governor is Paul B. Johnson, of Hattiesburg. Johnson's term runs out next year, and he cannot follow himself in office. Johnson was elected as a strong segregationist. But this hurt business coming into the state, so he began to call for law and order.

The governor sends his ideas to the legislature -- like the voting laws of June 1965, and legalizing liquor. He can call them into special session when needed.

He is commander of the Highway Patrol, which he sends to racial trouble spots. He can also call out the National Guard in emergencies.

The governor appoints many boards which do things like give out road contracts, choose school books, and try to get industries to come to Mississippi.

The Agriculture and Industry (A. and I.) Board is the agency that tries to get companies to come to Mississippi. To get them to come, they passed a law so that new factories wouldn't have to pay taxes for ten years. Also, towns can build factories and lease them to companies (BAWI bonds). The state also passed a law to make it hard for labor unions to organize in the state.

The main other state officers are the lieutenant governor and the attorney general.

The lieutenant governor takes the place of the governor if he should die.

The attorney general is the lawyer for the state. He fights suits in court for the state.

There are 52 State Senators and 122 State representatives. The state legislature passes all laws. They also decide how much money the state will spend. Mississippi spends less money on schools and welfare than any other state.

The state legislature sets the rules for people getting welfare. They set the penalty for crimes. They say what the county and city officers can do.

Bolivar county has three state representatives and one state Senator. There was a special election for the state representative post left empty when Rep. Walter Sillers died.

The State Senator is William B. Alexander, jr. of Cleveland, who is running for Congress as a Republican.

The other two representatives are Dana C. Moore, jr. and J.A. Thigpen. Both are members of the Citizens Council. Moore is a lawyer, and Thigpen works as a real estate broker. John L. Pearson, Walter Sillers' nephew, a lawyer, was elected unopposed to fill his uncle's seat.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The President, the Departments, Congress, and the Federal Courts make up the Federal government.

Mississippi gets money for welfare, medicare, poverty programs, education and agriculture from the Federal government. Mississippi's Congressmen and Senators have voted against these Federal programs. Yet they try to control them when they come to the state.

THE PRESIDENT

The President decides what the country should do at home and abroad; he sends his ideas to Congress which must set aside money for them. The President makes foreign policy - he decides what this country should do in Viet Nam, Europe and other foreign places. He makes treaties with other countries with the advice of the Senate.

Congress is supposed to vote before the country goes to war. But in Korea and Viet Nam, American soldiers have been sent into battle without war being declared.

President Johnson is also head of the Democratic Party. He uses his power as President to build a machine that will deliver votes for him in 1968. He is trying to put men who will deliver votes for him in charge of CDGM - the new MAP board.

The Congress

Congress is the Senate, which has 100 members, and the House of Representatives, which has 435 members. Each state sends two Senators to Washington. How many Representatives (congressmen) it sends depends on how many people live in the state. Mississippi sends five Congressmen to Washington.

Congress is divided into committees. Each bill goes to a certain committee. The Poverty program goes through the Education and Labor Committee; Adam Clayton Powell is Chairman of that Committee.

The longer a Congressman sits in the House, the higher he rises. Committee chairman are the members who have been in the House the longest. Most of them are Southerners.

Mississippi's Senators are James O. Eastland and John C. Stennis. Bolivar county is now in the 1st Congressional District; Thomas G. Abernathy is the Congressman who is supposed to represent this county.

All of them voted against civil rights, poverty programs, medicare, federal aid to education, and other programs to help poor people. But Republicans Prentiss Walker (who is running for Senator) and William Alexander (who is running for Congress) say Eastland and Abernathy are not enough against these programs.

Senators are elected for six years. Stennis was reelected in 1964, and Eastland is running again this year. Congressmen are elected every two years.

Mr. Dock Drummond does not believe that either Alexander or Abernathy represents poor people. So he is running as an independent candidate against both of them.

The Departments

The Laws which are proposed by the President and approved by Congress are carried out by the Departments such as the Department of Justice, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and the Department of Agriculture.

The President appoints men to head these departments. He approves or disapproves of what they do, if they take important actions.

The Department of Justice is under Attorney General Ramsey Clark. He is the chief law officer of the United States. The Attorney General can send Federal registrars to a county where the Voting Rights Act is not being followed.

Also included within the Justice Department are the Community Relations Service Division, and the F.B.I. The Community Relations Service is supposed to settle race trouble in communities. The Civil Rights Division brings lawsuits to make restaurants serve Negroes, and school desegregation suits. They also prepare cases against people who violate Negroes civil rights. But they only very rarely act with the power they have. The President is afraid that if he takes strong action to protect our rights, white people won't vote for him.

In six years, only one law enforcement officer has been sent to jail for brutality. And he was sent to jail for contempt of court.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare is headed by John W. Gardner. It includes the Office of Education, which gives money to school districts, and the Bureau of Family Services, which is in charge of Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Old Age Assistance, and Disability Programs. They set general rules for the states to follow. Under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Federal money could not go to segregated programs. The Office of Education makes each school district sign a compliance form saying they will have "freedom of choice."

The Office of Economic Opportunity is headed by R. Sargent Shriver. It is in charge of the poverty program. At first, poor people were allowed some voice, as the law says they should.

But now C.E.O. wants to give money only to people who will deliver votes for President Johnson, and not cause too much trouble.

Bolivar County is poor because a few big white folks own all the land. The Poverty Program has done nothing about this, because the big white folks have Senator Eastland to speak for them, and others like him. They have political power. We need some of that, too!

The Department of Agriculture is headed by Orville Freeman. The Department does things for big farmers. They wrote the cotton program to force small farmers out of business. They do not pay attention to the little man. Why? Because of Eastland, and because men who speak for big farmers give money to President Johnson. Cortney Cortwright (president of the National Cotton Council, from Rolling Fork), Charles Sayre (president of the Staple Cotton Cooperative Association), Ernest G. Spivey (president of the Mississippi Federated Coops), and Leroy Percy (owner of Trail Lake plantation) each gave \$1,000 to Johnson in 1964.

The Department has charge of the F.H.A. program, the A.S.C.S. and other farm programs. These, too, are run for big farmers.

The Federal Courts

The Federal courts include the District Courts, the Circuit Courts of Appeals, and the Supreme Court. Federal judges are appointed for life by the President. But actually District judges are picked by the Senators from that state. They are political supporters of the President. Judge Claude F. Clayton was appointed by Eisenhower, whom he supported in 1952.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals hears cases which are not decided in the District Court. Most of the Judges of the Fifth Circuit are good; but James P. Coleman, former Governor of Mississippi, was appointed to the Court even though he is a segregationist.

The Supreme Court consists of nine men appointed by the President. They decide whether laws follow the constitution. In 1954 they decided that racial segregation was not constitutional.

Such cases are redistricting Congress and the State Legislature, voting suits, school desegregation suits, and federal crimes are heard by Federal judges.

Federal judges don't depend on votes. But they do depend on the Senators and the President. So they may be able to follow their own conscience more than other officials. Or they may misuse their power like racist Judge Cox.