

To Get That Power

More than 110 Negroes have qualified as candidates in the 1967 Mississippi elections; running for offices from state senator to justice of the peace.

They are running so that their people -- the Black Community -- will have a voice in determining their own future.

For the first time in 90 years, Black people are seeking power in Mississippi.

The Building of Power

More than 190,000 Negroes are registered to vote in Mississippi. In some counties Negroes hold overwhelming voting majorities; in others there will soon be Black majorities. In these and other counties, where majorities exist in individual beats, Negroes are running as candidates for sheriff, constable, justice of the peace, state senator and state representative.

The majority are candidates for local offices. These are the elected officials who have the most effect on Mississippians. The county boards of supervisors administer tax monies, administer welfare programs and effect economic structures within the community.

After three years of intensive work and struggle to build voting power, Black Mississippians this year have the opportunity to gain the power that will allow them a voice in determining their own futures.

Twenty-three of Mississippi's 82 counties have Negroes running in either the August party primaries or as independents in the November general election. The candidates are running from counties and county beats where there are Black voting majorities. County-wide majorities have already been achieved in Coahoma, Bolivar, Holmes, Madison and Issaquena counties. Majorities are possible in several others before the July 7 deadline.

Success of Mississippi Negroes in the 1967 elections will be determined largely by the amount of resources available to them in their campaigns. In view of the severely limited resources, Priorities must and have been named. The concentration must be given to those areas where victory in November is a real possibility. The amount of available resources will determine the ability to widen the area of priorities.

Only when Black people are elected to public office will real and lasting changes be possible in Mississippi. The year is 1967 and the power must be won in November.

The Need for Resources

In the summer of 1964 people and money flowed into Mississippi from the North to begin a massive campaign to register Negro voters. In the ensuing three years the work and struggle has continued and expanded, but the once plentiful resources have become less and less apparent.

The effect of lessening resources on the Black community has been both good and bad. With fewer and fewer outsiders involved in the struggle of making the Black community's voice heard, leadership within the community itself has emerged and developed. Organization of the community has come from within.

Intensive work in political education and leadership training began in November 1966. The massive job of reaching each and every newly registered voter with political education has been financed and carried on the past eight months primarily by the communities themselves. But the Black community's resources, limited from the beginning, are beginning to disappear.

In the Delta, two-thirds Negro, the median annual income of Negroes in 1960 was only \$465. The predominately agricultural economy in the Delta, with its large cotton plantations, is dominated almost exclusively by Whites. Negroes who once earned \$3 a day by hand labor in the fields are now unemployed by the thousands because of mechanization and the unwillingness of land owners to pay the federal minimum wage.

In 1959 the Mississippi Employment Security Commission estimated there were more than 60,000 Negroes employed in the hand picking of cotton (primarily in the Delta); in October 1966 the commission estimated only 2,000 Negroes were employed in the cotton fields.

The Black community's resources, limited though they were, have been expended at great sacrifice in the past eight months to continue its struggle for a voice in determining its own future. These resources are almost gone -- at a time when they are desperately needed to clutch the victory almost in hand.



Mrs. Fanny Lou Hamer, Ruleville, Mississippi is probably the most renowned civil rights leader in Mississippi. She is an independent candidate for state senator from Sunflower County, the home of Sen. James O. Eastland. A freedom candidate for Congress in 1964, Mrs. Hamer was a leader in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party congressional challenge. She was brutally beaten in Winona, Mississippi in 1963 during voter registration work.



Mr. George Raymond, CORE worker in Madison County since 1964, is a candidate for state representative. Madison County has a registered Negro majority of 7,000 against a white registration of 6,000. Mr Raymond came to McComb, Mississippi in 1961 with the Freedom Riders and was instrumental in planning the massive civil rights activities in the state during the summer of 1964.

Mrs. Unita Blackwell, independent candidate for Justice of the Peace in Issaquena County, has been active in civil rights since 1964 when she began working on voter registration. Active in school desegregation in Issaquena and neighboring Sharkey county, she was a delegate with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in Atlantic City.



Mr. Robert Smith, candidate for sheriff in Holmes County, leads a 1,300 vote Negro majority and excellent chances of electing Negro candidates to office. Mr. Smith has been a high school mathematics teacher in Lexington 19 years. There is Negro majority in four of the five Holmes County beats, with very good chances in the November election.

Mr. Kermit Stanton is a candidate for supervisor in Bolivar County, Beat 3, which represents the best possibility for winning in the November election. There is more than a 3 to 1 registered Negro majority. Mr. Stanton is a self-employed auto mechanic in the town of Shelby. A leadership role in the Shelby school boycott in April 1967 made him a serious candidate for public office.





Mr. Joseph Williams, candidate for supervisors in the Beat 4 of Yazoo County, is the first candidate to undergo intensive intimidation from whites since qualifying as a candidate. A farmer, his credit at local stores has been cancelled and he has been threatened with having his home burned.

Mr. Johnny Applewhite, active in Freedom Democratic Party work in Carroll County, is running for constable from the only beat with a registered Negro voting majority. There are candidates for supervisor and justice of the peace in the same beat.



Mr. E. W. Steptoe, Sr., of McComb, Mississippi, is running for state representative in the August Democratic primary from a three county area, which includes Amite, Wilkinson and Franklin counties. Active over the past 20 years in Mississippi civil rights, he organized the Amite County chapter of the NAACP in the 1950's.

Priority Counties Need:

Campaign Managers

(two full-time, \$60 each
per week) \$2,640.00

Transportation

Campaign managers (\$25 each
per week) 1,100.00

Candidates (average 7 per
county, \$25 per week) 3,850.00

Workshops for precinct workers,
candidates, campaign managers,
(transportation to and from) 200.00

Voting instruction (6 workers, \$25 each
per week for 1-month before primary
and 1-month before general) 1,500.00

Election (turning out the vote:
40 cars at \$5 each, primary
and general) 5,000.00

Campaign Literature

Bumper stickers, handbills,
canvasser handbooks, posters,
poll watcher instruction, buttons
Total 5,000.00

Communications

Leaflets 300.00
Candidate brochures (\$300 for
each of 7 candidates) 2,100.00
Radio advertising 500.00
Television advertising 500.00
Newspaper advertising 300.00
Sound trucks 300.00

Facilities

Office (\$50 per month) 300.00
Telephone (\$125 per month) 725.00
Secretary (\$60 per week) 1,320.00

TOTAL \$25,635.00

Mississippians United To Elect Negro Candidates

has been organized to find resources to support the election of Negro candidates in 1967.

The committee has chosen eight counties as priority areas --

Amite

Bolivar

Carroll

Holmes

Issaquena

Madison

Sunflower

Yazoo

Resources will be used first to meet the needs in these priority areas. Additional resources will be used in campaigns of Negro candidates in the other 15 counties.

Make checks payable to:

Mississippians United To Elect Negro Candidates

P. O. Box 202

Greenville, Mississippi 38701