



MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY NEWSLETTER

NO - 2.

~ APRIL 4th 1965 ~

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507½ Farish Street,
Jackson, Mississippi.
948-4038.

THE CONGRESSIONAL CHALLENGE HEARINGS.

"...We are engaged with a systematic intimidation from every institution within the State from the Highway Patrol to the State Legislature to the Klu Klux Klan..." Lawrence Guyot - April 13, 1965.

"...The Challenge is not simply a challenge to the Congressmen, but a case of deciding between right and wrong. I want to see if the US Constitution has any meaning for Negroes..." Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer. April 3, 1965.

The Congressional Challenge hearings have just ended. They were the final depositions in Mississippi to be taken by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

Now the testimony from this rebuttal period and the previous 40 day period (Jan 4 - Feb. 12th) will be sent to the U.S. Congress. It is this body which will decide the outcome of the Challenge.

The Members of Congress will decide whether to seat or unseat Mississippi's five Congressman-elect. They will do so on the basis of evidence offered by the FDP, and a legal brief offered by the Congressmen.

At the Jackson hearings, which lasted three days, testimony was given by people from all over the State - McComb, Vicksburg, Laurel, Jefferson County, Grenville, Moss Point, Greenwood, Jackson, Indianola, Ruleville, and Amite County.

The new evidence showed that the State has not changed. It showed that since Jan 4 this year pressure is still being brought against Negroes who try to register to vote, who try to peacefully demonstrate against discrimination.

People testified about the burning of the Indianola Freedom Center, about the beating of Mrs. Quinn, the arrests at Greenville...

The Congressmen did not send any attorneys to represent them. They said the hearings were illegal. The FDP replied that this was a false argument. They said the hearings were provided for under a Federal Statute.

The question is now whether the Congress will consider this material or evidence from a human and moral point and unseat these illegally elected Congressmen - or will they still play politics with the Black man's destiny?

THE DEPOSITION HEARINGS IN JACKSON

The Testimonies -

Below are just some of the testimonies given by people who came to the Hearings.

Joyce Brown, 17, an MSU loader from McComb, Pike County :

"On February 24th there was a march on the courthouse in Magnolia. There were about 80 people, the majority of them students, and we were protesting the literacy test and discrimination against Negroes. We sang Freedom songs and carried signs, such as "One Man One Vote".

Well after the demonstration on Saturday the Judge issued an injunction to stop us demonstrating. But we decided to go with the demonstrations because we considered the injunction was illegal. It was not Constitutional.

Then we went to demonstrate outside the McComb courthouse. There were a lot of students and about 12 local people - adults. About 50 police officers were standing around and about the building, and Highway Patrolmen. They had covered their name plates with tape so they couldn't be seen.

Anyway the Police officer said "Get 'em boys", and we were all arrested and taken to the Pike County jail and put in the drunks pen. Then Police took out the COFO staff and me. I was the only student they took out, maybe because I was the spokesman for the group.

I was handcuffed all the way to Hinds County jail. They didn't take them off for an hour and a half. We were taken to the Highway Patrol headquarters where we were finger-printed and photographed. I was taken to the County jail and put in a cell by myself. That was Monday. On Wednesday we were taken out, handcuffed again and brought back to Magnolia. This time the handcuffs were very tight. I told the Highway Patrol officer about it several times but all he did was laugh.

Since Feb. 13 the Chief of Police, George Guy has been coming to our meetings in McComb. Guy just sits there, looking at people. His patrol cars drive along outside. Before Depositions Guy wasn't coming to our meetings.

Would I vote for Rep. John Bell Williams if I was 21? No - I wouldn't. Definitely NO.

Thomas Gibson, 54, from Greenville, Washington County:

I was arrested for demonstrating on March 25th this year. I was arrested by a Negro policeman. Chief of Police Burnley was there. Chief Burnley said if we didn't go the way he said to the Mills, we could not march. We were put into a truck. As near as I can hit there were about 12 in my truck. There were about 35 to 40 people marching. Anyone that tried to go down Delta - which is through a White neighborhood was arrested. Eighteen of us were arrested, some whites, the rest Negroes. They separated us in jail.

We were on our way to Greenville Mills to picket when Chief Burnley stopped us. He said that he was afraid that if we went down Delta the Klu Klux Klan would try something. That was what he said.

Racial relations? I don't think there's been any change over the past three months. I don't feel like that many whites like those demonstrations.

DEPOSITION HEARINGS (cont.)

Mrs. Dorothy Binum, 28, from Greenville, Washington County:

"I was arrested on March 23rd this year. What happened was that we tried to go down Solomon Street. This was not our normal way to the Mills and Chief Burnley said he would not let us go that way. So we took off the signs we were wearing, and some of us, went two-by-two towards Solomon Street. That's when we were arrested. We were taken to jail, just for marching.

I don't think there's been any change in Greenville, not in the way we are treated. They don't want to talk to us or anything like that.

Roosevelt Vaughn, 34, from Starkville, Oktibbeha County. Roosevelt Vaughn was working at the Mississippi State University, near Starkville, until a few months ago. He was fired for Civil Rights activities, and since then he has become a COFO staff worker.

"Just a little over two weeks ago several of us went down to the movie theater in Starkville. We had been there two days previously. This time there was a lot of whites around. Two of us went inside the theater. We stayed in a truck outside. Pretty soon the whites - I should say there were about 200, most of them students from the University - gathered round the truck. At first they were friendly, then this guy, a taxi driver, came up and he began inciting the crowd. Police were among the crowd while students were shouting at us "Goddam Niggers", and "Son-of-a-Bitch", and other things. One of the guys in the crowd came to the truck but he backed off when someone on the back pulled out a knife.

Anyway the situation looked bad. We called the Freedom House and the Sheriff, Bill Harpole, was contacted. He came along and told the crowd to get away from the truck, then he went to escort the two from the theater. I overheard the Chief of Police saying to some whites that Harpole "just belonged in the country".

When we got back to the Freedom House it was about midnight. From then to about 2am we had about 15 threatening telephone calls. What started all this I think was the jailing of a young boy four days previous to the incident outside the theater. We protested the jailing and that stirred people up.

But even before this things haven't been too good. I was sitting one day in the Greenland Cafe when a policeman by the name of Wolfaro came up to me and said: "I am going to throw you in jail". I asked him why and he replied: "Because you are Black".

I believe that if the Sheriff was not keeping the peace there would be a riot in Starkville. The City police will not let any civil rights activities go on - if they can help it. I have talked to people from Aberdeen, Columbus, West Point, and Amory, and from what they have said things are still bad in these places.

Sammy Rimson, a farmer for 25 years at Ruleville, Sunflower County :

"On June 23rd, 1963 I was beaten up by the Sergt of the State Penitentiary. He came to my house looking for escaped prisoners. He thought I was hiding them. He put a gun to my head and then kicked me; he kicked me even when I was on the ground. For 4 weeks after this I had to attend a Dr's clinic at Drew, and as a result of the beating I had to stop work."

"I was put on welfare. At first I got \$77 a month for my family. I have nine children, seven of them under 13 years old."

Mr. Rimpson (cont.)

From \$77 a month they cut it down to \$64, and last December it went down to \$32.

This February my welfare dropped to \$23 and now they have cut it off completely. And this is not because I can work now, because I can't.

It could have something to do, though, with the fact I have attended rallies. The plantation owner told me that he did not to fool with any civil rights people, and that if I was to fool around with them I would have to leave. We have spies out you know - Uncle Toms - and they may have seen me going to Mrs. Hamer's or to the Freedom House.

Mrs. Annie Rankin, from Fayette, Jefferson County :

I went down to register yesterday. It was a Freedom Day in Fayette. I left the Doctor's office where I work at about 9:30 am. The office was very quiet at that time. When I got back about half an hour later, the head nurse, Mrs. Irene Vaughn told me to get my things and get out. The Doctor, R.B. Harper said the same thing. He said I was never to come back again.

The Doctor was paying me \$7.25 a week. I have a blind mother and six children to look after. The people at the Doctor's office knew I had been down to register. There were white people at the courthouse who saw me go in. They knew who I was.

Lawrence Guyot, from Biloxi, Harrison County, executive Chairman of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

"We are engaged with a systematic intimidation from every institution within the State from the Highway Patrol, the State Sovereignty Commission, the Americans for the Preservation of the White race, to the Klu Klux Klan ... we encounter this intimidation from individuals throughout the State. Its impossible to organise in this State.

The case of CCFD v. Rainey shows that we have no recourse to justice ... in Federal court, Judge Cox wouldn't give it a hearing and then the Fifth Circuit court. Judge said he over-extended his discretion. Now the Justice Department has entered the case.

There is a systematic use of news media here to hamper labor ... its impossible for Unions to organise in this State. People are fired when they ask about wages. The Democratic Party is controlled by a few people and the majority of them supported the Republican candidate, Barry Goldwater. They tried to pass a gonocide bill which attempted to imprison any individual who had two illegitimate ... or she could surrender herself for a sterilization operation ... if it weren't for outside help this bill would have been passed.

The Governor is no longer able to maintain law and order. He is afraid of calling a special session of the legislature because it might become a sounding board for the entire country to hear.

This Challenge is not simply a State question, but one which the House of Representatives must decide ... how will the House select its members ... and how political power is going to be apportioned ...?

MR. MARTIN'S CAMPAIGN

IN MCCOMB

McComb, Mississippi once the scene of 17 bombings during the summer and fall civil rights activities is now quietly anticipating a local election of some significance. On April 5th, there will be a special election for selectmen-at-Large of McComb in which a Negro has qualified to be placed on the official ballot in a local election in Mississippi.

The Negro, L.J. Martin, Sr., a 52 year old resident of McComb and father of ten children. He moved to McComb 49 years ago from Holmesville, Mississippi where he was born. He is a machine operator for the American Box Co. at Fernwood and a deacon in Society Hill Missionary Baptist Church. He is one of the few registered Negro voters in McComb. Although there is no chance that he will win the election, he is expected to receive more votes in the Freedom Vote than the winner of the election. He also wants to show the white community that the Negroes are not satisfied with the way they have been governing the city and to help the Negro community understand what city government is about.

To demonstrate further that the Negro community of McComb is not apathetic about city government and the affairs of the white folks downtown, a Freedom Election will be held the same day as the regular election. Polling places will be set up to reach Negroes who cannot vote in the regular election because they are kept from doing so. Along with Mr. Martin, Mr. Wilmer Dodds will run for selectman from the Third Ward in this special Freedom Vote. Mr. Dodds, unregistered because he failed to pass the voter registration test, is running as a candidate to protest unfair voting practices in McComb.

Mr. Martin and Mr. Dodds are running against Mrs. Mary Tucker Bacot, daughter of the late Selectman Tucker, for whose post the special election is being held. Harry Marsalis and L.D. Stringer are running for Selectmen. The late Selectman Tucker was chairman of the building committee and co-chairman of the water and sewer committee.

The election is being conducted by workers of the Freedom Democratic Party, which challenged the regular Mississippi delegation's right to sit at the National Democratic Convention and is currently challenging the right of the five Congressmen from Mississippi to represent the state. The Freedom Party is almost one year old and has succeeded in gaining nationwide publicity and support for its efforts as well as providing a way for Mississippi Negroes to voice their protest against the state's racist practices.

This campaign points up vividly the correlation between not being able to vote and not being able to have any say over how your tax money is spent. Although Negroes make up almost 1/3 of the population of McComb they are virtually ignored by the city government when it comes to civic improvements, for example, the city just approved 1.47 million dollars on civic improvements. Over 1 million dollars is intended for street repairs on streets in the white neighborhoods which are already paved and are being widened and improved, while the Negro neighborhood has two streets which are tar and gravel covered - the rest are unpaved dirt roads. Negroes can't vote easily in Pike County of which McComb is a part - there are 6,936 eligible Negroes and only 150 are registered voters. In spite of four years of civil rights activities here and bombings, jailings, and beatings, the figure has not changed and the county as well as the state officials remain adamant in their stand not to allow Negroes to participate in governing themselves.

F.D.P. SEEKS SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE'S RESIGNATION

--- IF DISCRIMINATION IS NOT ENDED .

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party has called upon President Johnson for a re-shuffling of the Department of Agriculture, and the removal of all employees of the Department responsible for racial discrimination in the Dept.'s programs.

The Mississippi based Freedom Party's action came in a letter to the President from party chairman, Lawrence Guyot following a detailed report of discrimination in the nation's agricultural programs by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

Guyot charged in his letter that the Dept of Agriculture was fully aware of the perpetuating and increasing degree of discrimination against the Negro in the South. The M.F.D.P. asked the President to request Secretary Freeman's resignation, if at the end of 30 days he had not used all the legal powers available to him to correct the discriminatory functioning of the Dept.

POLITICAL CALENDAR

April 30th is the last day on which an independent candidate can qualify for the June 8th municipal elections,

The Democratic primary elections for municipal officials falls on May 11th. The second primary, or run-off election, takes place on May 18th.

From those candidates and any independent candidates, municipal officials will be chosen on June 8th.

For 1966 the calendar runs as follows :-

April 6. Last day on which candidate can qualify for June 5th Democratic primary.

June 5th. Democratic primary for representatives in Congress, State Supreme Court judges whose 8-year terms expire, circuit judges, chancery judges, and county judges.

June 26th Second primary (run-off) election, if necessary.

July 6th. Last day on which one may register and vote in either the primary or the general election.

Sept. 27th. Last day on which an independent candidate may qualify for the November 6th election by having a petition filed in his behalf.

Nov. 6. General elections for Reps in Congress, State Supreme court judges whose 8-year terms expire, circuit judges, chancery judges and county judges. And Senator Eastland's seat in the Senate.

The staff of the Freedom Democratic Party's Newsletter staff was proud to receive letters and financial contributions from people as far away as Atlanta, Georgia, and St. Louis, Mo. We will be mailing these people a copy and their contributions will help pay the cost of mailing etc.

--- Susie Ruffin, Editor.