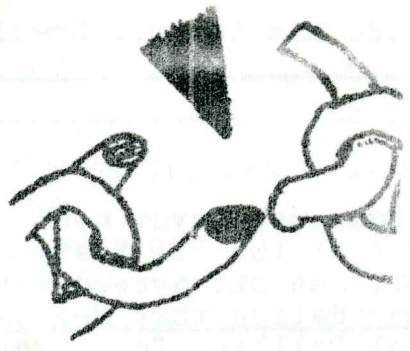




MISSISSIPPI NEWSLETTER



Number Thirty-Seven - Box 120, Tougaloo, Ms 39174 - November 3, 1967

BIG ELECTIONS TUES.

Coming Up:

- November 6 - Rally in Greenville for City Council candidate Mrs. Beatrice Huddleston, 8 P.M., Elks Community Auditorium
- November 7 - GET OUT THE VOTE FOR YOUR BLACK CANDIDATES !
- November 8 - Greenville city election.
- November 11 - CDGM Convention, 10 am to 5 pm, College Park Auditorium, Jackson
- November 11 - FDP State Executive Committee meeting at Holmes County Community Center in the evening
- November 12 - FDP State Convention, Holmes County Community Center in Mileston, 2 pm. Black candidates urged to be present. '68 national Democratic convention plans will be discussed.
- November 13 - Trial begins in Hattiesburg for men accused of killing Vernon Dahmer
- November 15 - Films shown in Kincheloe Hall, Tougaloo College: "A Time for Burning" and "Malcolm X: Struggle for Freedom", 7:30 pm. 25¢
- November 16 - "Boycott in Utica", "Troublemakers", and "Black Natchez" films shown at Tougaloo, 7:30 pm.

About 60 law students and 30 lawyers from the North, many of them Black, are in Mississippi to be poll watchers and make reports of any problems with the November 7th elections. Workshops are going on today at Mt. Beulah, sponsored by the Law Students Civil Rights Research Council and civil rights lawyers groups. This afternoon, the law students and lawyers will leave for their assigned work in the 9 counties where Black candidates will be running.

A hearing will be held Saturday before federal judge Harold Cox to try to get the three Black candidates on the Tuesday ballot.

Representatives of several civil rights groups met with John Doar of the Justice Department Monday and asked him to see that illiterate Negroes can get help from anyone they chose to mark their ballot. They also asked for some Negroes to be appointed to county election commissions. Doar said Thursday that the Department was concerned about illiterates and the rights of poll watchers, but that they are working with local officials to get them to change their ways. He was asked to see that the Secretary of State provide full instructions to poll workers on the job of poll watchers.

→ Mrs. Clara Lee Evans, campaign manager for Roosevelt Sias in Issaquena Co. was given eviction notice this week by the white man Sias is running against. She, her sister, and 6 children have been living in a 3-room house on the land of A.E. Scott, now Supervisor.

Vote!

around the state

Lawrence Guyot announced Wednesday that the FDP State Executive Committee had agreed with his recommmendation that Negroes vote for Rubel Phillips for governor on Tuesday. He made the announcement in a written statement that was distributed to the non-Movement press.

Before hearing of the committee's decision, Alfred Rhodes, Hinds County candidate for state legislature, sent a letter to about 45 important FDP people asking them to oppose the endorsement. He said, "It is true that we also should not endorse John Bell Williams. At this point in the field of politics, we should place all emphasis on Negro candidates and keep it on Negro candidates."

Rhodes said, "We have worked hard and long to reach this point in history. Please let us make no steps backwards. Because, if we can find an endorsement for a state-wide candidate, then each county will start to seeing ways to endorse local white candidates."

Rhodes asked FDP members to contact Mrs. Victoria Gray or Mrs. Annie Devine to give their views. By this morning, neither of them had been contacted on the subject. One FDP Executive Committee member said, however, that she couldn't care less who got to be governor, but she felt if "others" in FDP wanted to make the endorsement, they should be allowed to do so.

Several candidates and citizens from Holmes, Carroll, and Yazoo counties agreed last Sunday with Guyot's idea of backing Phillips.

Don Jackson, editor of the Hinds County FDP News, asked chairman Guyot Tuesday for his comment on the Phillips endorsement. Guyot replied "no comment." And Jackson said to his staff members that "I guess that makes the Hinds County FDP News 'Hostile Press.'"

Guyot also had "no comment" Tuesday on whether there would be a state convention on the 12th. But

Joe Harris, FDP state office manager, said that the convention would take place (see page 1).

A Negro mother who was arrested for supposedly "stealing" money from the welfare department, was let go Wednesday by a Hinds County J.P. There was no clear evidence against her, and the white prosecuting attorney did not bring any witnesses.

We wrote last week how Charles Evers spoke in Maine and told them that "any Negro who doesn't vote for Lyndon Johnson next year must have something wrong with him."

But a woman who is active in one of "Evers' counties" in southwestern Mississippi tells us that Evers tells them NOT to vote for LBJ. He tells Mississippi Negroes, she says, that if Johnson was like Kennedy, we wouldn't be in the trouble we're in now.

Would some other people let us know what They have heard? ? ? ?

Judge Harold Cox has given lawyers for the defense 5 more days to get signed statements to show why the 7 men who were convicted of the 1964 Neshoba murders should get another trial. Sentencing was expected Thursday, but it will wait until all legal moves are decided.

A federal judge has decided that the U.S. Senate can keep papers belonging to the FDP and the New Politics convention, even though they were stolen and used by Senator Eastland.

The Better Business Bureau is warning people to be careful about door-to-door salesmen. A large gang of swindlers keeps showing up and taking money for jobs they never do. The Bureau suggests that you only deal with companies that you know have a reputation of doing what they promise to do and what you pay for.

(The following article is reprinted from the newsletter of the New Orleans Movement for a Democratic Society, November, 1967 issue.)

THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY

THE END OF A MOVEMENT?

The Executive Committee of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party decided Sunday to challenge the white Mississippi delegation to the 1968 Democratic National Convention. --Mississippi Newsletter, 9/22/67, p.1.

Is this really true? What does it mean? Questions like these are already heard among movement people in New Orleans and will surely be echoed as this news spreads across the nation.

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party occupies a special place in the minds of all movement people, for it was the first organizing success of what came to be called the New Left. Together with SNCC, it was the father of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, the National Co-ordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam, the massive growth of the Students for a Democratic Society, the Lowndes County (Ala.) Freedom Party, and many other organizations and movements. The MFDP was the "Mississippi Freedom Summer," "The Summer That Didn't End," etc. When the MFDP went to the Democratic National Convention of 1964 in Atlantic City, the typical liberal back-stabbing of Johnson, Humphrey, Reuther, etc. was the first revelation of the reactionary nature of liberalism for many people now in the movement. For many years now, when Americans think of the Southern Movement, they have thought first of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

It is now time to realize that the MFDP has in more recent days become other thing. A frequent phrase hereabouts refers to the "Balkanization" (breaking up into small groups) of Mississippi movement politics. Along with the sincere radicals fighting for the liberation of black Mississippians, other forces have arisen. It is widely known though seldom reported that a whole series of black political empires are being carved out within the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party today. There is a whole group of black hustlers/hipsters within the MFDP who seek, like Adam Clayton Powell, to build black political-economic machines to carry out the further exploitation of the black people of Mississippi. They have no interest in the movement except as it serves to expand their own wealth and power. The effects of this development have not been slow in emerging, as will be demonstrated below.

(MFDP Chairman Lawrence) Guyot mentioned mostly court suits in discussing F.D.P. activities: trying to get women on juries; reapportioning the state legislature; county consolidation. --Mississippi Newsletter, 9/22/67, p. 1.

This, of course, represents the growing power within the MFDP of the ideas associated with the Mississippi branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) which has for decades emphasized the courts as an agency of black "liberation." In those sections of the MFDP where the NAACP is organizationally dominant, MFDP black candidates nearly always run inside the Democratic primaries.

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THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY - The End of a Movement? (cont'd)

The KKK control of striking Masonite workers in Laurel, Miss. should be investigated and publicized.

--From the Position Paper of the Mississippi Delegation to the National Conference for New Politics, Mississippi Newsletter, 9/15/67, p. 7.

This refers to the most important labor struggle in Mississippi in decades. In April of this year, the Masonite Corporation began a drive to destroy Local #5443, International Woodworkers of America, one of the oldest and strongest unions in Mississippi. Led by some of the black union members, the workers wildcatted, walked off their jobs without waiting for the union's sanction. (It should be mentioned that this local union has never affiliated with the Mississippi State Central Labor Council ...because they felt that the State Council would interfere with their ability to strike when and as long as they wanted to.) This strike goes on even as you read this article, in spite of dozens of court injunctions, armed company police, a total press blackout in Mississippi, a trumped-up murder indictment against two union members, etc.

Since April, some of the black workers have scabbed on their striking brothers (although other black workers have held firm and stayed off the job). The "excuse" for this scabbing is the alleged "Ku Klux Klan" control of the union. All this is rather paradoxical in view of the fact that the leaders of this union vowed a public war on the Klan several years ago when Klan thugs beat up the business agent of the union. At that time, the union published a famous public statement to the Klan: "If you want blood to flow in the streets of Laurel, you'll have it!"

There are Klan members in this union, but in view of the Klan's long anti-union history, it is doubtful if they "control" the wildcatting workers. Yet the MFDP people at the NCNP Convention flatly asserted that the Klan controls the strike, and that this justifies black scabbing.

Instead of making an energetic effort to unify the Masonite workers, end black scabbing, and win this strike, the MFDP has chosen to remain aloof from this struggle (as of this writing) and, instead, concentrate on court maneuvers and going to the Democratic Convention in Chicago.

The Associated Press said today that several county election commissions are checking to see if FDP independent candidates can be disqualified from running. State law says that no independent can vote in the primaries. It is reported that a few did vote.

--Mississippi Newsletter, 9/15/67, p. 1.

In other words, there has been next to no serious political education of the oppressed black people of Mississippi. The MFDP has taken the public attitude: "Democratic Primary or Independent Candidates -- What difference does it make as long as we win?"

Indeed, what difference does it make when MFDP Chairman Lawrence Guyot says on May 2, 1967, after the Sunflower County defeats:

We have been raped!...If we have learned one lesson from this election, it is to stay the hell out of the Democratic Party. -- Mississippi Newsletter, 9/29/67, p. 1.

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MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY - The End of a Movement? (cont'd)

And follows that up with a decision to go to the Democratic National Convention in 1968 and beg for admittance as "loyal Democrats willing to support the national Democratic candidates, that is LBJ"?

How are the rank-and-file of the Mississippi movement to tell the difference between an independent political movement controlled by the people and a cog in the national Democratic Party machine when the chairman of their organization cannot seem to tell this difference?

When the Hinds County FDP News printed a public statement called "Black Power is Fire Power!" - an appeal to black people to defend their rights violently if necessary - MFDP Chairman Guyot said that this was not the policy of the FDP, that "the policy of the FDP is to work in the political arena." (Miss. Newsletter, 9/22/67, p.2). Guyot reversed himself exactly one week later in the following words:

Everyone in the civil rights movement should carry a gun. We need to be prepared to defend those we're trying to organize. From birth to death, we've been the first to go. I think we've been down on our knees too long. There's a time to be nonviolent and there's a time to BE. --Miss. Newsletter, 9/29/67, p. 2.

Armed struggle for black liberation or non-violent electoral politicking, what difference does it make...as long as you win?

Oh my God, that Poverty Program...we fought for that program two solid years, and then after fighting for it two years, people are scared to open their mouth after they get it...They see that they gonna make some pretty good money and they tend to get quiet, and I think it was directed for that purpose. Cause right now you can see what's happening in Mississippi. It's trying to maneuver the votes in the Administration way for 1968.

--Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, The Movement, 3:10, October 1967, p. 11.

That such crude bribery could have such marked success cannot be blamed on the "inexperience" of the Mississippi black movement; such gross betrayal could only have succeeded with the active help of people inside the MFDP, inside the leadership of the MFDP. The question can now be asked: of those who voted to once again beg the national Democratic Party for admittance and thereby pledge the MFDP to working for the re-election of Lyndon "Butcher" Johnson, what percentage have active connections with the Poverty Program in Mississippi?

By the way, the Federal Government, gleefully learning the lessons of its growingly successful campaign to buy off whole chunks of the Mississippi movement has since added "40% of the activists" of the Lowndes County Freedom Party (Black Panthers) to the Poverty Program payroll (Mark Comfort in The Movement, 10/67, p. 11).

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MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY - The End of a Movement? (cont'd)

So we have certain objective factors to consider: a movement that all of us have helped to build is now fragmented by personal struggles for political-economic machines; whole chunks of this movement's best people bought off by Federal money; a serious division between white and black workers in a strike situation which normally unites workers in a common struggle against the boss's oppression; a pathetic new pilgrimage to Chicago to seek the blessings of the American führer.

With all this there has been the clear emergence of a defeatist attitude on the part of many Mississippi movement leaders. One MFDP leader privately said: "The people are tired; they want a strongly disciplined political machine with one big leader like Charles Evers (Mississippi NAACP chief) that they can look up to and follow."

Of course, if the oppressed black people of Mississippi are in such bad shape, why should anyone knock himself out trying to organize a revolutionary political movement controlled by the people? The answer is obvious: one shouldn't, and an increasing proportion of MFDP people seem to be taking this road. After all, if the people want to be oppressed, then it's better for you to be in the camp of the oppressor (grab some poverty money and start building your own political machine) than the camp of the oppressed (which is losing not only the fight but even the desire to fight).

In Mississippi today there are still many honest black radicals and even a small but growing number of young white radicals (in case you're interested, one way to find out who they are is to discover who is not only not getting any poverty money but damn well doesn't want any!), and nothing I have said should be taken as criticism of their efforts.

→ But the MFDP as a movement and as we have known it since 1964 may be coming to an end. A radical people's movement does not go to the ruler's political parties begging admittance and promising to support the butchers of black Americans and the Vietnamese people. A radical people's movement does not say to the people that "it makes no difference whether you run as a Democrat or as an independent." A radical people's movement does not tell the people that it makes no difference whether you follow the road of armed struggle or the road of election politicking. A radical people's movement does not support scabbing. A radical people's movement does not advocate dependence on the ruler's courts of "law." A radical people's movement does not go on the payroll of the ruler's Government. Every radical and revolutionary people's movement in the world today does the opposite of all these things. And there is little defeatism in their ranks, for every day brings fresh victories for the people over their oppressors!

These are the lessons of the Mississippi movement to date: if the movement people of Mississippi learn them in time, the MFDP may yet be saved from a disgraceful end. But whatever the outcome, the oppressed people of Mississippi and this country will eventually learn these lessons beyond all forgetfulness...and so will win their liberation.

---Ed Clark

A note from the editor to Ed Clark: A man in Jackson told us he agrees in general with what you say. However, he was sorry you let Charles Evers off so easy. An article on page two gives a good example of how Evers either "doesn't know the difference" or is unwilling to say what he really thinks - the same way each time.