

PROGRAM OF THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY

PREAMBLE

Almost 200 years ago the founders of this country while declaring their independence, said:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness."

We, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, declare in our turn that these truths are indeed self-evident and that the right to live in freedom and dignity, properly housed and fed, assured of the best medical and health services science can conceive, and guaranteed the opportunity for the highest quality education to ourselves and our children, are rights to which every person, black or white, man, woman or child, is due.

We recognize that there are powerful forces in Mississippi and in the United States, who deny these truths and these rights, and that as a result millions of us, black and white, men, women and children, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, Indians, live in oppression and deprived of the most basic needs to which human beings are entitled. We understand, therefore, that the guaranteeing of these rights requires that we do battle with these hostile forces and that to win the struggle we must work not only with our brothers and sisters in Mississippi, but with those who live throughout the country. We cannot expect to win for ourselves a decent life while our brothers and sisters elsewhere are deprived of a decent life for themselves.

PROGRAM FOR MISSISSIPPI

The black people of Mississippi -- and many whites -- are ill-housed, ill-clad and ill-fed. And all black people of this state live under the oppression of a white power structure which uses the police, the legislature, courts, all government agencies and Eastland's illegal Mississippi Democratic Party in order to keep us in this condition. Therefore, any federal program which has as its purpose the improvement of the lives of black Mississippians must be conducted by the people whose lives this program will affect and under no circumstances by the white power structure or its representatives. Nor may the State of Mississippi have any choice as to whether it will or will not participate in a federal program. It shall be required by federal law to do so.

Black Americans and minority people can not achieve justice in the political life of this country under the present system. Unless some new

understandings come to play, the races will polarize even further than they are at present. We call for a new approach which would guarantee to black Americans and minority groups, representation on all governmental bodies which affect their lives. We suggest the formula of "broad representation" of all citizens such as the national Democratic Party has required of all state delegations to the 1968 national convention.

We call for the federal government to demand that Congress and all federal departments, whose decisions affect the lives of minority people ensure that broad representation will be guaranteed. We call also for the federal government to enforce this form of minority group representation on all state agencies which receive funds from the federal government. We do not ask for exact mathematical formulas; we do not ask for unreasonable demands. We merely demand that which is fair and that which is long overdue.

We call for strong enforcement of existing laws, particularly civil rights. We believe much new legislation must be passed but it should not be used as a camouflage for inaction regarding the enforcement of existing laws.

We call for a program to basically change these conditions of life, and which shall apply to everyone, without regard to race, color, creed, religion and sex.

In making these demands we seek redemption of the promises made after the Civil War when black people were liberated as slaves and told that they would receive forty acres and a mule. This promise was broken and because they were thus denied a means of livelihood they were re-enslaved by the same plantation owners from whom they were supposed to have been freed. We, the descendants of betrayed slaves now ask that the promise be kept.

FOR A NATIONAL PROGRAM

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party does not pretend to be able to draft a complete and detailed program affecting millions of people outside of Mississippi, especially without having consulted with them or their representatives. It does believe that a national program would at least contain the following elements:

1. Every person of working age shall be guaranteed by the Government of the United States an annual income. The Guaranteed Annual Income should replace the present welfare system. Administration of the GAI should be by the federal and not the state governments. Application for GAI should be made through a simplified income tax return. Rejections should be subject to appeal by boards composed of GAI recipients. The minimum GAI for a single

person should be \$3,000. a year. A couple should receive a minimum of \$4,000. and \$500. additional for every child. There should be no maximum income level. The OEO should be directed to provide job counselors whose task would be to reach the hard-core unemployed whenever they may be in the country. The federal government must take the responsibility of providing suitable employment at no less than minimum wage levels for all those people who seek employment.

2. The negative income tax should be adopted to benefit those working people whose income falls below the \$3,000. a year level. If an individual's income is day \$2,000., he should be granted an additional \$1,000. to bring his level to the minimum standard. This system will provide incentives for work and yet will guarantee to all Americans decent living. Until the Guaranteed Annual Income becomes a reality we call for the following changes in the present welfare, Social Security and job training system:

- a. Expansion of funds to provide job training programs in the state to meet the already existing and proven needs for job-training.
- b. Amend the present Welfare section of the Social Security Bill so that mothers with young children can have a choice as to whether or not to take training and a job. Until the people that want and need training are trained, it is ridiculous to force others into training.
- c. Require states to pay 100% of need and make sure that the determination of need is based on realistic family income requirements.
- d. Require states to institute welfare programs that will cover both unemployed fathers (the present program encourages a father to leave the home if he is unable to support his family) and to have a general assistance category to cover those in need that are presently uncovered.
- e. Place the present Medicaid problem on a national basis, with national standards, like Medi-care, instead of having it optional for the states.
- f. Increase the amount of funds available for both rural and urban health centers in low-income areas, with additional funds to train and hire low-income residents to operate them.
- g. Expand the day care program so that all mothers that want to work are guaranteed adequate, low-cost or free day-care for their children. As in the health center program, low-income residents should be trained and hired to staff these day-care centers.
- h. Streamline and centralize all existing assistance programs (Veterans

benefits, Unemployment Compensation, Welfare, Social Security etc.)

i. Place the social services presently provided by the various agencies on the same basis as medical services, entirely separated from assistance payments. In low-income areas social service centers, similar to the Concentrated Employment Program, should be established with maximum participation of the poor, and provided counseling, credit unions, legal aid, health services, and the employment services listed below.

j. The new Bureau of Work-Training Programs would be expanded and offer guaranteed employment via the social service centers.

k. The whole concept of new careers would be expanded, with sufficient federal funds and incentives supplies to make it work both in private industry and public agencies. Basically the New Careers concept is a restructuring and re-evaluating of careers, such as teaching where in a low, or unskilled person can be hired in an entry level position and work their way in succeeding steps into more skilled positions, while working and taking training at the same time.

2. Every person shall have a proper home with electricity, heating and running water, whether he lives in a rural or urban area.

Emergency housing should be made available for poverty families. One million low income housing units should be built next year with at least six million new low income units to be built within the next five years. Military bases now vacant should be converted to low income housing units. Wherever possible free mass transit should be guaranteed by the government (federal) so that poor people can get to their jobs.

Unemployed or underemployed poverty families should be taught to build their own homes. They should be paid at least minimum wages while they are on the job. Poverty families should be granted long term low interest federal loans to repay housing costs (other than labor).

The Urban Renewal Program should rearrange its priorities so that future programs build low income rather than high income housing units, individual, one, or two story homes rather than large scale high rise apartments. They should be built according to minimum standards set by the federal government.

If slumlords do not repair buildings, their property must be taken away, renovated and kept as public housing under community control.

3. Every person shall receive free and complete medical care from the day he is born until the day he dies. This, of course, requires a great

hospital building program and the training of doctors, nurses and other medical personnel in numbers far greater than anything now planned.

4. Every person able to work shall be guaranteed a job at a living wage. This means the immediate establishment of a massive Federal public works program which will build housing, schools, hospitals, parks, roads and other structures needed by our communities.

5. Our brothers and sisters who live in the rural areas need land. Every person who wishes to farm shall be given to him by the Federal Government sufficient acres, and a tractor and basic farm tools and equipment without costs. The title to this land shall be awarded to the farmer immediately upon his working it for 3 years. This land shall be made available from federally - owned acreage in Mississippi as may exist, from state-owned acreage as may exist, and from private or corporate-owned acreage as may exist, and from private or corporate-owned land not being worked which will be taken under that power of eminent domain with which the Federal Government is amply provided.

The federal government should sponsor, wherever they are needed, cooperative farms and industries. These enterprises would, in effect, be "cities in the country-side", or "new towns." Their basic needs including streets, housing, public utilities, hospitals, schools, community centers and parks should be provided by the federal government.

The government should help these co-ops complete and survive by providing job training, technical assistance (Peace Corps and Vista - type aid) grants, and long term, low interest loans. Vacant military bases and government buildings should immediately be utilized wherever they can be adapted for these cooperative enterprises.

6. The President should declare a national hunger emergency in a least 256 counties, and at migrant farm camps and Indian reservations where actual cases of starvation and severe hunger exists. The federal food programs should be made available to the needy of every locality and should not be made to depend on local or state option.

No food programs should be approved until they are well advertised and public hearings have been held. No plan should be approved which does not include procedures and appeals to the designated authority which we think should be the Office of Economic Opportunity. Free food Stamps should be

made available to poor people by filing a simplified income tax return. The eligible individuals could simply present this to the designated food stamps official to receive his stamps. Enforcement would rest, as with the income tax, on the Internal Revenue Service, using sample checks.

Until free food stamps for the needy become available, the present federal regulations should be abolished which prevent counties from offering poor people the choice between food stamps and free commodity foods, also, recipients should not be forced to buy a set minimum worth of food stamps but should be free to buy less than the minimum when they want to.

7. Free school breakfasts and lunches should be made available to every poor child whether in public school, kindergarten, Headstart programs, nursery schools or day care centers. The meals should conform to federal nutritional standards. These programs should be made available to the needy of any locality and should not be made to depend on local or state option.

8. The Office of Economic Opportunity must not be dismantled. Its funding by Congress should be greatly increased so that every poor person in every community in America can be reached and provided with the means necessary for him to truly escape out of poverty.

The Green amendment should be repealed and poor people should be allowed to control the programs which are designed for them. This means that existing CAP boards should be declared null and void and elections should be held to establish new boards so as to satisfy the OEO ideals of "maximal participation by the poor". Since OEO projects are aimed exclusively at helping the poor, the control of these projects should be by the poor. The present OEO guidelines require only 1/3rd representation of the poor on the CAP boards. We call for control and representation of the poor, those for whom the program was designed on these boards.

The recent OEO rulings which prevent OEO employees from participating in politics during their off-duty hours must be repealed.

9. We call for a nation-wide federally funded crash educational program to eliminate illiteracy.

We call for free nursery schools and day care centers sponsored by the Office of Economic Opportunity.

We advocate that the federal government reimburse all state owned or supported colleges and universities for funds which they would normally

receive from students' tuition fees. Free universal higher education should be made available for all.

We oppose the relocation and firing of black principals and teachers in the name of school desegregation. We insist on the black community's right to control its own schools. We call for increased federal support for AFRO-AMERICAN cultural and historical studies throughout the public schools and colleges in the U.S. We support the right of students and faculty to the constitutional privileges of academic freedom.

We call for living allowances for all college students and their dependents.

9. To implement this we call for an immediate and massive emergency program funded by at least 30 billion dollars which must be established by guaranteed annual income, housing, hospital and medical and school programs and which will create thousands of jobs.

10. It is all but impossible for a people to use the vote to remove from power persons who control all the machinery of the election process--and people who have controlled that machinery for almost 100 years. The people who control the elections are also the people who have economic power over the lives of the poor voters in the community. Free and open elections are necessary if democratic methods of political action can ever be used for significant social change. It is now clear that continued racist control of the election process must be ended; just as such control over voter registration had to be ended. Federal supervision of the whole election process is the necessary and logical extension of the federal action in assuming authority for voter registration. The MFDP calls for federal supervision of the entire election process for a period of time amounting to at least three four year election cycles. This will cover registration, planning the elections, supervising the voting, counting the ballots.

The MFDP calls for the following specific changes in elections under federal supervision:

a. Mobile federal registrars and their assistants shall take voter registration to the people, rather than the present plan of placing registrars in one location on rare occasions.

b. Voting precincts shall be located in places convenient to the people and located so as to encourage the greatest possible voter turnout.

c. Elections shall be changed from weekdays such as Tuesday to weekends, either, Saturday, Sunday, or both. If elections are kept on Tuesdays, then election day shall be declared a legal holiday.

d. Voters who need assistance in casting their ballots shall have the choice of asking assistance of a federal employee or of bringing the person of their choice in to the both with them.

e. Polls shall remain open until 9 p.m. for the convenience of working people.

f. The federal government shall see that every election is widely publicized so that voters may know the date and place his vote may be cast. The federal government shall provide community education and publicity prior to each election on how to mark the ballot.

g. On election day the federal government shall provide funds for day care for the children of voters.

h. On election day the federal government shall bear the expenses of providing transportation to the polls for voters whose family income is below the poverty level.

i. On election day the federal government shall bear the expenses of voting of persons whose family income is below the designated poverty level by paying each person who votes the sum of money equal to three hours of work at the prevailing minimum wage.

j. Federal troops shall be provided as necessary to protect the civil rights of voters and candidates and to guarantee that there is no threat of violent intimidation influencing the election. Federal troops must be assigned any community when ten percent of the registered voters so petition.

k. There shall be no changes in any aspects of elections in the communities covered by the 1965 Voting Rights Act, that are not approved by the appropriate Federal Court in Washington. The Voting Rights Act should be extended indefinitely and its provisions should be rigorously enforced.

l. The voting age should be lowered to 18.

FOR A FOREIGN POLICY

None of the programs we have discussed can begin to be implemented so long as our nation is militarily, politically and economically ensnared in

the war in Vietnam. The interests of the masses of the American people cannot be advanced while this war continues. For this reason alone it is necessary to end this war and withdraw our soldiers immediately without protracted negotiations.

The moral integrity of this country can not be established until we end that slaughter.

We call for an end to compulsory military service. We support those who resist the draft and our troops who refuse to commit murder in Vietnam. When the people of Vietnam create a stable government, America should give massive foreign aid to the United Nations to help rebuild that country.

We urge the cessation of arms shipments to the Middle East and help in negotiating a peaceful settlement.

We call for the resumption of all normal diplomatic relations between the U.S., Cuba and Mainland China.

We advocate American cooperation with the United Nations in a peaceful effort to eradicate tyranny in areas of the world -- such as South Africa, Angola, Southern Rhodesia, Bolivia, Guatemala and Greece.

We call for vigorous enforcement of the arms embargo against South Africa. We call for a foreign policy which will support the legitimate desires of people everywhere for national independence and political and economic justice.