

NEGRO CANDIDATE SCORES SEGREGATED MEDICAL CARE

GREENVILLE, MISSISSIPPI --- Mississippi's first Negro woman candidate for U. S. Congress, Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer of Ruleville, spoke here April 17 on "Medical Care and Public Health" in Mississippi, and Washington County in particular.

Mrs. Hamer said there were only six Negro doctors in Washington County where the Negro population is 43,408 or 55.2 percent, a situation forcing Negroes to seek help from white doctors. (There are 35,230 whites in the county.)

"At the white doctor's office we're put in a little over-crowded room and made to wait all day until the doctor treats his white patients. Then when the doctor gets to us he asks, 'What's the trouble, Fannie?'"

She told the crowd that throughout the 2nd Congressional District, where she is running for Democratic nomination, the death rate is twice as high for Negroes as for whites.

"One third of the Negro babies born in Washington County each year are delivered by midwives. Only two white babies out of 828 born last year were delivered by midwives. And people wonder why the white infant mortality rate is 26.1 percent but 67.2 percent for Negroes," she said.

Mrs. Hamer attributed this to segregated hospital facilities "which lower the quality of patient care and violate professional ethics," and "the poverty of segregation."

"Poverty and poor health form an unbreakable circle, one which needs attention from the people who are supposed to represent us," she said.

Mrs. Hamer departed from a prepared speech to say that her campaign was showing many people that a Negro could run for office. "Well, now they know and they can run for any office in the state," she said.

Mr. Hamer, one of four Negroes seeking national office in the state plans to challenge the right to nomination of incumbent Jamie Whitten if he is elected in the June 2 primary.

All four candidates are running under the auspices of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. If they are defeated in the regular Democratic party, they will continue their campaigns as Independents in the November general elections.

In other Hamer campaign speeches made in the Delta, she has referred to Whitten's action in late 1962 where he "squashed" a federal program to train tractor drivers because 2,400 of the 3,000 to be trained would have been Negro, and the program would have been integrated. At the time Whitten stated the program would "upset the local economy."

Only 28,000 or 6.6 percent of Mississippi's voting age Negroes are registered to vote. 525,000 whites are registered voters. SNCC has conducted a Greenwood-based vote drive in the Delta since August 1962.