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MISSISSIPPI Freedom Democratic Party

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(as statement or as Letter to the Editor)

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party wishes to express its thanks to all those who helped in our fight at the National Democratic Convention. We especially wish to thank Congresswoman Edith Green of Oregon, whose compromise proposal, which would have seated loyal Democrats of both delegations, was acceptable to us but not allowed to reach the Convention floor.

We came to the Democratic National Convention not as a symbolic act, but in a sincere effort to become a part of the National Democratic Party, as the representatives of the people of the state of Mississippi. We firmly believed that from both a moral and legal standpoint we should have been recognized as the Mississippi delegation. Our conviction was built on several premises:

1. Negroes in Mississippi are denied the right to vote.
2. Negroes in Mississippi are denied participation in the "regular" Democratic Party.
3. The "regular" Democratic Party does not support the candidates and platform of the National Democratic Party.

Our presence in Atlantic City raised several basic political questions for the Democratic Party, and for the country as a whole:

1. Would the Party, and the country, continue to support racism and its institutionalization in the Southern wing of the Democratic Party ?
2. Is there a place in the Democratic Party for the Negro, on more than a token basis ?

3. Would they help us gain the right to vote and our rightful place in the political life of the country ?

The final compromise proposal was unacceptable, because it did not deal with these questions. Instead, the compromise:

1. did not seat any of our delegation as representatives from Mississippi. It gave us symbolic rather than real representation by offering us two delegate-at-large seats.
2. chose the delegates for us. It did not allow us to select our own leadership.
3. said, in effect, that the Mississippi "regular" party represented the Democratic Party in the state, even though we had shown that Negroes were excluded from the party and were denied voter registration rights.

We are truly sorry that Mr. Humphrey, Mr. Walter Reuther and others involved in developing the compromise could not create a solution we could accept in good conscience. But we had little choice. We rejected tokenism. The situation in Mississippi will not be remedied by tokenism, and we could not in good faith accept a plan which failed to provide real change for the hundreds of thousands of citizens whom we represented.

Numerous commentators have said that our refusal was morally right but politically naive. We say, in response, that we pray for a time when politics in America will embrace morality, when principle and practice will not be enemies, when real issues can be fully debated and real solutions found.

We will be conducting a campaign for Johnson and Humphrey in the state of Mississippi----the only campaign that is likely to be run for them here. Members of our delegation have already begun to accept speaking engagements in support of the Democratic ticket. We do not believe the issues we raised will be forgotten, and we look forward to working with the men of good will all over the nation who believe in our cause and its final triumph within the Democratic Party.

Executive Committee
Mississippi Freedom
Democratic Party
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