

NEGROES REFUSED PLACE ON BALLOT

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI - The Mississippi State Election Commission has refused to place the names of three Negroes on the November 3 general election ballot. All are candidates of the Freedom Democratic Party (FDP).

The commission - composed of Governor Paul Johnson, Attorney-General Joe Patterson and Secretary of State Heber Ladner - said October 6 the three did not have the required number of signatures of registered voters on their petitions.

Actually, the petitions contained more than the needed number of signatures, but many county registrars refused to certify them. Also many registrars acknowledged neither the U.S. 24th Amendment nor state laws passed last spring to implement that amendment. They demanded prior payment of poll taxes as a requirement for certification.

Gov. Patterson called the three petitions "ridiculous." The three candidates are Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer of Ruleville, Dr. Aaron Henry of Clarksdale and Mrs. Annie Devine of Canton.

They and two other Negroes - Mrs. Victoria Gray of Hattiesburg and Harold Roby of Canton - will run against white opposition in a Freedom Vote October 31 through November 2. The Freedom Vote will be a supplement to the regular national election--the only difference being that all residents will be eligible to vote regardless of color. Civil rights leaders hope that this will bring attention to the gross inequalities of the Mississippi electoral system.

Mrs. Hamer was vice-chairman of the Mississippi FDP delegation which tried unsuccessfully at the Democratic National Convention to take the seats held by the all-white regular Mississippi Democratic Party. The Freedom Democrats - who pledged loyalty to the national party - were offered a two-seat compromise, which they refused. All but two of the regular delegation refused to take the loyalty pledge and were refused seats.

In the June 2 Democratic primary Mrs. Hamer ran against Rep. Jamie Whitten of Mississippi's Second Congressional District, Mrs. Gray faced Sen. John Stennis, Rev. John Cameron of Hattiesburg faced Rep. William Colmer of the Fifth District and James W. Houston faced Rep. John B. Williams of the Third District.

Dr. Henry - who is state NAACP head - ran for governor in a Freedom Vote campaign in November, 1963, with Rev. Edwin King - white chaplain of Tougaloo College - as candidate for lieutenant-governor. They polled 90,000 votes cast by the state's disenfranchised Negroes in churches, schools, poolrooms and votemobiles over a three-day period. Henry had tried to qualify as an independent against Sen. Stennis but Gov. Patterson and the election commission disqualified him. Earlier the election commission had ruled that neither Mrs. Hamer nor Mrs. Gray could participate in both the Democratic primary and the general election.

Mrs. Devine will face Rep. Arthur Winstead in the state's Fourth District.

All of the candidates have been enjoined by the state from participating in the affairs of the FDP.

The candidates and the FDP will campaign actively for the Johnson-Humphrey slate.

Members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) have helped organize voter-registration drives in Mississippi since 1961. SNCC staffers work closely with local civil-rights leaders throughout the state.