



MEMO TO FRIENDS OF SNCC:  
11/5/65

#### ASES ELECTIONS

The Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service is without a doubt the backbone of the farms and rural towns of the South. Through its programs in allotment of crops, the ASCS disperses huge amounts of federal funds to rural communities. The whites, naturally, have received most of the benefits of these funds.

In December of 1964, out of 37,000 community committeemen elected to 7,400 community committees in the deep south, only about 75 were Negroes.

The County Committee of the ASCS handles acreage allotments, CCC (Commodity Credit Corporation) loans, acreage conversion, etc. The County Committee is elected from a convention of the community committeemen who are elected each fall in what is called "The ASCS elections." Each county in the south is broken down into ASCS communities.

From each of these communities, five ASCS community committeemen are elected. The man with the highest number of votes is the Chairman; next highest, Vicechairman; 3rd highest, The Member; the last two are the First and Second Alternates. Any farmer, sharecropper, tenant, or part owner over 21 years can vote; if a person actually operates the farm and is under 21 years old, he can vote, too.

Only six signatures of eligible ASCS voters are required to nominate someone to run for the Community Committee. The people who are elected to the Community Committee have a convention of themselves from which the County Committee is then elected.

It is important that Negroes who want to become a meaningful part of the ASCS County Committee elect a majority of the Community Committeemen, or Negroes must win at least the first 3 places in the Community Committee elections.

It should be pointed out that the ASCS office has now required that all balloting be done by mail. This means that although the ballots have to be counted in public and anyone can watch the counting, there is no way to insure that: 1. All of the ballots are counted, 2. The ballots arrived at the ASCS office, 3. Ballots are not replaced by other ballots. In short, there is no way to insure that the election is not a fraud.

Ray Fitzgerald, Deputy Director of State and County Affairs for the Department of Agriculture, has refused so far to make any effort to see that fraud does not occur. In fact, the thought occurs to us that it might just be possible that the reason for the change in the method of balloting from the choice of voting at a polling place or balloting by mail, to requiring balloting by mail might be that the Agriculture Department has found a way to relieve itself of pressure from powerful Southern Congressmen and the Southern lobby at that Department.