

HATTIESBURG; 575 Sign Up For Freedom Schools
(reported by Bill Light)

SNCC office in Hattiesburg reports that by Thursday, July 2, 575 prospective students had registered for the five freedom schools about to open in the area. The students range in age from 8 to 82 years.

The first to register was an old man of 82 who has taught himself to read and write. He now wants to learn how to pass the voter registration test.

The Freedom Schools will be staffed by at least 33 volunteer teachers. Local teachers are also being recruited to help out. Several voter registration workers and office workers in Hattiesburg project have offered to help in night time teaching to alleviate the shortage of teaching staff for this unexpectedly large number of students.

During the past two weeks, voter registration workers in Hattiesburg passed out Freedom School applications as they canvassed the Negro community. On one day alone last week 175 of these forms were mailed into the SNCC office.

As the students registered at one of the 6 registration centers set up in the local churches, they checked off their choice of courses. The youngest group, aged 8 to 12, have no choice. They will all follow one curriculum which includes the following subjects: language arts, reading writing spelling (2) Negro history (3) General mathematics.

Those 13 and over could choose three courses from among the following: (1) language arts including not only basic skills but creative writing and public speaking as well (2) related American history, a course which will correlate general Am. history with Mississippi history and Negro history. (3) Social Studies a course which will include studies of the Mississippi and U.S. Constitution as well as some local and national geography. (4) Science survey course (5) general mathematics.

The courses for the older age groups will be repeated during a two-hour night session. However, the approach to the subject matter may be somewhat modified. As the night sessions are geared for adults. About 1/3 of the registrants are over 35. The night session will also contain courses in advanced science and math and in typing. More than 25 typewriters have been secured but many more are needed to cope with the flood of people who wish to learn to type.

Morning classes run from 8 to 11 am, evening classes from 7:30 to 9 30 pm. For those who wish to participate, there will also be programs scheduled for the hot afternoons. Informal discussion groups on social topics, selected by the young people themselves, entertainment, movies, etc. are tentatively planned for this time. Although the Freedom School registration books have had to be closed because of the unexpectedly large number of applicants, many people continue to phone in requests to be admitted. The staff is considering opening registration for the second session scheduled to begin in four to five weeks.

RULEVILLE: JULY 3 FOUR U.S. CONGRESSMEN PAID AN UNANNOUNCED VISIT TO A MASS MEETING SPONSORED BY THE SNCC SUMMER PROJECT AND THE RULEVILLE CITIZENSHIP CLUB.

The Congressmen, Rep. William Fitts Ryan of NY's 20th District (D), Rep. Don Edwards, California's 9th District (D. San Jose), Rep. Gus Hawkins, Calif 21st District (D. Los Angeles) and Rep. Philip Burton, Calif 5th District (D. San Francisco) joined in the singing of freedom songs, and gave speeches of encouragement to the audience of 125.

The meeting was held at 8 pm at Williams Chapel Baptist Church; only a week and a half earlier a Molotov cocktail was thrown at the church and tonight the Congressmen walked up the still charred steps. John Lewis, Chairman of SNCC, introduced three of the liellators; Len Edwards, a SNCC summer volunteer, working in the Ruleville project and a 2nd year law student at the U. of Chicago, introduced his father, Congressman Edwards. Mrs. Irene Johnson, President of the Ruleville Citizens Club, the local CR organization, chaired the meeting and welcomed the "people we thought would never be here."

Ryan, reform Democrat from New York State told the Summer volunteers that they were in Mississippi on a "mission of conscience." He told the local Negroes "today we have been traveling in a state particularly to see the people in Miss. who are oppressed. There is no reason why Miss. should not join the rest of the nation in living up to the ideals of this country."

Burton, who was just elected to the House in a special election in Calif. this spring, referred to two volunteers in the audience who helped elect him in San Francisco. "We meet again tonight because we have stood for human dignity. We stand with those who say 'we don't want some freedom some day but we want all of it'". He added "IT IS GOING TO BE A LONG, HOT, SUMMER AND IT IS GOING TO BE A lot harder for segregationists than for us."

Hawkins, a Negro Congressman from Los Angeles, stressed the importance of CR work in the South saying "I go back with the feeling that what we are doing is insignificant in comparison to what you are doing. We are on the road to freedom; yesterday with the passage of the CR Bill we crossed one great river but we have many more to go."

Cong. Edwards, who was staying overnight in Ruleville with a Negro family said, "I am down here for two reasons: to see Len and to lend whatever support I can." He added, "we would not have passed the CR Bill if it were not for the work done by the Freedom Riders. We had the chance in 1866 and 1877 to bring equality to our country and we failed. Now we have a new chance; this is the third Am. Rev." (Cong. Edwards is the member of the House Judiciary Comm. and helped to write the CR Bill.)

The Congressmen joined in a standing ovation when SNCC Chairman John Lewis was introduced. Lewis told the mass meeting, "The CR Bill is not the end, just the beginning. Just as the ICC regulation became meaningful only with the body of Freedom Riders, it will still take our bodies and our efforts to make the CR Bill meaningful."

The highlight of the meeting was the introduction of half a dozen guests from nearby Drew, Miss. The SNCC workers in Sunflower County have been concentrating their voter registration efforts for the past week on Drew, which has seen no previous CR activity. Charles McLaurin, 23, SNCC project director for Sunflower and Bolivar County, told the group that the Drew people symbolized a real breakthrough. "We have been working in Drew to overcome the fear and intimidation and we welcome them. These people will be a light to Drew just as a few were the light in Ruleville a couple of years ago. The reason so many are coming to Ruleville to see what is happening is because that little light did not go out."

GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI: JULY 3 From Bill Light, Jackson

U.S. Congressman, William Fitts Ryan (D. NYC) Augustus F. Hawkins (D, LA) and Philip Burton (D, San Fran) visited the registrar in Greenwood Miss to witness firsthand voter registration procedures. The Congressmen talked with 4 local lawyers called in by the registrar ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~, Mrs. Martha Lamb, as well as with Negro citizens trying to register.

They arrived at the courthouse as two Negroes were trying to register. One had not been permitted to take his test again because of previous failure to qualify. Several more people came to register, among them Mr. Sam Block and Miss Mary Lane. Miss Lane had taken the test 9 times before and was returning to see if she has passed. She had not. Cong. Ryan asked to see the 9th test in order to determine what was wrong with it. Ryan and the lawyers called in by the registrar, discussed voter registration procedures for about 20 minutes. All the Congressmen agreed that the procedure was discriminatory. Ryan asked Mary Lane to let him know of the result of her tenth test.

After the trip to the courthouse, the Congressmen visited the SNCC national and local offices and discussed with the SNCC staff members the situation in the Miss. Delta.

??? The Greenwood lawyers who talked with the Congressmen included Hardy Lot, (on the exec. committee of the White Citizen's Council.) Stanley Sanders, and Aubrey Bell. #

via Stew House, Greenwood

MEMPHIS From Elaine Weinberger / NOT FOR RELEASE YET
John Robin Greer, British subject, visitor's visa, beaten and attacked 20 yards from entrance to the orientation site here tonight. It was apparently an attempt at robbery since the three Negroes who accosted him tried to take wrist watch and money. Taken to John Gaston Hospital although a minister connected with the orientation tried to have him taken to a Negro hospital. B/w 12:30 - 1:30 am. He still plans to be in project, had originally been scheduled for southwest area. Will not work in v r as planned.