

WATS REPORT -- FROM ATLANTA

Monday, December 7, 1964

HOLLY SPRINGS. Cleve Sellers/Barbara Brandt
William Seabron, Special Assistant to the Sec. of Agric., called Cleve this morning and informed him that Robert Jones, a Negro farmer from Chulahoma Community in Marshall Co. had won as first alternate. Seabron wanted to assure Cleve that the election had been carried on in a proper manner. (A state ASC representative and a county ASC representative were in the room when the ballots were being counted, Cleve says, but he plans to contest the election anyway because it is believed that more votes were cast for their candidate than were counted.)

Robert Smith IRREGULARITIES IN BENTON CO.

In Benton Co., where balloting was done by mail, COFO supported candidates in 3 out of 5 communities.

COFO workers Smith, Diane Roeberson, James Batts, Aviva Futorian and a local woman stayed at the Benton Co. in Ashland, where the votes were being counted, from 9 a.m. until 4 that afternoon. According to the COFO count, they won one community, but will know definitely tomorrow. They also suspect that ballot boxes in Communities A and C were stuffed, but will know more definitely in a few days. (stuffed with ballots of ineligible whites)

"The entire county police force" was in the room during the counting, as well as two federal officials.

Bob saw at least one instance of illegal practices during the counting--the county committeeman, who was calling off the names of the candidates who received votes, called off the name of a white candidate, when the ballot contained only the names of three Negro candidates. During the day, two white men stole lists of names containing names of eligible Negro voters from the COFO workers. When Smith tried to catch the men, he was stopped by Benton Co. Sheriff Brooks Ward. The Sheriff said Smith could not search the men because Smith did not have a search warrant, and the Sheriff said he would arrest the thieves only if Smith got a warrant for their arrest from the Justice of the Peace.

12 am JACKSON Jane Adams/Barbara Jones

There will be a meeting tomorrow in Batesville with all the (COFO backed) farmers who have been running in the ASC elections those who have been working on them, to decide what they will do next--will they ask for new elections, etc.?

Tuesday December 8, 1964

HOLLY SPRINGS Cleve Sellers and Aviva Futorian/Julian Bond
COFO WINS SEVERAL ASC POSITIONS IN BENTON CO., DESPITE IRREGULARITIES In Benton Co., SNCC*COFO sponsored three candidates in one community, three in another, and two in another. In one community, all three candidates won. They are L.B. Paige, 183 votes; Calbon Jackson, 181; and Mrs. Sarah Robinson, 170. (The white candidates got 165 and 160 votes each.) They found at least one case of padding white voters' lists. Two teenagers who were not eligible were on the list and were successfully challenged by COFO vote counters yesterday. In all three communities, COFO discovered 156 eligible Negroes whose names were not on the lists. In one community, they lost by 40 votes, and COFO is sure that there at least 40 eligible Negro farmers from that community were not listed. In some cases, sharecroppers were forced to go down and withdraw their names. New ASC community committee president L.B. Paige told SNCC he was "surprised and pleased" and welcomed the chance to do something for Negro farmers in Benton Co.