

REPORT - FROM CHARLES McLAURIN  
Sunflower County, Mississippi  
January 11 - February 19, 1964  
February

Report from one of our  
local Mississippians who is  
on the staff - Sunflower  
County's Senator Eastland  
County.

I will start this report with some of the things people are saying and doing; I was on my way to Indianola on Feb. 11, 1964 to carry five old ladies to register. The ladies ranged in age from 46 years old to 74 years of age. One lady, Mrs. Susie Jones, an old lady who lives outside of Ruleville near the Leflore County line, started to talk about things on the plantation and how she as a girl had lived and worked very hard to help her mother and younger sisters and brothers. Mrs. Jones cannot read or write, but she wanted to vote. I told her when we get to the courthouse I wanted her to go in and tell Mr. C.C. Campbell (the registrar) that she wanted to register to vote and could not read and write. We walked up the steps to the Courthouse behind the others and went into the office together. Mrs. Jones told C.C. she wanted to register. When he offered her the application blank, she told him she could not write; At this time I walked up to the desk and asked if I could fill out the form for her. He said "no". I then asked if two persons witnessed her make an X could I sign her name. The registrar said, "If you want to, but I will not pass her". So I signed her name and gave the blank to Campbell.

Later that day, 7 other Negroes were taken to the Courthouse to register, only one could read and write.

That day about 47 people came down to register and of that number only 12 could read and write. The 12 took the test and the others went back to Ruleville.

February 12, 1964: 5 people were taken from Ruleville to Indianola to register; 3 of them lived on plantations outside of Ruleville, and could not read or write. However they were taken to the Courthouse and told to ask the registrar (C.C. Campbell) to let me fill out the forms for them. He said as always, "No."

We will not stop carrying Negroes down who cannot read and write because I feel as do the leaders in Ruleville that when these people go down and face the man (C.C. Campbell) that this makes them see better than me or anyone else can tell them, that the white people don't love them. Also this shows that people (Negroes) would register and vote if they could.

Well after we got back to Ruleville from Indianola, the truck with 24 thousand pounds of food and clothing had arrived; and community people were unloading the boxes and believe it or not of the 12 people moving those boxes 8 were women. Well this sounds bad for us, but the men up here are nothing. The saying around Ruleville is that if you want a job done right, get a woman. Most of the school bus drivers are women.

February 13, 1964, Thursday: About 75 or more people came to the food center at 820 Quiver Street to sign up for food and clothes. 25 of this number went to the Courthouse to register. The people were told to come to a mass meeting at Williams Chapel Church on Friday night at 7:30 PM and that only people who went down to try and register would be served first and that those who did not go down to register would be last.

Friday morning (Feb. 14): There were about 300 people at the center to get food. We started carrying them down to Indianola at 8AM and at 4:30 PM more than 156 people had gone to Indianola. These people came from every town in Sunflower County and some had walked five and ten miles to Ruleville.

We had the people coming into the Courthouse, but C.C. Campbell would only take in two at a time.

Feb. 15, Saturday: We took six people to the Courthouse and the registrar told us

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that the office would be closed because the county Lawyers were holding a meeting in the testing room. So we stayed around in the Hall for about 45 minutes and then went back to Ruleville.

There has been someone off every plantation in Sunflower County except Senator James Eastland's plantation. People say that Negroes on Eastland's plantation are in bad shape, but they are afraid to come and get the food and clothing.

The people on Ben Flemmins place where he told them (the Negroes) that "if any nigger goes down to vote I will shoot him down like a rabbit." However nine people came off that plantation to try to register to vote. Last year two people had to move off the place when they went down to register and were forced to find themselves places in Ruleville. So as soon as Ben finds out about them going down we may have nine more to try and find places for.

Feb. 16, Sunday: People were in and out of Mrs. Hamer's and Joe Mac's homes all day long asking about things that were to be given away on Monday. Names and addresses were taken of people who were to go to the Courthouse the next day. So night came down on a very busy day.

Feb. 17, Monday: I got out of bed about 6 AM to go to the restroom and from the restroom window I could see people gathering at the house where the food was stored. Well I went back to bed and was there about 30 minutes before Mrs. Hamer came and said she needed help. It was about 7:30 when I got around to the place and there were cars lined up for about ten blocks on Highway 8, Reden St., Center St. and Washington St. and not only that - there were about a thousand people in and around the house..

Well it took us until about 8:15 AM to get people into four station wagons and three cars and of f to Indianola to register. At about noon 205 persons had come to Indianola and of this number over half could not read or write. I took names and addresses and went over the forms and answered questions as the people waited their turn to go into the office. Some people talked with each other and with me and tried to get with people they knew best.

C.C. would only take two people at a time, so that afternoon we had about 80 people to go through the registrar's office. Some could read and write and some could not, but they ~~maxx~~ went and that was what they wanted to do. Now they could say that they had been to the courthouse to register to vote. The people who could not write or read may never become voters, but they had done what we asked - to register or to make an attempt to do so.

On Monday all of the food and clothing was given away. Yet there is always someone who did not as they say get a thing. You know how they act, someone got more meat than I did or two pairs of shoes and I only got one, things like that.

So by the end of this day, Monday Feb. 17 - we had had in one week a total of 302 people try to go or go to the courthouse in Indianola, Miss.

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Tuesday, Feb. 18, 1964: Mr. Otis Foster carried four people to Indianola to register and on Wednesday morning I carried five people down and that afternoon carried four more .

Thursday, Feb. 20, 1964: I took four people to the courthouse and only one could read or write. I asked to sign her name if Campbell wouldn't do it.

There were also other people to go down, but there was no gasoline money on hand so we couldn't take them. We plan to carry about 25 people down Friday and Saturday, Feb. 21 and 22. Next week we will try for 100 a week, with most of our effort in Indianola and Morehead, Mississippi.

We plan to have a good number of people in Sunflower County to come to the Farmer's Workshop the 29th-2nd of March.

Well that's about it for now.

Yours in the struggle,  
Mac.

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