

POLITICAL REPORT - Oct. 17 - Nov. 8

Joe Morse

This report will have to be fairly short and without much detail. I have been unable to write this until now and I won't remember too many of the details.

The week of October 18-25 was spent preparing for Freedom Day on October 29th. This preparation took the form of many Voter Registration Classes. We had 14 classes throughout the city during the week. All but one of these were held in private homes. We instructed about 50 people in this registration project.

We had two mass meetings in the week. On Wednesday Mrs. Quin from McComb, Mississippi was our featured speaker. We drew about 50 people to this meeting. Mrs. Quin's talk was actually disappointing. She did not move the people to action in any way we could determine. On Friday evening we were scheduled to have Paul O Dwyer, a councilman from New York City, to speak at the mass meeting. On Friday at 12:00PM we were told by Jackson that he could not make it and thus we got a substitute - Mrs. Palmer from Jackson. She talked to a group of about 25 people and rather than delivering a good speech she made some pertinent comments and threw the floor open to discussion to bring the "freedom spirit" to all the people. This meeting did provide some good thoughts and timely suggestions from local people.

The week of October 25 - November 1 is probably one of the busiest weeks we have had in Meridian. It began with a Political Dinner on Monday the 26th. This dinner was put on primarily by the Lauderdale County Executive Committee of the Freedom Democratic Party. The featured speaker was Ozzel Billingsley, a Negro attorney from Birmingham. He spoke on the importance of dedication to the movement and his experiences with Civil Rights in Alabama. It was quite successful with around 125 people attending. The tickets ranged in price from \$2.50 for students to \$15.00 for the highest priced adult ticket. The Executive Committee made close to \$200.00 half of which they sent to the National Democratic Party, in spite of the protests of the COFO people involved and the other half was kept for future work by the F.D.P. in Lauderdale County.

On Tuesday evening we had another mass meeting in preparation for Freedom Day. Mrs. Annie Devine, candidate for Congress from the 4th. District in the Freedom Election, was the featured speaker. We had approximately 30 people in attendance.

On Wednesday's mass meeting, we tried to have as many of those who were to register on Freedom Day to the meeting. Mr. Floyd McKissick, President of National CORE was the speaker. There were 125 people in attendance. Mr. McKissick gave an excellent speech. The local people were very impressed and stated that they could listen to him talk alnight. He identified with the people and talked in simple

terms about very difficult and profound concepts concerning the entire movement, both in Meridian and throughout the entire country. The people responded so well that a suggestion was made to take up a collection for the COFO workers in Meridian to buy food and supplies. This was a real morale booster for us since we had been discouraged with the outlook in Meridian as a center of Civil Rights Activity.

Thursday was our Freedom Day. I will not go into any detail about it because I am preparing a special report on Freedom Day, which will be sent along with the next report.

The following four days, Friday October 30 thru November 3 were spent in working the Freedom Election. This will also be covered in a special report which is not yet prepared. Lauderdale County got approximately 1,500 ballots, which was considerably less than was obtained the last Election. This report will be included in the next report also.

The time from November 2 to November 8th. has been spent largely in appraising COFO's position in Meridian, and setting up our new political office in a building half a block from where we are now located.