

Tim Jenkins - Dec. 18, 1965

JM: Tim, would you like to start in on talking about the decision to go into political direct action?

TJ: Okay, I'll talk from my standpoint, which was - in 1960, '61, I was the National Affairs Vice President of the United States National Student Association. We had been involved, during that year, in a program to support the Southern Student Movement. And that movement had consisted, up until that time, largely of protests around lunch counters, and then, beginning toward the end of '61, with interstate commerce, and public accommodations, in hotels, motels, and depot restaurants, and what have you. It was felt the end of 1960 and '61, that something had to be done to make the movement and its goals more sustaining than direct action would ever succeed in doing. We had seen the way the police and local officials had handled demonstrators, in both lunch counter and freedom ride type activity, that it would be necessary to get stronger ties, or stronger leverage with the political system (~~can I leave that alone?~~)

We - largely a group of people who played a secondary role in sit-in activities - they were northern students, some people who had given financial support, adults, and people who had given a great deal of thought to it, to the movement, (different) stages and things - we also represent, I suppose, some of the leaders of the student movement.... It was first conceived that we would introduce this idea of political action at a regular SNCC meeting; and this was done. At the time there was a very strong reaction from a certain segment of the movement, which seemed to feel that it would be a betrayal of the religious motivation for the movement to get involved in politics. Their feeling was that the movement essentially was a spiritual thing, and was aimed at the revolution of individuals and not of the degenerated political system. They felt that the political system at that stage was hopeless, that no attempt should be made to participate in that, because it would be wasted effort. This then represented -

JM: Excuse me. What time was this - what date did this meeting occur?

TJ: Again I'll have to refer to notes, and I think I do have adequate notes, but I can't give that date. Prior to our Highland (Folk) School meeting. And it was that stage when we were trying to discuss the whole business of political action for the first time.

This had gone, really, in my thinking, from certain preliminary discussions we had also had with people in the foundation world, and people in government - the United States government. We had talked with the Justice Department, and they had indicated that they would have much stronger affirmative powers in protecting people engaged in civil rights activity if they weren't linked, or associated, with political activity. That is, not partisan activity so much as registering people to vote and use the franchise. It was also indicated by foundation people at a



joint session, that we would have a much stronger basis for getting funds from tax-exempt sources, if we engaged in something that could be called non-partisan political activity. It was their feeling that the demonstrations were - at lunch counters and so forth, however vital, would not be the kind of thing that they could fund. And as a result, they would never really get their maximum push, because they couldn't get the resources - financial resources. But the voting proposition was said to have this kind of backing from the foundation world.

That was at a specific meeting, held at (Tappahosic) under the auspices I believe of the Southern Regional Conference - Council, and the - uh, this meeting was held in (Tappahosic), sponsored jointly by the Southern Regional Council and the - also a foundation president which is F.D. Patterson (the name escapes me) - Tappahosic is an estate belonging to the late William (Russell Molton), on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. At that conference, attended by Harold Fleming, Southern - now of the Potomac Institute, then the Southern Regional Council, Burke Marshall of the Justice Department, John (Dorr) of the Justice Department, and St. John Barrett of the Justice Department, executives from the New World Foundation, and the Field Foundation, John Hope Franklin, no, John Hope, Jr., and a few others I'll supplement later. And representing NSA, I was there, and representing SNCC, Charles Jones was there. Our discussion was on political action and southern politics generally, and how the enthusiasm of the movement could be led into more direct political activity. It was agreed that it was very useful to do this, and at that time, the indication from the Justice Department and from foundation representatives were made, that a special program could be jointly worked out at subsequent times. We were to go and present it to the students, and talk to them about the possibility of setting up a special bureau (particularly) within SNCC, since SNCC was the active spokesman for the student movement.

We presented this in a - in what, in retrospect, might have been a bad way: we didn't reveal to the entire meetings - the entire meeting what our purpose was. We only spoke to the principal leadership about the problem of trying to get more political action. We knew beforehand that there was very strong opposition to this, and in an effort to head off that opposition, we didn't disclose the full scope of our project. The opposition was led primarily by Diane Nash, and Marian Barry. The opposition was that - the religious one that I had previously indicated. We proposed then that SNCC set up - since it wouldn't go into political action entirely - that it set up a political wing. They'd have a project director, and that it be distinct from the direct action wing, on the theory that we would have to have this sort of dichotomy in program in order to get foundation support, and indeed, in order to get Justice Department action and protection of that wing of the program which was devoted to political action.

There was a great deal of difficulty getting this view accepted. And it was a series of subsequent meetings that finally allowed us to get the majority of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee - the committee then was working on a basis that each campus where there had been



protest activity sent a representative, and this was a sort of informal, yet formal group. They were designated by their local groups to go and represent their group at the coordinating committee. But it was informal in the sense that there was no set criteria as to what would qualify as a protest unit, or constituency for that representative. So we didn't - even though we cast votes and had majorities, it's not known what those majorities really represented - in a larger sense, the real feelings of the students, the students at large.

Well, we had - at the same time, as vice-president of NSA, I went to the foundations and got funds to have a special training seminar for student leaders. I have brochures on that seminar. That was my effort to make sure there were some people who were steeped in real political know-how. The seminar was designed to bring in the best in the way of academic people, and some movement-type people. To talk to the guys who had been leaders of the student movement and really acquaint them with the way in which the southern Negro question was related very directly to politics. The seminar was ranged over the areas of sociology, family organization, economics, and finally political action. And it was designed that the seminar would terminate with an action program. The director of that seminar was (Harlan) Randolph.

So, this seminar was held at - in Nashville. The seminar achieved its purpose, and got about fifteen to twenty guys, deeply committed to political action. Even prior to the seminar, there had been some effort to talk with a guy whom we had heard was operating a political program in Mississippi - that was Bob Moses. We had talked to Bob when he was on his way from New York to Mississippi on original exploration of the political situation down there. He had been a professor at, I believe, Hamilton College - a small school, a small boy's school. And he was on his way down to start this project, he believed, for a year, and then return to New York. We talked to him in Philadelphia, and he told us what he was trying to do; we told him what we were trying to do. He had heard of SNCC and was interested in working for SNCC - he was not then on the payroll of SNCC. He has in fact - he was in fact carrying several checks, which he hadn't cashed, from both CORE and SCLC, inviting him to come and work for them, but he preferred to work for SNCC. And he returned those checks, and went to Mississippi actually on his own, and I believe went to Greenwood originally. We kept constant contact with him by telephone and letter writing.

JM: Was this in 1960?

TJ: No.

JM: Well, let me see. It had to be at the end of '61. I'll look it up.

TJ: It was probably around August of '61 that this meeting with Bob Moses took place, after the seminar. We didn't discuss concretely what we wanted to do; we had had...



Sometime toward the end of 1961, we had received information - that is, SNCC had received information of serious interest in participating in the movement from Harry Belafonte. The communication had been I think directly from Diane Nash to Belafonte. She had indicated that she was interested in inviting him down to participate in one of these freedom rides, because they had become difficult to finance because of the lack of notoriety, or the lack of novelty, in getting people interested, it was necessary to get a shot in the arm for the freedom ride activity. So she thought a group of celebrities ought to be arrested in one of these demonstrations. I went to New York and talked to Belafonte on this matter, and also indicated some of our interest in broader political activity. He was very receptive to this, and took steps to make money available for the top leadership of SNCC to meet with him in Washington.

That meeting is difficult to locate in time, but I think it took place just prior to the seminar. That was an important meeting, because I think there the group really began to appreciate that we were specially accepting a commitment that was likely to run for one, two, or maybe even three years. That group was made up of people that I had selected. Lottie King, the head of the Atlanta Student Movement Human Rights Committee was there, Charles (McDoo), then chairman of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, Charles Jones, who was student leader at Johnson C. Smith activity in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Charles (Shirra), who had been the student leader at Virginia Union College in Virginia, and the student body president at Jackson State College, whose name escapes me, was also there. There may have been one or two others.

Our meeting there was designed to really see how we could - if you will, subvert the existing structures of SNCC, and reorganize it around a less democratic nucleus, for a more effective unit. The problem was that, as I've indicated before, SNCC was a rather amorphous group, representing a confusion of different size groups and what have you, and no real central authority, the executive secretary was kind of a busy fellow with administrative duties but no real policy program to promote. The chairman was a mouthpiece, but he really didn't have any effective authority. There was a tendency to start a staff, but they really weren't staff in the sense that they had no (line) responsibilities, there was nobody to report to, they had no procedures for fiscal responsibility, and what have you. And although they got some - subsistence salaries, from funds collected through donations in the mail, largely from campus donations that National Student Association had generated around the country, they weren't really an organization. They were sort of an amorphous collection of people with different, and un-parallel functions. Our effort was then to try and take over this amorphous group, and form it into an organization comparable to the NAA, CORE, and SCLC. We were promised funds to do this, largely from Belafonte and some others. And we then viewed this as an important part of our work in the seminar.

The seminar was then operating on two levels at all times. It was operating on the level of information gathering, and sharpening of expertise in broad economic and political and sociological questions; it was also operating on a very practical and strategic level, of seeing how it would be necessary to hold constitutional conventions or what have you,



to revamp the structure of SNCC. We were working then on a new constitution for SNCC, which we were to propose at the next general SNCC meeting.

JM: The foundation that F.T. Patterson was the head of was the Phelps-Stokes Foundation.

Tim, can you discuss the poll tax campaign? - as you knew about it, which occurred from January 1 to February 1, 1962.

TJ: Well, essentially the poll tax campaign was a step taken to anticipate further action in the actual elections. Mississippi of course has a poll tax requirement, and it has a deadline for paying the poll tax, which is substantially in advance of the actual elections. So it was necessary to take this step to go around to the Negro communities, throughout the state, in an attempt to highlight the business of the poll tax closing date, if we were hope to - if we could hope to increase the electorate at the election. And to do this we had to both pull in SNCC personnel from across the South for short-term duty, and also recruit northern students to come in to work on this poll tax project. We were quite successful, we had a coordinating program, I believe that the northern program was at Yale, and it got a number of students who went down for that particular event, staying two weeks or more, and then coming back to the campus. A few students stayed on the entire year.

JM: Now, on this poll tax campaign, from what I understand you have to - a voter in the state of Mississippi has to pay poll taxes for the year of the election and the year before. So that he has to produce two receipts for paying the poll tax in order to vote. And that apparently, even among the Negroes who are registered in Mississippi, they felt that their votes would be so insignificant with two racists running, if two is the number in, let's say a primary or in an election, that they didn't pay their poll taxes, and consequently couldn't vote even if they wanted to.

TJ: Well, you stated it.

JM: Then the idea was to get many people who were registered to bring their poll taxes up to date and also - if this is correct - to get people who weren't even registered yet to pay their poll taxes, to prepare them, let's say, for the elections of 1964. So that when they finally did register they could vote, immediately.

TJ: Right. Then we were operating under the clear impression that poll taxes were clearly constitutional. I mean the only way to deal with it was to take steps to see that people would be covered. And so we were trying to get both people who were registered, as you indicated, and had lost their



receipts, to be careful in getting new receipts; and also to get people who weren't registered to pay their poll tax so they would be ready to vote.

JM: There is also some indication that a poll tax for many of these Mississippi Negroes was a definite discriminatory fact, because they just didn't have the money to pay the poll tax - particularly since it occurs during the winter, when people in Mississippi would be quite poor, and unable to pay.

TJ: Well, it's more than that - of course, Bill Higgs'll be able to discuss this in detail, he has rather carefully developed legislative history for the poll tax amendment. And the reasons that were finally used for passing the poll tax, in addition to the clear impact of the poll tax, because Negroes tend to be the poorest element in the community, is also the fact that it lends itself to a great deal of abuse in actual application of the requirement to have paid poll taxes. White people were frequently allowed to vote without their receipts, or with one receipt, or with - not having paid their poll tax at all. And of course this is the only subject to review now, under the Civil Rights Act, they can get their records and photograph them. But in order to be Caesar's wife in these elections, the Negro community had to take precautions to see that they had them, their receipts.

JM: Can you discuss now the campaign to elect Rev. Smith and Rev. Lindsay, in the summer of '62?

TJ: We never really entertained any delusion that either of the two candidates could be elected, but it was our feeling, and particularly Bob Moses' feeling, that strenuous effort had to be made to get Negroes to rethink their rightful role in the political participation. An effort was made to collect data on Negro Congressmen and Senators, after the Reconstruction era, who had represented Mississippi, and to play up this in addition to running candidates who would reclaim those seats according to the just population breakdown in Mississippi. We also saw it as a way to force the ministers to take a more active role. So we selected two ministers to run these two campaigns, in hope to get the most organized element in the community, namely the churches, behind this effort. Because up until this time, the churches had been very, very reluctant in getting involved in anything political. So we thought it would ease the difficulty in getting church participation - church men to participate in political action if we had two ministers run, and so these two were selected.

JM: Jim Forman stated that in addition, that the white power structure claimed that there was apathy in the community, and that by running Negroes for office you could focus more interest in the Negro community upon an election which, until this time, had been very meaningless to the Negroes even who were registered.

TJ: Well, that's true, and we also tried a new political thought - we felt that while there was this apathy in the Negro community - well it wasn't really apathy, you might - lethargy, or absence of an effective



program to get Negroes concerned with the voting - we felt that if we could ever demonstrate the willingness of Negroes to vote, and indeed, their political strength if they were allowed to vote, we would both get Negroes to vote in greater numbers, and also we might crack the solidarity of the white political picture. We thought we would also demonstrate that candidates in close competition with opposing candidates should then woo, in some manner, the Negro vote, in order to edge out the competition. And we thought if we could sizeably demonstrate that Negroes would vote in large numbers, when interested, when they had a program to vote for and support, then we would also be making a chink in the solidarity of the white community. So it was both those purposes. I suppose we were demonstrating the lack of apathy both for the Negro and for the white community.

JM: Then really the Smith and Lindsay campaigns in 1962 is a direct anticipation of the freedom vote of '63, and its part in the evolution was that it began to draw out from the shell, the Negro community which had sort of retired out of fear and lack of interest, and overt oppression from the white community.

TJ: Well, if you want - you could say that it was the precursor to the later campaign, but I don't think it was conceived of as a step in anything quite as systematic as all that. It was the next step; we kept making innovations as the time presented itself. We'd find new clauses in old acts, and we'd try and exploit them, we were just trying to use whatever means possible to get a program off the ground. I don't think - it would be a misconception to characterize the Lindsay and Smith elections as being calculated as a step in a longer program; I think it was just a - one of the steps that occurred to us, and they were fairly disjointed as we made up the rules on an ad hoc basis.

JM: Tim, can you discuss some of the things you saw developing in the summer of '62 in response to Rev. Smith and Lindsay's running for Congress?

TJ: Well, perhaps the most important thing was, it gave us an issue to then go to the young people in the community and make a specific request that they either drop out of school and give full time for a limited period of time, if they weren't in school to work on this particular campaign. It was a focal point then for us to garner a real indigenous staff - up until that time, most of the people who had been the organizers, had been imported by SNCC from out of state, and largely from the northern states. Now, with this campaign, this was a breaking point, at which Negro Mississippians began to see their own vested interests in a different perspective, because no longer were they being asked to support something that was designed elsewhere, but it was a domestic or a local project. They knew Rev. Smith, they knew Rev. Lindsay, and they responded very, very well. I think that was the very significant event around this particular tactic.



In addition to this, we have to see that in '62, you had some misgivings about the way the national groups had also brought in freedom riders without consulting the local community, and had made decisions on what those freedom riders should do, and how their cases would be handled, wholly on the national level, which excluded the local people. I think that with this new technique of running a local candidate for a local office, we assured the people, in a very real sense, that the political enterprise was certainly not to be an extension of an external movement - it was to be an internal thing, have local candidates, and also local policy. And this was encouraging; I felt that throughout the state many areas had some misgivings about external control, and began to relax those misgivings and as more students began to come out of the Mississippi colleges and high schools it relaxed further, and began to really take on the color of a community effort, as political action seldom does.

JM: Then, here in the summer of '62, you really begin to get asstate-wide effort, or an anticipation of a state-wide effort, on a local level without something that's manufactured by the civil rights groups to go above and beyond the scope of the local people's problems.

TJ: That's right. It's very clearly represented by the effort that was made even by the Mississippians to make Bob Moses the president of the Council of Federated Organizations. And it was refused - it was indicated that if anything, he could only become the executive secretary. And more appropriately just the chairman of the political action program, because again we were tied up with this foundation tie, which required that we not be partisan in the political activity that we supported. I think it was perfectly clear at the end of negotiations that summer, though, that Mississippians had to be the drivers in this whole registration and voting effort, and they were going to support their own candidates, they were going to decide their own platforms, and ultimately have this worked through on their own policy on the national level. But in that sense it might be said that this was an anticipation of what later developed on the national level.

JM: Then this is in a real sense an idea that the civil rights groups were only there to spur and at times guide local people in decisions which would have to be made on a local level, rather than by a group dictating what was going on.

TJ: Well, without trying to get into the - you know, organizational difficulties - it should be appreciated that this wasn't the universal view of all the civil rights groups, there were pressures I think from the national offices of CORE and NAACP to do somewhat the opposite. There was regional policy to be followed, there was national policy to be followed, and both those organizations to some extent exerted some pressure on their local people to tow a national line, to in fact exclude cooperation with certain other civil rights groups, to highlight the independence of the



parent civil rights groups - the other parent civil rights groups. This friction did exist. I think that well, the local people who were members of the NAA resisted it, the local people who were officers of agents of CORE resisted it, and it had the effective color of a local enterprise, even though there was some pressure to the contrary.

JM: Tim, can you talk about the primaries that were conducted during the summer of '63.

*Primary  
June-August*  
TJ: Well, then I was technically not wearing the SNCC hat, I was representative of the law students' civil rights research council, I was financed by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, to go down and serve as some sort of legal assistant to the director of the Council of Federated Organizations, Bob Moses. I was in a group of law students that had various functions to perform, liaison with federal agencies, protection of people in their constitutional rights in criminal courts, some advice on civil legal matters, and also to direct and help deal with the problems of the Council of Federated Organizations. When we got to Mississippi we soon discovered, one of the law students discovered an old act which provided that those people who felt that they had been illegally denied the right to vote could present themselves on the election day, or primary day, at the polling place, and sign an affidavit to the effect that he had been illegally denied the right to vote, and have his vote counted if the registrar or the commissioner of elections certified that this affidavit had reasonable cause. It so happened that this particular provision was put on the statute books shortly after a carpetbagging era in Mississippi, and it was put there to protect white citizens against carpetbag- and scallywag-controlled elections. And it was a way to avoid the problem of the affidavits of loyalty to the Federal Government, because the commissioners of election somehow seemed to be loyal more to the local people than to the Federal Government.

We attempted to dust this statute off and use it, for our purpose, saying that Negroes had been illegally denied the right to vote by virtue of inequitable education, and also by intimidation of a physical sort and economic sort. This was the substance of our affidavit. And we then tried to get this as widely circulated in the state as we possibly could, to demonstrate that Negroes could vote in large numbers if given the opportunity. And we predicted that we would get something like 20 thousand people to participate in this vote. And on the basis of this we set up a very elaborate program, county by county, attempting to have a central organization which would provide transportation down to the polling places as well as a center where they could meet in the morning and - a regular, well-oiled political machine to get people out to the polling places. We had very great success. The first primary when we ran this we netted something like 23 thousand people, or affidavits, and the second one in excess of 50 thousand.

JM: Now, this was in June and August?

TJ: Right. June and August of '63. That effort was again aimed to



coincide with the - something that was going on on the national scene, because we anticipated taking the affidavits that resulted from this procedure, protest procedure, and flying them to Washington and placing them before the House Judiciary Committee to demonstrate the number of people who believe themselves to be illegally denied the right to vote, and the people who are interested in voting. The big argument in Washington at that time by the southerners was that anybody who really wanted to vote could pay a poll tax and could vote. We were arguing on the contrary that oftentimes the poll tax was offered but not accepted, and that registrars arbitrarily closed down, or sometimes discarded applications that Negroes had made to vote. And we thought it would be very useful if we could get a huge number of these affidavits and bring them up to the House Judiciary Committee, and present them officially to the chairman, which we were able to do in '63.

JM: Now, this method apparently was not used in the freedom vote itself, in the fall of '63. How is it tactically arrived at that rather than affidavits contesting the denial of the right to vote, dropped in place of freedom registrations?

TJ: Well, I think the theory was that there was too much frustration in this business of the protest affidavit and an attempt to vote, because the people never could see any tangible results. You'd cast your votes, they didn't have any effect, and the people sort of felt it was a wasted enterprise. So we thought we'd have to carry the graphic representation of what we were trying to do another step further, to make its effects much more demonstrably clear to the population. So we decided that we would cast these votes and then we would call the person who wins under this procedure the Governor, and also the lieutenant governor and so forth. So we decided then to conceive of it as a freedom vote, which the person didn't need the credentials of the official election, because those credentials were in fact arrived at in order to discriminate against Negroes on the basis of race. And therefore the freedom election was conceived as a complete rejection of the existing political system, a much more complete rejection than the affidavit principle. It's both founded in the idea, though, of bringing home to the people the importance of voting and the importance of running candidates and the importance of winning elections. But I thought that they - I think it was thought that they freedom ballot would be a more impressive way of doing it than the affidavit.

JM: Then the freedom registration and the freedom vote was looked upon as a less frustrating way and a more productive way of attacking the racially oriented elections and possibly in breaking down this sort of structure for the future. And that once this was broken down it would be possible to then resume registering people officially, and more effectively, in case.

*Aug 29 Freedom regis Station*



TJ: Well, you shouldn't say resume, because we never stopped the official registration of people and getting people to pay the poll tax. That was the hard-nosed side of the program at all times, to get people to actually register, and to actually present themselves at the official registrar and also to actually pay their poll tax. So it wasn't a question of resuming that, it's a question of highlighting it by a technique, which was ancillary to getting people to take the official steps, to get them to vote in the freedom elections. And then, too, the other side of it was the very important conception of most of the people to get people prepared for every stage of political procedure. Not only did they have to have candidates, not only did they have to be prepared to protest when the candidates didn't win, they also had to be prepared to handle conventions and organization down to the local district, or beat, of each county, so they could - when they finally got the vote in - as we believed they would be able to in time - they would in fact have a political organism that would be viable in expressing the will of the Negro people. I think there we were motivated by the analogy of what had happened in the northern cities, we were motivated to avoid the pattern that developed in the northern cities, namely where the Negroes went into the traditional political structure and really didn't have an effective voice, because they did not build an essentially responsive political machinery. They were sucked in and used by the existing political machinery. To avoid that, the only way we saw of avoiding that was to get across this idea of independence; it wasn't vote black per se, because as you recall there were a couple of integrated slots on the ticket. But it was an effort to get people to see the hard reality of political power. Not only casting a vote but also supporting candidates, arguing for them, district meetings, having conventions, and having a structure that can really turn out that vote.

JM: And this was conceived of in this way at that time?

TJ: Everything of course is conceived of at different levels by different people. I don't think there was any doubt though, in the minds of the people who had organizing responsibility for this campaign, that this was the ultimate course to be followed. I'm speaking here of Bob Moses, Lawrence (Guyot), Aaron Henry, Salter and King - Ed King.

JM: Now, there's been some discussion as to the fact that the tactics by which political power would be gained were not premeditated in their thought. But isn't it true that the objective was still the same - this was to get as great as possible number of educated Negro voters in the state of Mississippi moving toward protecting their interests.

TJ: Well, yes, you can't be sure of the tactics ever in Mississippi, because the opposition is unpredictable. You have to operate of course on an ad hoc basis at all times, because you can never anticipate what's gonna happen. But there was no doubt that our overall objective was to always consistent, was to build not only people who were able to vote, but to build an electorate, people who were able to control that vote, get the maximum use of it.



JM: How did this process of supporting specific candidates rather than non-partisan political activity originate?

TJ: Well, you recall that we began our political activity with a huge amount of our subsidy - a disproportionate amount of our subsidy, let me not say huge - coming from tax-exempt foundation sources. Conduited through the Southern Regional Council Voter Education Project. This was our main lifeline, and of course we had to adhere to the letter of the law, we couldn't support political candidates. At least it couldn't be a dominant segment of our program. So we, in order to do anything, we just divided our program. We eventually found that it - if we were out to register people to vote we couldn't do so without giving people reasons for voting. We couldn't give the people a reason for voting as long as we merely said that they had to vote for the existing candidates, and choose between Tweedledee and Tweedledee. So we set up - when I say say we I suppose I'm variously speaking of COFO, SNCC, the political leadership of Mississippi - saw it necessary to set up a candidate-supporting wing, which would operate on independent type funds, non-tax-exempt funds if you will. To give the people a purpose for voting. In time it showed such promise and such importance that it was seen that it was more important to get the people organized around partisan objectives, because of the success we had had in that direction, than it was to abstractly appeal to people to vote. So actually we got weaned completely from funds from the tax-exempt source, and devoted ourselves wholly to - almost wholly - to partisan political activity.

Originally we had conceived that partisan political activity would be necessary, at some stage in our effort to get Negroes involved in the political process. But our conception grew, or developed, as the years went on. Our first conception was that we would build a political base among the Negroes without any partisan activity, and in effect, functionalize the white power structure by trying to get them to variously vie, one against the other, to get that Negro vote, which we hoped that by a few years'd be very substantial. That was the conception that prevailed in 1961 and '62, I believe. In '62 it became clear, though, that we weren't making very much impact, that both candidates on the ticket in - the primaries were usually the important elections - both the candidates were strongly racist, and they didn't see the influence at all. In fact the Negro vote was conceived of as a liability, because it would allow the other party to point to you as being interested, or seeking the Negro vote, and therefore being liberal or moderate. So we saw we had to develop another tactic; that was essentially building our own political machine, on more liberal objectives, and then selling that to the more liberal whites, and for that reason I think we were particularly careful at all times to keep an integrated ticket. So that we weren't excluding white supporters who might not be within our immediate movement. Our conception then was that we would operate on such a broad platform of social welfare and social benefits that it would be an appealing - a much more appealing platform than the normal segregationist platform, which was narrowly limited to the issue of states' rights. We wanted to talk about welfare and minimum wage, labor organization and this sort of



thing, and I think that it wasn't until the end of '62 and the beginning of '63 that we began to see that then we had to view this as our own burden instead of jumping on the bandwagon of someone else's political machine.

JN: Now, this then would explain, at least in part, the reason why.....

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