

WALTER TILLOW

Highlander Center
September 1
Interviewed by Anne Romaine

(Anne) Where are you originally from?

(Tillow) From New York City.

(Anne) How old are you?

(Tillow) 25

(Anne) Where'd you go to school?

(Tillow) I went to Harper College and I did graduate work a couple of years; one year at the University of Washington, one year at Cornell University.

(Anne) How long have you been working for SNCC?

(Tillow) I started in June of '63 until the summer of '65.

(Anne) How did you get into SNCC?

(Tillow) I was tired of graduate school. I went South to the April spring conference in '63 and then at the end of the year I left and I went South. I went to Tennessee, west Tennessee ^{Fayette} ~~A~~ County.

~~XXXXX~~ (Anne) When did you first start working with the MFDP?

(Tillow) Well we had discussed the possibility of, I guess the idea of the convention Challenge had been around as early as the Freedom Vote and it might have even been around earlier but you'd have to check with people like Bob.

(Anne) As early as the what?

(Tillow) The Freedom Vote in November of '63, but it might have been around even before then. But I was working in research and communications

and all that.

(Anne) In Atlanta?

(Tillow) Yes, starting in January we set up that department and we started I would say in the early spring to begin to assemble material and look into procedure and then I was asked to go work with Miss Baker ~~xx~~ and Frank Smith in opening up a northern office.

(Anne) Who is Mrs. Baker?

(Tillow) Miss Baker. She was, at that time, I guess she still is an ~~adult~~ adult advisor to SNCC. She was on the executive board as one of the two adult advisors, she and Howard ^{Sinn (A.R.)} ~~..~~ She was largely responsible for SNCC's being. She was executive secretary, to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and it was her idea to call together the sit-in students in Raleigh in '60 there and then she kept it together. You ought to speak to her ~~xxxx~~ because she was the one who was involved, It was her office in a sense. She became, there were a couple attempts to get other people to do that operation, you know, support for the convention Challenge in the North, northern support. Bayard was approached; a few others. I wasn't involved in approaching, Bob was. Then they couldn't get them I guess, for whatever reasons so she said she would do that. She was moving at that time from Atlanta to New York, going back to New York.

Originally we thought we'd open up in New York, she, I, she and I really, in New York but then we discovered ~~about~~ that we'd have to be in Washington

because it was more strategically located in terms of politics...

So we went to Washington where Frank Smith had been working. Frank was a student for the spring term at the Institute for Policy Studies. He had been--

XXXXX

(Anne) Was he from Mississippi?

(Tillow) He's from Georgia ..., Georgia, but he was one of the original SNCC people in Mississippi with Bob. He had just been there two years I guess at that time.

(Anne) Where did you first meet Bob?

(Tillow) He was Moses when I first met him. I guess shortly after I went to work. Well, I saw him at that April '63 conference and we didn't talk. I ~~gux~~ forget when's the first time I saw him. But then we saw him repeatedly as I worked. You know, we had a abundance of research people in Atlanta... and ~~it~~ it was a question of some body going because Miss Baker said she couldn't do it alone. So I was asked to go. And I went. That was in May, early May of '64.

We opened up, I guess, the office in June in Washington. I mean we piddled around for a month seeing people, having meetings.

(Anne) Going back... Whose idea... MFDP...?

(Tillow) I think what happened was that there was a Freedom Day, the first Freedom Day in Hattiesburg in Januarh of '64. Somebody who was there from California, a guy named George (Dallas?) went back in February

introduced a resolution into the California Democratic Council, which is like the reform movement of the California Democratic Party, saying that if a Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegation came that CDC ought to urge--it was a California resolution at the CDC convention--. You know, they passed this resolution, you know, wherefore, wherefore, wherefore, thereas, therefore be resolved that the California Democratic Council convention urges the California regular Democratic Party convention to support the seating. That was in February and that's the first time I ever saw the name Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, used.

Now, the idea, I think, was around, you know, the parallel kind of thing, back after the Freedom Vote. But I wouldn't know. I mean I was in Atlanta when this thing came in and we circulated it. That was in February and the thing wasn't officially founded until the end of April, April 26th, 28th. So, I think that's the first that I know of where the name was used. Now I don't know where this guy got the name in Hattiesburg or whether they just dreamt it up because the resolution--

See, they didn't know. It must have been talked about in Hattiesburg and they just didn't know what was coming off so that they just-- I don't know how they got the idea for the name but they made it up, and things like that.

(Anne) Not just the name but the whole idea of ~~an~~ a separate party.

(Tillow) ^{Where} Where it comes from?

(Anne) Yes.

(Tillow) I just don't know. It comes out of a lot of things, the Freedom Vote and others. I don't know where it gets started. I'm not the best source on that.

(Anne) Would you trace the major events in the summer of '64 leading up to the convention?

(Tillow) Yes, well--

(Anne) Or, would you rather talk about--

(Tillow) I can tell you just what we did in Washington.

(Anne) You were working in Washington at this time?

(Tillow) Yes. We went to Washington in May and we stayed through ~~September~~ September. Our job was to drum up support in the delegations that were coming to the convention. So, I myself traveled to Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota, to the state Democratic party conventions in those three states. Frank went to Connecticut, California and he spoke before some Democratic group in New York and he was in Denver. Somebody was in Oregon.

(Anne) What was this for?

(Tillow) Well, the ones that I went to were actually state party conventions. Frank went out to California. I went to the Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota, three consecutive weeks and we succeeded in getting three resolutions out of each one of those conventions. The Michigan one was-- You see the state partys and how the ~~same~~ state delegations are chosen vary from state to state. In Michigan the convention delegation is chosen at the

state party convention. Therefore, it can be instructed by the convention so that the Michigan resolution was very, very strong and was binding on the delegation, almost. I mean, in fact, it was binding on the delegation. In Wisconsin they had these direct primaries where the delegates are chosen in the primary and therefore the delegation is separate from the state party structure so that there's a lot of people that are delegates that are also delegates to the state party convention but nothing ~~at~~ ^{that} the state party convention does is binding on the state delegation. So we got a resolution out of that, you know and we succeeded in getting--

(Anne) What was the resolution?

(Tillow) That they support in ~~principle~~ principle. You know, they couldn't tell the delegation to do this because they just couldn't do that. But it said, you know, all resolutions are pretty much the same. But we did, in Wisconsin, succeed in getting Kastenmeier on the credentials committee.

(Anne) How did the Democratic Convention go about it?

(Tillow) At the state? Well, the credentials committee at the Convention is two, a man and a woman from each state, two delegates from each state. And sometimes they're appointed by the governor, sometimes they're chosen by the convention, sometimes, like in Oregon, the delegates are chosen in primaries so that the guy that gets the highest number of votes has his pick of what rules, credentials, resolutions, what committee he wants to sit on. The next highest has his vote and so on. So they vary from state to state.

So we got those three resolutions and there were eleven state, I think, which passed resolutions in all told. So that was ~~par~~ primarily our, one way that we operated ~~annually~~ in actually going around.

(Anne) So there was just you and Frank involved in ... the state conventions?

(Tillow) Well, a kid named Reggie ~~Robinson~~ Robinson, SNCC field secretary, did some traveling.

The other thing was to start doing ~~mailing~~ mailings to the delegates. As the delegations were made up in the various states we would get the names and addresses and then try and do mailings. And try and set up our committees which were based on Friends of SNCC groups, based on some CORE chapters, based on some parents, parents of the volunteers that were in Mississippi for the Summer Project. They had a organization, The Parents' Committee. And then, based on other groups of people that we could get ~~names~~ names of and make contact with. Our job was contacting delegates and then trying to build pressure on the delegations and make the issue known. That kind of thing.

We were also charged with setting up the arrangements in Atlantic City. We got the hotel ~~accommodations~~ accommodations and raised money.

(Anne) How did you get ... idea to rent a whole hotel?

(Tillow) Well, we needed a hundred beds and we sent a guy up there about a month before the convention and he found us ... hotel ~~and~~ and the

guy was willing to rent the whole thing to us that week. It amounted to about a week.

x(Summary)

(Anne)?

(Tillow) No, but there's a bill around in the record somewhere. I think the whole ~~foot~~ footing the bus fare for 68 people and the whole Atlantic City operation came to less than \$10,000.

(Anne) Did you have any part of the fund-raising for this? For the MFDP? What sort of ... did you go to?

(Tillow) Well, we were trying to go ... the ~~SEXXXXXX~~ COFO set-up. SNCC, CORE, NAA.

(Anne) Did you contact ...?

(Tillow) No, we tried to go to the organizations direct because they participating in COFO and they were supporting FDP which was an offsprink of COFO. Each organization I think was supposed to put in \$1000 to set up the northern office. Well, the NAA never cooperated, they were the silent ~~part~~ partner in COFO. It really fell to SNCC, SCLC and CORE and CORE came through. CORE, they were supposed to staff the office. Those organizations were supposed to staff the office.

As soon as we got to New York we had some meetings with Bayard and CORE and A. Philip Randolph. It turned out that Norman Hill worked in our office about two weeks. He was involved at that time with some internal difficulties with CORE and this was just before he left. And also he was involved in organization at the Republican convention. I don't know if you

remember but there was a big ... organization at the Republican convention in San Francisco. He was CORE's man ~~for~~ out there.

CORE did give us two thousand bucks. Paid for the housing I think for the delegates, paid the hotel bill. SNCC and SCLC gave us money. SNCC gave us the most money. I don't know the figures anymore. I guess SNCC CORE and SCLC in terms of contributions. Most of us in the ~~off~~ office were being paid by SNCC so that, Miss Baker was being paid by SCEF. She was, still is special consultant to the Southern Conference Educational Fund. So they allowed her to do this thing for that four-month period. So she was paid by SCEF. I and Frank and Barbara Jones and Charles ^{Sherrod} ~~Scherard~~ and Reggie Robinson were paid by SNCC. I, Frank and Barbara were full time, ^{Sherrod} ~~Scherard~~ was kind of in and out, Reggie also. At one point we had about a month or two to go until the convention he became fulltime. We were carried staff-wise by SNCC and then contribution-wise--I don't know the amountss--but that's what is was.

(Anne) Are there any other major events ... summer connected with FDP that you might comment on, before the convention?

(Tillow) It was just a quiet-- Some of the stuff we knew was going on. UAW was supporting us at first and then got cooled at one point. In fact, the Michigan resolution at the Michigan state party convention was initiated and pushed through ~~by~~--well, was initiated by a lady named Nellie Jeffries-- it was written by Rowe and Nellie Jeffries. ~~Joe Rowe~~ Joe Rowe is a Washington attorney who is general counsel for the UAW. Jeffries is the

national committeewoman from Michigan but she's an assistant to Walter Reuther. She's on his staff at the UAW. And, she was instrumental in the Michigan convention.

And then their legislative newsletter, you might get a hold of this; It's called Washington Report, UAW legislative newsletter, carried a full-- It's a four -page like student voice newsletter comes out weekly. The guy you might speak to is a guy named Pete Irons who does it. He did an ^{Waskow's} ~~int~~ inside/. . tape of the meeting. He was at that meeting at the Institute. And he commented there that he was pulled off at one point. He did a two-page spread of what was going to happen in the various state delegations that already passed resolutions. California passed resolutions, Denver, Colorado passed a resolution, Oregon passed a resolution, the three that I mentioned passed resolutions, some various county Democratic ~~organ~~ organizations passed resolutions depending on how active people in the countryside were in pushing this.

And then they stopped. We just couldn't get any more. In fact, just before we went to the Convention I asked, there was some guy who's in government now... but he was a New York ~~reformer~~ involved in New York reform and was working in Washington came in to see us and he was ~~doing~~ doing a lot of work for the poverty program and said that Jack Conway who was UAW man in Washington ~~XXXX~~ IUD, Industrial Union man in Washington, and was working for the Poverty Program community action director of the ~~Poverty~~ Poverty Program. ^{owed him} some favors in terms that he had produced

some literature and whatnot for Poverty and he was sure that they would pick up some bills for some printing because they'd got presses that they own as well as available. And I asked Rowe. You know, I called up Conway and he said if Rowe said it was okay I'll do it and Rowe said to me you'd better not. There was some kind of-- The rumor in Washington... we weren't going to get anything more than just that the rumor was that the President somehow ... Reuther around so that he was not free to act whether he wanted to or not. That was the story that was around Washington.

So there was all kinds of that kind of stuff. Our work in Washington was trying to-- You know, some of the Congressmen and Senators, like Greene and like Kastenmeier, were delegates or credentials committee people and we tried to see them. We went down to see Kastenbeier and to see Greene and try to keep up the relationship in terms of what was happening in the state and get ... around. That was the strong-- Because at the same time they were in Mississippi in all going through all the necessary steps to elect a delegation, were having precinct meetings and in June and July and then they would have district meetings and county meetings and then they would have district conventions and were leading up to the state convention and they produced a document outlining all the incidents that happened when they tried to go to precinct meetings. They adjourned the meetings as soon as they showed up but they never called the meetings and we tried to circulate this stuff in terms of what was happening. That was

pretty much our thing. We put out some news releases. I guess they're available... And then we just tried to carry on correspondence with people. So, for instance, in Oregon we had a former Congressman and a professor in the University out there in Eugene, the professor, he and some students did research on the legality and the precedence for this kind of action and they did a mailing to the Oregon delegation and they tried to start a national committee for Democratic Mississippi. ... And they were trying to influence some of the Western delegates. It was just trying to reach people and get them to move... really is what our job boiled down to.

(Anne) You want to go on to the ~~xxxxxx~~ Convention then?

(Tillow) Yes,

(Anne) Tell me everything you can.

(Tillow) The Convention started on Monday the 24th. Just before the Convention we began to get rumors about Humphrey trying to work something out. Monday morning the Herald Tribune ran a story, I believe it was Monday ~~Mx~~ morning, which in effect said that the President had given Humphrey the assignment. It's an interesting article by the way.

(Anne) What assignment?

(Tillow) Of working out the compromise. According to the Herald Tribune he immediately checked with ^{Eastland} Eastman and Stennis. You see the strategy of the Mississippians was to send what we called a Joe Doaks delegation which meant there was nobody, everybody, only state officials and Congressional representatives refused to serve on the delegation. There was a lot of mix-up

the adjourning of their convention so that they could reconvene it after the national convention and endorse Goldwater which they didn't do but ~~what~~ they ... I mean they didn't do it formally but they did it sub rosa. And they did a ~~pamphlet~~ pamphlet on ~~the~~ Atlanta but they never printed it but they did it, analyzing who the delegation was in terms of influence.

The Convention started on Monday the 24th. The credentials committee was due to meet on Saturday which meant that credentials committee delegates were arriving that Friday and Saturday because their hearing was 2 o'clock and the bulk of the delegates were arriving on Sunday. So our people arrived Friday morning. I got on the bus and came from Washington Thursday night, Friday morning ~~at~~ 4 o'clock in the morning. I was the next to the last person from Washington to go up there. Everybody else was up there. Frank, Barbara, Eleanor Holmes ~~was~~ who was a ~~law~~ law student, a graduate ... in the summer graduate from Yale Law school... helped Rowe with the brief, did a large part. There were two people that did a large part of the research on the brief was a student of Bill Higgs called.. You got a copy of the brief? They got those in the FDP office. And the other was Eleanor Holmes. She was up there already. A whole bunch of people, Reggie was up there and another guy that came in from the West coast and done some activity on the West coast, Frank Suraco (?) he was up there. And so we got up there Friday morning. Francis Mitchell had come up to do PR work. He was up there. And they arrived Friday morning in Atlantic KCity.

Their presence, I mean the 68 Mississippians getting off the bus really

made it a real thing. People who really didn't believe it would be a real thing in terms of having to deal with people. I guess they felt they could some how work it out... But that gave it a realness with all the volunteers that were going back, coming to Atlantic City and all that, all the triple lynching that happened there that summer. There was a whole climate that was around Mississippi and all made it a real thing. Plus the fact that it was as a pretty dry convention. Everybody knew Johason was going to be nominated and everybody guessed that Humphrey would be the.-- I mean there was no big fight. Everything was ~~done~~ done by unanimous decision. So... that appearance of unified Democratic Party business. So that we had the advantage of being the only newsworth item, the only potential disturbance. The TV people had a direct line out to the hotel. They installed a direct line, all the TV and radio people althought they didn't hardly use it but they put it in.

Saturday we just got organized and we got rested. There was a lot of hubub, you know, housing and getting the eating situation and they had had some meetings. I guess Friday night they began to meet and try to contact some credentials committee delegates, organizing staff, volunteers and delegates to go visit credentials committee that was coming in to the city.

What we had prepared in Washington was a breakdown by delegation so that you know who the delegates were that had written back that had corresponded, who^{key}/people were in the various state delegations. As much as we

could ascertain about the state party politics and ... lined up and whatever information we could get up, that we were able. Then we tried to get the volunteers to lobby their own delegations and the staff to lobby their delegations and we made assignments, people had this, this, this. They kept the records and had phones installed.

So Friday and Saturday morning was done with that. And then Saturday afternoon was that hearing. That was a very critical thing in terms of the country, it was a televised hearing. Aside from the fact that King Wilkins and Farmer and the National Council appeared and made a statement which gave it the backing of ~~things~~ the thing-- It's ironical that SNCC, you know, nobody stood up and spoke for SNCC as backing this thing although SNCC was the major thing but I guess that was Rowe's doing. That was for show. We had an hour. Each side had an hour and I guess they broke ~~up~~ it up forty-five minutes presentation and fifteen minutes rebuttal kind of thing.

So Henry spoke and King spoke and the clincher was Mrs. Hamer speaking. That, she spoke of her experience, especially Winona when she got beat up in Winona. But half the committee being women she had a tremendous impact. Lot of women were crying after she finished. Then she was followed by Rita. The president broke in on Rita. He called the news media, you know, shift it to the ~~WHK~~ White House because he was addressing, unexpectedly, I think it was governors, I don't know who it was. It appeared like it was ab

intentional break. To break up because the national, everybody was tuned in to that thing. Even now I speak to people from the West coast about it and they remember. I mean I just spoke to some guy in Philadelphia a couple weeks ago and he remembers what Mrs. Hamer said a year later and this guys not a civil rights activist. It had a tremendous impact. Then they finished up.

The other thing, the other deciding factor was they had some real idiots representing Mississippi. They had some junior official in the attorney general's office who was a pig farmer. I think that what he was, in fact. He was a pig farmer or something like that and they--

(Anne) I don't understand what you mean. They had some... officials who--

(Tillow) They had three--

(Anne) Who were they?

(Tillow) The regular delegation from Mississippi. They had a guy who was ~~xxxx~~ hooked into the president, a guy name Ducko Swin (?) who ~~xp~~ kept his mouth shut but who was like unofficial advisor. They had three people sit up. They didn't ~~xxxx~~ present any witness in a sense. They just-- Or did they present witnesses? Maybe they presented one witness but they' just got up and read their case and this guy Win who comes from Greenville whose wife is the goddaughter of one of the Johnsons'. Win's wife is the daughter of a guy named Ed Clark who was just appointed ambassador to

to Austria, ... And Clark is a buddy-buddy of Lyndon from Texas. He's a powerful figure from Texas. Rob, I think, can tell you something about Ed Clark. He's a very powerful...state government.

So that was that tie-up and the Wins spent a week-end at the ~~DEIX~~ LBJ Ranch prior to the Convention. He was there. Then they had this junior official from the attorney general's office and I guess they had the new national committeeman for the party. I don't know who the hell that was. The former national committeeman is Tom Brady who was the author of Black Monday. He was into position, you know, father... He wrote this pamphlet Black Monday and they just elected the state convention, they elected a new guy because Brady would have killed them. He could have murdered them with Brady...the new national committeeman, I don't know what his name was. And they had this guy from the attorney general's office who was a real pig farmer.

They didn't even give out their briefs to the credentials committee and we had printed 4000, 5000, everybody got a brief. But they just had sixty and some of the credentials committee were complaining, you know, are we going to see a copy of the brief? I never could see a copy of the brief. I don't know where..., maybe the Democratic National Committee. They would probably have a transcript of the entire proceedings too. So that was their thing. Mrs. Hamer, Rita Schwerner and their presentation was very, very strong in our favor.

After that, that was Saturday afternoon, we began to get telegrams as

the result of Mrs. Hamer... And what they did, Bob, Dr. King and Kastenmeier, maybe Mrs. Greene was in on that. But, you see, ours was not the only challenge. I think there was a challenge from Puerto Rico and some kind of challenge in Oregon and there was a challenge of the Virgin Islands. So the committee had to go on hearing them.~~after~~ After they recessed for dinner they came back because they had to decide those things Saturday night. So Bob and King got into a room right off the committee room with Kastenmeier and Greene, you know, called in delegates while they were sitting and they had the Greene proposal, which was a proposal that both sides take the loyalty oath.

No, no, they had-- The first proposal was that they seat us, they throw them out they seat us. And they had enough people on that, you see-- What we needed was-- Our ~~sex~~ strategy was to get a roll call vote ~~and~~ - to get a minority report out of the credentials committee and then to get a roll call vote on either the minority or the majority report. In order to get a minority report, we need ten percent of the credentials committee, which was eleven members. In order to get a roll call vote we needed eight state delegations to request it of the chairman, you see. So we were working on those two things. When we went to lobby people we'd say, you know, will you give us a fair chance for a hearing and vote for your state delegation to request a roll call vote. What they did with the roll call thing was they changed the rules. Governor Sanders of Georgia was chairman of the rules committee. They ruled that-- You see, we had gotten Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands

and Guam which were delegations, you know, to say ~~that~~ they'll request a roll call... small delegation and whatnot. Then they changed the rules and said only state delegations could ask for a roll call.

So ... never knew if we had enough state delegations. There ... crucial about it. That was one thing. What they did that night, that ~~five~~ Saturday night, was they began to ask people to sign a report which said, oust them seat us. They got it on the condition that people didn't have to stick to that thing because people just weren't prepared. The delegations weren't there yet, the full delegation. They hadn't caucused. Most delegations were due to arrive Sunday night or Monday and hold their caucuses sometime Monday because the convention didn't start until 7:30, 8:00 on Monday.

And they got eleven people, more than eleven people on this thing which was really a wedge, bargaining device. Nobody ever thought that we would have this thing. Meanwhile Mrs. Greene had the Greene proposal which was give everybody the loyalty oath and then seat both sides. Everybody that takes the loyalty oath gets the seat and they divvy up the votes.

(Anne) ... delegates, MFDP delegates...

(Tillow) Well, they had voted to accept the Greene proposal.

(Anne) How did they really feel about it?

(Tillow) I think that they would have been very happy with that thing because they knew that, wouldn't have been a complete victory in terms of acknowledging, you're right, you won. It would have been a victory in terms of, in fact, the Mississippians wouldn't have stayed so that they would have

got the seats and they would have recognized. Because they were all prepared to take the loyalty oath.

You see, a lot of our pitch during the summer had been ~~inexhaust~~ -- in the county, in the district conventions and the state conventions passed resolutions supporting Johnson, supporting the platform, pledging loyalty to the national party which the regular party couldn't do, based on the '60 platform... the whole history of that thing. ~~So they had this~~

So they had this on Saturday night. And they really stood up the convention, they stood up the Democratic Party; they stopped it cold until about Monday afternoon, Monday night in fact, really. What happened after that was that Sunday they began to lobby in earnest with delegates arriving and whatnot.

(Anne) Had the compromise already been proposed?

(Tillow) No. What happened was, there was a meeting--was it Sunday afternoon at 2 o'clock, or Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock? There was a meeting with Aaron Henry, Ed King, Reverend King, Bob Moses, Mrs. Hamer, Hubert Humphrey, Higgs, Mrs. Greene and Kastenmeier which was in a motel, the President command post which was the Chalet or the Valet Motel which was right next to the Convention Hall. This took place Sunday afternoon, I suppose. Mrs. Greene stalked out of that thing. That was where they were-- the first broach. The first time I heard the compromise, what turned out to be the compromise, was Sunday night. We had a meeting... quarters, our credentials committee people had a meeting in King's hotel

Uhlmann(?) ~~Chambers~~ was suite. And ~~Chambers~~ who was the other Congressman, ~~with~~ the other credentials committee person kind of proposed that in passing. They had to go back, Higgs and-- K See what the credentials committee did was appoint a subcommittee which was ~~stacked~~ stacked, which was Diggs of Michigan, who was I call a fifth column guy I mean he was a Negro and he spoke for us but he was an administration guy, he's a Congressman from Detroit. A guy from Iowa who was an administration guy-type. Georgia and Texas were quite clearly administration. And then the guy in Mondale, who took Hum--who was appointed Senator from Minnesota when Humphrey resigned after he won. So he was tied-in there. So it was really stacked against us. I heard that proposal Sunday night in that hotel suite and they started the vigil Sunday night on the boardwalk. They had a meeting in our church, delegate all supporters

(Anne) This is essentially where everybody was getting mad at Rowe?

(Tillow) No, no. Everything was peace and harmony at this point. People didn't get mad at Rowe until Tuesday.

(Anne) Could you discuss the vigil?

(Tillow) After they had come back from this afternoon meeting on Sunday, Sunday afternoon in a motel. Then they decided to set up a vigil. You see, we had ~~also~~ also, in summer-- We knew that have the credentials... the first order of business so it comes up Monday night when they pool everybody's credentidals so we had asked for all sympathizers to come to Atlantic City Monday night for a big rally. So they walked out of this credentials committee thing and that night we had a meeting-- There were

two meetings. One was a meeting of the delegation and their supporters in our church. That was a meeting of our supporters on the credentials committee in the, King's suite. I had ~~taken~~ taken some of the key delegates, Mrs. Hamer, Mr. Turnbull, Mrs. Gray, Mrs. Devine, Mr. Miles, Henry was already there. Ed King was already there-- over to the hotel. They had been told what had been going on at the church meeting and then they decided they walked over to the boardwalk to set up their vigil which was Sunday night.

In the hotel room, Rowe went out and then came back and they were just talking and it became clear-- You see, everybody who had signed the initial proposal you know, saying that King was was present, getting him to say to throw them out and seat us was not prepared to stand by that thing, to vote on that, to sign a minority report to that. So we were trying to ascertain what they would do. Meanwhile Mrs. Greene was circulated her proposal. She was shrewd, boy. And she wouldn't tell who had signed. She said she had seventeen names on it. She wouldn't tell who which ~~names~~ names they were. Rowe asked her. Rowe and Diggs asked her but she said she wouldn't tell but that she had seventeen. That was Sunday night.

So that meeting broke up with nothing definitive because nobody could agree at what point they were prepared to stand. Part of that resulted because nobody knew what the delegation was prepared to stand on but the the delegation was prepared to stand on the Green thing. And in passing

Uhlmann made this thing of two ...

Well, come Monday, the credentials committee meeting met and they postponed-- That meeting in a motel might have been on Monday. I might ~~be~~ be mistaken. It might have been on Monday but the vigil started Sunday, Sunday night. What the credentials committee did on Monday was they adjudicated all the other ~~challenges~~ challenges and they postponed this one until Tuesday. So on Monday night they voted on all the other challenges at the beginning and the postponed us till Tuesday and ~~that~~ they gave both delegations seats in the gallery on Monday.

We had a big rally out there on the boardwalk. They were stymied at that point, Monday night. We had a big rally on Monday night on the board-
walk, the entire delegation just before they went ⁱⁿ ^{up} to sit ~~in~~ the gallery. That was a big victory, winning in a sense, because the fact that they had to postpone because they couldn't reach a decision meant the President couldn't get what he wanted. King spoke and Rustin spoke and everybody and whatnot and all these people were down from Philadelphia and New York, had come in for that night. That was Monday and during Sunday and Monday all the delegates were arriving and people were out-- We had lots of literature and people making up packets and every delegate got a pack of literature which included the MFD platform from 1960 and our brief and a whole bunch of information about the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

Then, on Tuesday which is the crucial day, the credentials committee meeting was due to meet at 2 o'clock, 2 or 2:30 in the afternoon. The meetings of the convention started 7, 8 o'clock. And the time here is very important because that's what eventually did us in. The timing was ... their ... I mean the fact that they sprung it when they did was not-- But we had a meeting of the delegation on Tuesday morning 10 or 11 o'clock and Bob was there and he tried to get the delegation to agree to what it would agree to. The conversation that morning was what are you ~~prepared~~ prepared, what's the least that you're prepared to accept, that kind of thing. And this comes into the whole thing of how many times they voted, in effect voted on the compromise because I don't know if Bob had a premonition or he was just using... an example, what he'd heard or what. He was operating at a much higher level throughout the convention in the sense that he was in on all the meetings but I said-- There weren't very many people there and I was there, Miss Baker was there, Rowe was there and that's about it and the delegation was there. There weren't very many. Everybody else was out lobbying since that morning because everybody, all the delegates were there. He mentioned what happened^s if they say we'll seat Mrs. Hamer and Aaron Henry? And they had voted not to accept that, that the least that they were prepared was the Greene proposal which was give everybody the loyalty oath. Rowe, just before he left to go to the credentials committee meeting, said, you, pledged his support. I'm paraphrasing this now but he

said, and I remember this very clearly, that if there's one signature on the minority report it will be mine. Meaning that he was prepared to signed the minority report alone. Then he went to-- That was about 2 o'clock. About noon, Bayard arrived in town with Reuther. I don't think they came in together. They came in separately. Walter Reuther. Bayard came over. Rowe left to go to the credentials committee and I'll pick that up later. Bayard showed up and tried to get-- got, you see he only wanted Henry and King to go to a meeting with Reuther and Humphrey. Ed King. And he said that it was just to hear what the final thing was going to be, no dickering. And this was all-- So nobody knew this was happening when he came over and there was very few people there and some of us were annoyed, you see because they were going to go because Mrs. Hamer wasn't included. The day before they had Mrs. Hamer in that meeting and she must have given ... so they cut her out and so Bob, Aaron Henry, Ed King, Bayard Rustin were all supposed to meet in this hotel which I guess was Reuther's or Humphrey's hotel.

You got to remember that Reuther, the excuse that Reuther used to come to the Convention was he was coming to report to the President on the state of negotiations. He was in the midst of this auto negotiation. ... And at that meeting where Dr. King was there, Bayard was there, Humphrey, Reuther, that's where they said, this is what is going to be. That they were going to seat Henry and Ed King as delegates at large ... status, ~~and~~ sit them

them up in the gallery. ~~XXX~~

Bob walked out of that meeting, That's where Reuther was supposed to have said the labor movement gave King and SCLC \$176,000 and they won't give them anymore if they didn't go along. At the Institute meeting Bob said that Reuther said Joe Rowe works for me and he's not going to sign any minority report. That kind of talk. So Bob left that meeting.

At the same time-- And then Bob was supposed to ask, how many voters ^{us} can you guarantee/if we accept this and Humphrey was supposed to have said that's not for the Democratic Party that's ~~xxx~~ for the Democratic administration and we can't promise you anything. There was a real-- The chief whips ./. that they were using was Humphrey's using nomination, they were using ...the liberals and the backlash. Everybody's forgotten the backlash argument now but it was hot stuff, especially after Goldwater was nominated and everybody was afraid and Wallace had run. Everybody was afraid of backlash, nobody talks about it now because it just wasn't there. But those were the two chief things that they used. Humphrey won't get nominated if this thing isn't settled because the South ~~will~~ won't let him go on the ticket and the backlash, you know, can't let go...

So, at the same time that this meeting was going on at the hotel, ~~which~~ they were having a credentials committee meeting. Now Rowe came back and said when he got to the credentials committee meeting there was a message to call this number. He called the number and was told this was the proposal the final proposal and that it had been accepted. He went back in a asked for

conferred with a -- ~~confirmed~~ Greene and Kastenmeier and asked for a recess. They asked for a recess to make a check with FDP what happened and they were refused the recess. Lawrence, Governor Lawrence of Pennsylvania the chairman refused the recess and the credentials committee then went on to pass the compromise. The subcommittee report, this was two seats, Henry and King, delegates at large and they passed that. They came out and they couldn't reach Henry. They tried to reach him over the walkie-talkie system they had set up there. And so they came back to the church and all this ~~happ~~ happened within the space of about four hours.

What the administration did you see was spread the word that this was the thing that was voted on and Waskow talks probably in his notes about what happened at the Wisconsin delegation when the word came out that this was the final offer, this what's been voted on. It caused a lot of stink because we were trapped-- After the caucus brokeup about one o'clock, our caucus, delegates went off to lobby. That was really a big mistake because we couldn't counteract the news spreading that this thing had been accepted. If we'd been together they could have voted no and then they could have got it out to the newspapers. So everybody started coming together at the church about 6 o'clock, the convention was due to start about 7:30 and we were pressing for a rejection and we got our credentials committee people, our supporters back there and Mrs. Greene was very teed off. She had understood that they had accept the proposal and she'd been lied to and she was

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stood that they had accept the proposal and she'd been lied to and she was

very, very disturbed. And that's when we got the credential committee people together about the minority report and that's when the thing started to ~~crumble~~ crumble. When Rowe said that he wouldn't sign it and King and Bayard were working against ... I mean they were in that room and they had come from the meeting with Humphrey.

See, the meeting with Humphrey Bob had left early, before King and Aaron Henry. I don't know if Henry and Ed King actually accepted the proposal after saying ... Bob. Bob said that--

(Anne) Accepted the compromise you mean?

(Tillow) Yes. You see, I don't what happened. Maybe Bob knows better but Bob said was you come to the delegation and you present this and I talk against you, this proposal. Let them vote on it. So there was that was what had happened. So they all got together at the church--

(Anne) What church was this incidentally?

(Tillow) ... When they all got together at the church you began to see some of the people would stay. There was a Negro woman from New York, an aid to Mayor Wagner who'd been very strong and she just said I can't sign it. There was a Negro lady from California whose husband was up for a Federal judgeship and she couldn't sign it. j There was, all kinds of ~~ob-~~
~~stacles had gone up~~ armtwisting had gone on those two days, Monday and Tuesday, and whatnot. So the thing kind of fell apart at that point because King had turned and was arguing this was the most we can

get this was a significant victory and all...

(Anne) He was arguing this at the time?

(Tillow) Yes, at that time. Tuesday evening about 6 o'clock. That's when the rupture with Rowe occurred because everybody felt he'd really sold out and he was just -- this is what had happened in a sense.

We were pressing the delegation to reject the damn thing. And they voted to reject it and Mrs. Devine got up and made a motion to reject it. Henry was kind of stalling around not willing to take a vote on it but she got up and made a motion and it passed to reject the thing.

(Anne) What was Ed King doing at this time?

(Tillow) I don't know. I don't know what he was doing. I mean there was just bedlam... the newspaper was out, the TV outside. And that's when Rowe went out and got on TV and then we got Bob on TV. Rowe just couldn't sign it. Said that he couldn't sign it.

(Anne) What about Bayard Rustin?

(Tillow) Well, you see that was Tuesday. Tuesday night--

(Anne) How'd he get there. What was his excuse?

(Tillow) That was Tuesday night. After that they all went over to the vigil which was ... thing and the delegates voted to go in, you see, and take those seats. That was-- after they knew that there was going to be no minority report. So then we started rounding up friendly delegates ... and that's how they got in and that's when they were about to be evicted and they got the

phone call from some-- you know, don't manhandle them. That was Tuesday.

Then Wednesday they got them all together in the afternoon and that was when they tried to get them to reverse the decision. That's when Dr. King and Bayard and Wayne Morse and Jack Pratt, whole bunch of people spoke. ...to speak, you know, on whether or not to accept the compromise. And, yes, they voted twice already. They voted on Tuesday, they voted Tuesday afternoon not to accept it. And this was the third attempt to change their minds so. ...

The ~~xxx~~ guys that spoke for acceptance were Bayard, Martin, Senator Morse, Jack Pratt of the National Council. Then Lowenstein--I don't know how he got in there--and Farmer were kind of caught and they were kind of wishy-washy. Waskow spoke I think it was Waskow spoke in behalf of a group of legislative aides that were helping us out; ^{GAR ALPEROVITZ} ~~Darr Applewitz~~ (?), Stanley Newman, Kastenmeier's aide at that time--what the ~~hell~~ hell was his name--Tom Alden. They were down helping us out. Waskow. He spoke for rejection. ... Thomas of the National Council spoke in opposition to Pratt. And then Jim Forman and Bob and I guess John Oldt spoke ... accept this thing.

What Bayard said was that he was ~~fox~~ told to come down because Reuther couldn't reach Aaron Henry or Ed King. That word reach can be, you know, that's verbatim, couldn't reach ... stuck in my mind. ~~xHaxaxx~~ Bayard and Martin had pretty much the same argument about politics and compromises and

that kind of thing. Personally, you got the feeling, Morse spoke, I got the feeling from Morse that he really believed what he was saying. He spoke about the need to beat Goldwater and in fact there was a victory and I felt there was something sincere about him. I said this at the Institute. It must be on tape also. There was some sincerity. This is a personal aside.

But with Bayard and Martin, especially Martin because on Monday Martin was up on the boardwalk six or seven or eight times, said seat the Freedom Democratic Party, you know. Martin was instrumental. Seat the Freedom Democratic Party. They reiterated the phrase, Seat the Freedom Democratic Party. This was a big rally about 3000... And then about face. It was hard to see. And Bayard was not associated at all. Bayard sits there and goes back.... There were some meetings in Mississippi during the summer to iron out the convention and Bayard was there and he was in favor of if you get rebuffed picketing the hotel where the Mississippi delegation stayed, that kind of thing. It goes back. Not the best of things. Like an attempt to put it under an umbrella, starting with the beginning of summer really, we had some meetings with Bayard and CORE people and the idea was to put this under some kind of legitimate organization as an umbrella. Our whole thing was that we were acting on behalf of the Mississi-- Our ~~whole~~ whole Washington thing was that we were acting on behalf of the Mississippians and that they were the ones who were going to make the decisions. This whole attempt at the beginning of the summer and at the end, when they got together in Mississippi, Bayard and Farmer and King and

Forman and Bob and some staff people who were meeting in Tougaloo, ... was to put this delegation under an umbrella where the decision wouldn't be with the delegation whether to accept or reject. But that's-- I mean I just sat in on the committee meetings this summer. I guess the Mississippi meeting-- The Mississippi meeting, I think, happened right after the state convention, shortly after the NAA, the beginning of all this. I forget the date. I guess the convention was August 9. The FDP state convention was about ~~XXXXX~~ August 9, but you'd have to check on that. I think the meeting took place after that at some point. They'd gotten King to come in and make a tour for FDP, to spur Freedom registration and things like that.

So that was Wednesday when they spoke. And then the delegates got everybody out of the room and they voted not to accept the compromise. It wasn't unanimous because there were some people that wanted to compromise... But nevertheless there were substantial numbers... that were substantial. And of course the sentiment of SNCC and the CORE staff and of the volunteers was that they shouldn't have accepted it but well, it's academic whether, -- I mean ... people say SNCC didn't do it. I don't think they did. It's just their think was kind of identical.

So on Thursday the delegates left. On Wednesday again they entered the arena. This time... Johnson's birthday I think, Wednesday, of the convention. ~~EX~~

He made a special-- Well, you see, Wednesday was-- Wednesday Johnson was supposed to announce-- Now you'd have to check when Johnson

was nominated, whether he was nominated on ~~xxxx~~ Tuesday night or whether he was nominated on Wednesday. Anyway, he ~~came down~~ ~~xxxx~~ came down special. He was supposed-- I guess he was nominated on Wednesday night and he was supposed to, after he was nominated, make known his choice from the Fish room in the White House by closed circuit TV and he made a special appearance; flew in in helicopter and flew right out, to accept, well, not to accept but to make know his ... choice. This was on Wednesday. Thursday he made his acceptance speech. The reason for that was that they were going again to get in and there were all kinds of ~~rumors~~, you know; people are going to ^{storm} ~~storm~~ the Convention. They closed the convention hall, in fact. Even if you had spectator. You could only get in to the convention hall as a delegate. That was ~~awful~~ real bedlam. They had this big birthday party and whole bunch of nonsense. So that was Wednesday.

Thursday the delegates went home. Thursday night the delegation went home. They did on Thursday draft a reply for why they had refused the thing and there was circulated a questionnaire, I think Miss Baker may have those questionnaires, that the delegates themselves filled out about what they thought... I remember. Everybody was just trying to sprawl out all over the place by Wednesday and Thursday. The climax of this thing ~~came for us~~ came for us, the real confrontation came on Wednesday, when they tried to get the delegation to... some of Bayard's what you might call pupils and some-- Miss Schwerner got up and challenged Bayard's right to speak, saying that who the hell was he to speak. He hadn't cooperated with

the Summer Project and somebody else got up behind her and objected. Tension was very high in that Wednesday session. But that's primarily--

Then they had another meeting Bob could tell you about when they went back on the bus and they had a meeting in Jackson. They got the delegates together. Some very interesting things some people said, the ~~xxxxxx~~ reactions, their impressions of the Convention.

We went-- I went back to Washington to straighten out some of the unpaid bills and in effect closed down the office. The office remained closed until November, ~~xxxxxx~~ when ~~the~~ they opened it up for the Congressional ~~xxxxxx~~ Challenge. But that's basically what it was all about.

(Anne) ...people in Washington² that you worked with and also...?

(Tillow) I suggest you get this tape of the meeting, you know, Bob. Frank Smith. Very important.... Frank wrote something for the Liberator. I don't know how useful it would be. Then whzt I mentioned ^a before. That file in the FDP office, the brief. I don't know if Rowe would talk to you but you might -- And Miss Baker. She's in New York.

(Anne) And what is her first name?

(Tillow) Ella Baker. 10 West 137th Street. Think that's what her address is. You can reach her through the SNCC office. Youx might talk to Norman. He was in our office for two weeks. But he wasn't at the convention.

(unidentified voice) You might get labor's reaction.

(Tillow) Well, they had no reaction. Norman was working with CORE at the time. That was when the moratorium came out. You know, moratorium

on demonstrations after the New York ~~xxxx~~ riots. And CORE and SNCC rejected, and Norman left, over CORE and SNCC's rejection, you know, but before that he was supposedly working with us as a CORE and he actually came to Washington for 10 days in our office.

Jack... I suspect that Atlanta and New York, ~~xxxx~~ no, Atlanta and Washington has those big--