

LAWRENCE GUYOT

interviewed 1966 by:
Anne Romaine
Howard Romaine

Guyot:at the time I was involved with the NAACP just on campus, Moses was working on voter registration. There were fifteen people in the state, most of them college students who became very interested and involved. SNCC has just completed its invasion in McComb the first demonstration in Mississippi had been carried out.

My ~~first~~ interest specifically....in boycott, demonstration and.... voter registration. Moses arranged for leadership training conferences to be held and it's somewhat ironic that I met John Doar and Moses at the same time. After that the...became centralized....registration.

(Howard) Where was this leadership training?

Guyot: Mount

(Howard)?

Guyot: SNCC

(Howard)?

Guyot: It participated.

(Anne) Could you identify....? and the other....working.... This was before CORE came in?

Guyot: This was definitely before CORE and-- CORE had become within a matter of four or five months later at which time the non-violent ~~move~~ movement was organized in Jackson made up predominantly of CORE and SNCC and some of the ministers of Jackson. Its emphasis was on...boycotts,

non-violent direct action, that sort of thing, which later was all centralized and crystallized in voter registration.

(anne) Did you take part in... SNCC, the election campaign of '62?

Guyot: On the outfringe, yes, the very outfringe.

(Anne) Are you from Jackson?

(Guyot) No, I'm from Pass Christian which is on the Gulf Coast.

(Anne) The NAA joined in... COFO at the beginning?

(Guyot) No.

(Anne) XXXXX What was their position?

(Guyot) Thier position was very consistent with Roy Wilkins' ~~position~~ position at the time, which was that it's impossible to try and work in Mississippi. His solution to the problem in Mississippi was, what should be done is it should be cut away and let it drift into the sea.

Anne: And this was Aaron Henry's position?

Guyot: Well, you're talking now before the organization ~~ERX~~ COFO and I think it's important to understand that COFO as such was an organization that had been pulled together, literally, to ...the government. It was made up of the tradition and conventional Negro leaders of the state of Mississippi, to discuss the school situation but that blew up in the face of the government. Because some of the more respectable Negro leaders took the position well, yes we learned, you know, astrology by looking to the moon and we It was exactly the sort of thing they'd called the meeting to deal with.

After SNCC and CORE came into Mississippi, Moses took the position

that what was needed was a protective cubicle, that went beyond voter registration so the logical extension of that would be the Council of Federated Organizations which as I point out earlier was an entity. It wasn't a viable entity but it had existed. The name did have some meaning. Only after the organization of COFO by first of all organizing, agreeing that the state would be broken up into congressional districts. There were five district directors.

(Anne) Who were they?

(Guyot) Frank Smith, ... George Layman who was with CORE and who was director of the 4th congressional district, ... White, and Moses. This was the beginning of COFO. This was before the summer project, this was before lots of things.

(Howard) Do you remember the year?

(Anne) 1962

(Guyot) That's right. It was also understood that COFO would be a convention-type organization, that conventions would be called, the people all across the state, programs would be presented and voted on. Henry was the titular and the head in fact, on paper of the organization but he had nothing to do with daily decisions. This was obviously for the reason that staying off the possibility of being undercut or co-opted by the NN NAACP's ... organization.

The move was to do as much as possible to crack through the fear at that

which permeated Mississippi. With a program and with a concentrated effort you can get people to go to a courthouse. In '62 there was a hell of a job to even consider voting 'cause that meant going to the courthouse, that meant the possibility of being beaten-- ~~The problem~~ the probability of being beaten-- the probability of not having a job and of being cut off of welfare. They had just complete ~~total~~ rigid control.

Our ~~movement~~ move then was to use the church, the young people and political education on a very simple and elementary level to deal with the whole question of who decides whether or not you eat and who decides whether or not you survive in order to get more and more people to attempt to vote. And, of course, serving as a ~~buffer~~ ^{ff} between the whites ~~in the~~ and the Negro community, and the only thing we had to offer was our convictions, our experience in community ~~organization, xxx~~ ..., organization and non-violence, which ~~you~~ we could use to... church, and institutions. and, make it ... enough for a cross index of the inhabitants of the Negro community.

Howard: In other words... believe in the church... ethical....

Guyot: ... the inconsistencies of every institution we knew, the church, economics, law and order, the fact that we could count on and use ~~xx~~ trials as a classic example of how that could be changed if we could change the jury system and in order to change the jury system we had to line up ~~xxxxxx~~ "x" number of ~~xxxxx~~ voters. In order to line of "x" number of voters we got ~~h~~ to have people who ~~id~~ know how to teach other people how to register to vote.

And at this time, you got to remember, in order to register to vote a person had to successfully complete 22 questions, one of them dealt with ~~xxx~~ the interpretation of any one of the 285 sections of the Mississippi constitution. It was clearly devised ~~xx~~ in 1890 to make sure the ~~illiter~~ illiterate white would be ~~xxx~~ registered but no Negro, regardless how literate, would be registered.

We fought a hell of a lot of battles, McComb, Greenwood, Greenwood was a classic because I think all of us learned what can be done in a community in Greenwood which we then used everywhere else. That was, two people went in, ~~xx~~ Sam Block and Willie Peacock, myself and Lavarne Brown went in later. It took us three months to get a meeting place and every time we would move into a place and attempt to rent someplace to stay, the Klan would come that night simply--not bother us--but simply ^{park} ~~hang~~ outside all around the place and ~~xxx~~ shine their lights on their cars. And when we attempted to use the telephone, the telephone/^{operator} would call back and say, look, you ~~guys~~ got some troublemakers in there, you better get them out. This went on ~~fourxxfourxx~~ for four months.

Then... we started taking people down, a couple hundred people down to register to vote and the board of supervisors cut off the food supply. This was not planting time, not picking time and most of people there were depending on their welfare commodities for survival. So when those few hundred Negroes attempted to register to vote none of them were allowed... taken the test. I think the reason ~~the~~ ~~xxx~~-- When the board of supervisors cut off the

money and commodities at which time we went raising some food. Dick Gregory helped ~~six~~ celebrities helped and brought in to Mississippi. So in effect we set up our own welfare system.

This went on for a couple of months and it was in Greenwood, six months later--well, not six months, during the whole interim that we were, it was very clear about a couple of things. Number one we were the only group actively working on voter registration in the state. Number two it was clear we could count on the Justice Department within certain limits. For instance, when we marched six hundred down the streets of Greenwood, this was after, ^{night} on the ~~day~~--the build-up to this was, you have to understand, the board of supervisors had ~~supposedly~~ cut off the food supply, we had set up our food supply and were using the churches... arrange meetings. Dewey Green, Jr. attempted to enter Ole Miss, the night before he attempted to enter, his father's home was shot into in Greenwood. Well that's what we needed, 'cause the next morning we marched 800 people down the streets of Greenwood, at which time our reasoning being number ~~w~~ one we wanted police protection in Greenwood, Number two we wanted, in order to cut through the fear, we wanted to take a lot of Negroes down to vote at once, the argument being if they are ... places, they are public places and if one registrar can't ~~mess~~ register hundreds of people at a time well then why appoint us deputy registrars, glad to ~~serve~~ serve.

When we did this we were, eight of us were arrested; all of the SNCC people, James Forman, myself, Frank Smith, Charles ..., Moses, Mary Lane. It was a classic example of how a community can be mobilized.

Eight of us were arrested. The Justice Department filed a request for a Temporary Restraining Order, ... the prosecution. Then, Judge Clayton (?) took the position that if the city would drop the charges the government would withdraw its request for a "TRO". So, without our knowledge we were gotten out of jail by appeal by the Justice Department, that was the first time.

But in the interim for the next six months we then had to wage a fight with the Justice Department about the whole question of ... people who could not read nor write. Taking illiterates down to the courthouse. It is a fact, it is politically and historically a fact that the ~~whole~~ whole fight of registration, the registration of illiterates was won, fought and ... in Mississippi because we-- At that time you have to also consider that on August 28, 1962 the case of United States vs. Mississippi was filed. It's a classic case. It would have done the same thing we attempted to do later on in both Atlantic City and in the United States Congressional Challenge and that was declare the state of Mississippi illegal. Ipsa facto from its precinct laws to its, the whole power that the state legislature has over party organization, to its voter registration laws, which were just changed last year.

So, if you will remember, and I would strongly suggest that if you're interested in anything about Mississippi and SNCC and FDP you have to read the case of the United States vs. Mississippi. Because here's a case where it would have done exactly what we needed. Number one, had that case been ruled on it would, of course, been necessary for a constitutional convention

in the fall.

But that case was held up. Number one, it was heard in the district court. They refused to rule on the question of whether or not the government had standing. That was later cleared up and we lost it in a two-to-one decision. You got to bear the dates in mind because it wasn't heard again until November 17, 1965. You got to really be careful because if you will remember, this was two months before the decision on the Congressional Challenge. And we used the same political and legal argument in the Congressional Challenge ... Article I, section 5 of the United States Constitution as the United State Government did in the case of United States vs. Mississippi.

Had the the Solicitor General at that time Archibald Cox asked for emergency leave--and we had Mississippi in the courtroom when that case was finally brought up--the judges were prepared to rule on the merits of the case and the Solicitor General did not ask for emergency leave. So when FDP takes the position that, in attempting to prove the functional disfunctionality of existing political institutions in this country, we have evidence to back that up because, had the Supreme Court ruled we would ^{withdrawn} of course have ~~xxx~~ the Congressional Challenge. Our purpose would have been served; that is, to declare everyone elected in Mississippi from 1870 illegally elected, set up a new criteria for registration, demanded and ogganized a constitutional convention, and...

~~The whole question of~~ It's necessary to understand that in that in the

interim ~~wherever~~ what we needed in order to survive was the cover of voter registration, the cover of non-violence, and the involvement and the protection that we could both give and receive from the Negro community. There's no sense asking, even dreaming, of a fair trial, of police protection or even about really ... the concepts of self-defense to Negroes, it just because ~~wherever~~ wasn't possible, it just wouldn't have fit in that situation.

We left Greenwood. Well, we didn't leave right then because ... There was quite a bit of violence there, quite a few people kicked out of jobs, quite a few of the churches ... were involved. At one time in Greenwood we could call meetings of 5,000 Negroes. This was after the marches. After the initial march a lot of the critics and supporters of SNCC said, oh my God, they're crazy, marching in the Delta. It's never been done. And they were true. It had never been done. So now our move was to spread out the organizers who had really learned on-the-job training in Greenwood to the rest of the state. I went to Hattiesburg. Frank Smith when up to ... County. Our moving was timed with federal district court rulings. ... County had just gotten a decision saying that applicants for registration only had to answer seventeen questions which cut out the whole question of the interpretation of the constitution which at that time was a blessing! Hattiesburg, of the potential registration of 7,000 Negroes only 12 20 Negroes had been registered. The registrar--they had been convicted of civil contempt--an (Howard) ... Sandy... He was ~~not~~ there.

(Guyot) Right. Sandy was to come much later, much, much later. In fact, two years later.

(Howard) He wasn't in the state all the time?

(Guyot) No.

(Howard) ... '61 or '62?

(Anne) It doesn't matter.

(Guyot) Now, after moving into Hattiesburg, it was necessary there for us to-- Meetings had been conducted. ... Watkins was there and Curtis Hayes, both of them were there. They had meetings going-- My role when I got there was to begin immediate confrontations and that's the way it happened because a three-judge panel was hearing and myself and ... went into the courtroom and passed out copies of the voter registration form, which somewhat served its purpose because as soon as I left the Federal courthouse I was arrested for not having a draft card. That sort of thing, which, course I was gotten out of jail by Mrs. Gray who was even at that time ~~has~~ acknowledged leader of the Movement in Forest County.

Our move was--this was during the Freedom...

(Howard) '63

(Guyot) Right. We had time to make sure that meetings were being conducted and set up throughout the county...together. At this time a newspaper was..., the Mississippi Free Press. We got up an agreement with the ~~edit~~ editor then, to print up a special edition about freedom elections. Aaron Henry, Reverend ^{Edwin} ~~Edward~~ King. We got something like 75 or 80p thousand

of these. We distributed a lot of them around the state and then we arranged special meetings. Now the first mass meeting that was held in Forest County was attended by 800 people, because what happened, before the Freedom election we'd been having small voter registration meetings. And we had to move around because as soon as... what we were doing the ministers wouldn't allow them to use their churches. But this one meeting--it was beautifully set because the fire department came down and all of their machinery, the police came down, the radio and television reporters from all of the media in Forest County was there and Negroes were packed the building inside and were standing around outside all around the Masonic Temple which wasn't large enough to hold all of them.

Aaron Henry came and spoke. ~~EX~~ At that time, you have to understand Henry wasn't really tied in with the national Democratic Party, nor was he tied in with his black Anglo-Saxonism which he is now. At the time he gave a rousing speech and it was very clear that--we made a few things very clear--number one that ^{we had invited Henry;} /xxx Number two that we were going to stay there regardless of what happened and number four that there just wasn't anything they could do to stop us from voting except killing us. We, of course, attempted to humiliate all the officials who come in there and wanted to know, rhetorically, did they want... to vote too. Which, really gave us a base in that community.

(Howard) You mean they couldn't stop you from Freedom registering?

(Guyot) No, we were talking about voter registration. And we used the Freedom election as a hook to bring people together to crystallize Freedom

registration, and the voting because at that same meeting we had people vote for Aaron Henry, although in the Freedom election, you see. But they had to put themselves publicly on the... and I think that meeting just creating a new frame of reference for a lot of people because they could now take the risk of getting involved in the Freedom business. Because everyone they had known had, who had been involved in it, had either been hurt, damaged by it, or, had sold out.

By January of '63, which was really of January '64. At this time in Alabama people had marched to the courthouse, so, we tossed around the idea of doing the same thing but instead of just marching to the courthouse we'd announce publicly the date and we'd call it the Freedom Date. And the first Freedom Date in Mississippi was on January 22, 1964 and it was held in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

(Anne) This was after the...?

(Guyot) That's right. Now, this was a beautiful thing. Because here again we got six major religious denominations to send personnel down to the march. We had ... in the Negro community; the NAACP was against the march, but we had the manpower and we had the community. We announced the march and on the day of the march five hundred people showed up to march in front of the ... courthouse. There were no arrests; there were petty arrests of, well, Moses was arrested for blocking traffic, and other people were arrested on traffic charges, ... picketing and passing out

leaflets which was done for the first time without arrest in Mississippi; it happened there, January 22 in Hattiesburg.

Now, later on~~e~~, however, the state of Mississippi was to come up with a series of laws, all of which were contested by Moses and Dennis~~x~~. Incidentally, the hearing on that petition is coming up now⁷ in Federal District Court. Some of the laws ... anti-picketing laws, said that public places could not be picketed as such. The recent Supreme~~m~~ Court ruling last week is frightening within that context because it's something the Supreme Court's going to have to reverse very shortly or it's going, in fact as was pointed out by one of the justices, ... give ~~xxx~~ legal sanction to the police state.

We filed a suit. One of the first suits we filed was to do away with the payment of the poll tax. This was filed by a woman in Hattiesburg and it was really a rather quite innocuous suit because the way it-- Our argument was that a person had to have time in order to pay a poll tax. In fact, we weren't really arguing the legality^{or} the unconstitutionality of the poll tax. We just wanted time enough to pay it which the state wasn't giving under its own law. The court went along with us but by the time that it ruled our case was ...

The second suit that we brought, however, was ~~axxx~~ of tremendous significance and I have the briefs on that that I want you to read before your leave. That is Camden vs. Johnson~~which~~ in which we raised the question of the legality, the unconstitutionality of the anti-picketing statute and the anti- leafletting statute, of the state.

(Howard) When did they pass those laws? Did they pass those laws before the '64 contest?

(Guyot) They were on the books, and we compiled forms, since '42 but they were really firmed up once the '64 Summer Project was announced. They were amended quite a great deal.

(Anne) What part did ... have before...?

(Guyot) Without initially simplifying political participation and without establishing a new frame of reference, politically, for people who were frightened, 100% if that's possible, and who had a history of political consciousness but certainly not political participation, and also, solidification, strength, all of this was accomplished by the Freedom election. With this in mind, I'm not prepared to say that without the Freedom election there would have been no Freedom Democratic Party but I am prepared to say that the Freedom vote crystallized and accelerated the whole actuality of political participation faster and to a larger scope and degree than anything else I can think of.

(Howard) You said after Greenwood... fanned out in different directions. Was there a director of COFO at that time or was it sort of spontaneous and loose?

(Guyot) No, the directorship was very clear. Henry was the publicity man the front man; Moses was the field director; the assistant field director was ~~xx~~ Dave Dennis of CORE. In our attempt to keep that coalition as tight

as possible to organize. ^{...} ~~Now~~ after the Freedom election.

(Howard) At the Freedom election did Moses feel ... field director...?

(Guyot) Moses, yes.

(Howard) About the evolution of the idea of ... election. ^{Lowenstein} ~~Moses~~ came through here. How did he-- Were you'all having staff meetings or something? Ed King said that he suggested an idea... the idea of a mock election and ... allowing you to do something without getting put in jail... and would... a little bit of feeling of cover ... terror. ... His idea... Do you remember that?

(Guyot) I remember facts to the contrary. I do remember Lowenstein being ... In fact he was in Mississippi ~~during the~~ doing the conducting of the election but as far as the idea originating with him I--

(Howard) Well, who thought of it?

(Anne)

(Howard) ... conversation... You don't remember that. You don't remember how the idea of a mock election came about, it just sort of evolved?

(Guyot) No, it didn't evolve but my whole point is it did not come from Lowenstein. It came from need to attempt to crystallize and polarize the positions of strength in the state. We had marched people to courthouses, we had marched people to rallies, ~~we had~~ the logical extension of, to really simplify why register to vote and why risk your life for it was to conduct our own election.

After the Freedom ~~election~~ ... it was then clear that what we needed

was more cover, more protection. Under the banner of voter registration we had done every ~~damn~~ damn thing possible, we'd set up community centers as such, we'd taught people to conduct mass meetings, we'd been involved in demonstrations--and involved a lot of people in demonstrations-- we'd sold the idea if not the actuality of a economic boycotts, of strikes. So we needed more cover and the cover that was debated by the five district directors was challenging the seating of the Democratic Party in Atlantic City.

Now, there were two sub-sections of the current discussion in that. One was Moses took the position that if it was done that that should be the reason for the organization of FDP and the point of termination of the concept. You know, after Atlantic City we forget it. My argument was we should not forget it but that we should fight that legal and political argument, the battle of who is the Democratic Party and what does standing mean, so that even after, whether we were seated or not, after Atlantic City we would come back to Mississippi, organize membership, build-in county executive committees and operate in the way that a political party should. It's quite easy to see that I won that argument.

(Anne) Why did you feel this way?

(Guyot) Well, because of the fact of political awareness of both this country and what Mississippi's Democratic Party meant. You know what I mean, and he posed it rather frankly, are we prepared to join into that ...? Of course, we were not but there was another alternative and that is

presenting an alternative within the same institution, that is the political party, using the same laws with our interpretation and varying widely on political orientation, on involvement, and on functionality. We've done things as a political party that no other group in this country has ever done: .../ reapportionment suit, Atlantic City, the Congressional Challenge, the fact that the Freedom Democratic Party as a party, defeated the anti-picketing statute and the anti-leafletting statute here in Jackson, Mississippi. So our concern will be to attempt to understand first of all, the only comparable entity politically to the Freedom Democratic Party in the history of this country is number one the Doar Rebellion, number two the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, and number three the Anti-Saloon League. That's just it, there's no other historical *raison d'être* for a kind of political organization that we've been, within the framework of a political party.

The paradoxical thing, to me, is that there is no political subdivision in the country that varies in form from Mississippi. It may vary in content, but definitely not in form. Our question is, and it's very definitely rhetorical, is, why not, independent issue-oriented, organized within the ^{ing} ~~ies~~ ^{ies} boundaries--within the inconsistencies--of a political party throughout the country? And, this is a question that the country doesn't deal with, that the FDP because of its limited money, personnel and what have you cannot deal with will be dealt with. But political necessities will force the country

to revamp, not only its value system but very definitely its concept of political mobilization, and I would argue that right now that's all that happens in this country; ~~the debates are set, issues~~ debates are set, issues are programmed and people mobilized. As far as organization, political organization, there is, in fact, none answerable to and by people as it relates to issues and inconsistencies, both economic and social, nor such ... as exists in this country.

(Howard) You're talking about much more participation, in other words? That there's not much participation in the regular process. I mean people don't have a chance to speak... ..

(Guyot) Well, now look I understand that but you got to understand one thing that this particular democracy as such was crushed by both its proponents and adversaries because it was reduced to the point of absurdity.

(Howard) Well, I'm not talking about... I'm just trying to get at what you're saying, I'm not-- I thought you were saying much more participation than

(Guyot) Yes, it is because my concern is that in all political subdivisions a few people decide what the party platform is to be, what the issues and the sidelines of the debate of any fight that is to ensue. Now, if you change that, and if we really make precinct meetings or some other political subdivision a functional entity that provides for its own needs, well then I would certainly be for that kind of ..., politically. Now that does not necessarily mean that

everyone in the country has to sit down and decide how we spend the Federal budget. I don't mean that and that is unfortunately ~~what~~ what quite a few of the ~~the~~ proponents and adversaries of participatory democracy ~~have~~ ~~had~~ have reduced the discussion to that level.

(Anne) Let's go on to the actual organizing toward the Challenge, how ... and how it was carried out, coordinated.

(Guyot) What happened was we had a meeting at which time we pulled together all of the laws in Mississippi dealing with political organization. The reason we were doing this was very clear. In Mississippi the state legislature regulates political organizations, time, dates, what have you, qualifications. We found out ^{it} ~~what~~ was necessary to hold a precinct meeting. We learned a hell of a lot in the organization, even on that level. We found out that the city had never had a precinct meeting, it had never needed to. So on June, the law was very clear, on June 16 at 10 o'clock ~~w~~ in a previous voting place a precinct meeting would be held after three public announcements in three public places and the purpose being to elect representatives to the county meeting and to pass resolutions.

This posed quite a few problems. In a previous voting place/ ^{that means polling} ~~that~~ ~~XXIX~~ places. In quite a few instances a lot of people ~~had~~ that we had willing to go... had never voted. So

(Howard) This was 10 o'clock in the morning and not 10 o'clock in the evening?

(Guyot) In the morning. And we had to deal with the whole question of

registration. So we came up with a Freedom Registration Form which quite similar to the federal registration form now used. We registered people to vote. After studying all of the laws dealing with organization of political parties in the state, we followed everyone of those damn laws. We conducted precinct elections; we conducted a county convention; we conducted Congressional district caucuses; a state convention; and we organized the state executive committee at which time I was elected chairman--that nomination was made by Mrs. Gray, and seconded by someone else from Hattiesburg, I'll never forget that. We even attempted to, after electing at the the national committeewoman and national committeeman and after/convention agreeing on our platforms and principles--have you seen the little blue book, it has all that platforms and principles plus the ... in it... written by Joseph Ryle, and after this we attempted to qualify, register as a political party with the secretary of state. We, of course, were denied and it is interesting to note that an injunction was filed in ... court against anyone using the name, operating as a member, affiliate or leader of the Freedom Democratic Party. This was before Atlantic City. That is the political move that almost split the party down the middle, because we had various groups represented in the delegation to Atlantic City, We had ministers, businessmen, sharecroppers, one notable pharmacist, and the move was after it was clear that this injunction would be used ~~after~~ at the convention-- You see, at that time, Marion ... was an attorney for

FDP, who pointed out to the secretary of state, ~~not~~ to the ... judge, that his jurisdiction didn't extend to Atlantic City... And, he then said, okay-- but he didn't change the injunction.

Right now Atlantic City's over. We've organized the party and come back from Atlantic City. The organizers--between 200 and 300 of them, were completely disillusioned, completely alienated and completely, their political existence is ~~now~~ inversely proportional to the possibility of political organizing in the state of Mississippi. In other words, they would have been better absent, than in Mississippi, after the Congressional Challenge. Because, ~~then~~ for three months there was nothing but anger, frustration; no attempt to really deal within the frame of reference of the people of Mississippi.

(Howard) You mean you think the students ran everything and so on?

(Guyot) No, ~~XXX~~ What I'm saying is that had the organizers been able to get off of the bus after Atlantic City and do a program of an explanatory nature of what happened in Atlantic City, whether or not we continue to build a party in this state, if so, what would we do with it, ~~they~~ would have done a hell of a lot better than what in fact happened. Because for three months--utter chaos. There's no question of who, in fact, made the decision, because at that time ~~were~~ there were a few who were politically astute enough to note that policy is what's done, not what's verbalized. And the people with the power who get things done on the local level were those 350 organizers who came from Japan, Africa, quite a configuration there.

I just want to get back to this injunction. Two weeks after Atlantic City we were, all of the people who attended Atlantic City were handed subpoenas to appear in Chancery court in Jackson, Mississippi to hear cases of Mississippi vs. Edwin King. Now the argument then was, if that injunction was left standing and the state could arrest ~~arrest~~ us at will if we continued to operate as a political party. My position after the trial which of course we appealed, was that I would be willing to go to jail for that. Because it was more important to keep that FDP going than to just dissolve it ourselves at the whim of the state, because the state had no right to interfere with our political organization.

However, you have to remember that this was ~~in~~ before a lot of court decisions that altered this and made this very clear. The party, the delegation split right down the middle. Some people wanted to change the name. Quite a few people wanted to get out.

(Anne)?

(Guyot) That's right. Because it was very clear that the injunction was still viable. We might be arrested any time. This is absurd but ... it was done. Our move was to use federal district court to counteract that injunction by filing a counterinjunction stating that we had a right to exist politically in the first and fifteenth amendment; that injunction violated that right.

Now it was just two months ago, when this case ~~that~~ we filed, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party ~~vs.~~ the ~~xxx~~ regular Democratic

Party of Mississippi, was to come up, the night before it was to come into federal district court, the attorney general called our attorney and said, look, we're dropping the injunction that was filed before in 1960.

At the time, of course, there was no reason for us to follow through with our federal ... So we dropped that. The whole question of the survival, legally and politically, of FDP has certainly not been a birthday, it ~~hasn't~~ been a bed of roses. Because we have to fight to whole question of--the militants who would like to see ... FDP right now a cross between SNCC and CDC, and

(Howard)?

(Guyot) California Democratic Clubs. Now, what else?

(Anne) You were at jail. What happened before that? Were you traveling around ~~■~~ to the state delegations before?

(Guyot) No.

(Howard) Prior to the Challenge, after the mock election, when you first brought in students and also you had the experience of bringing in ministers, did you begin to think, to some extent do you think ... outside world to bring the spotlight on Mississippi, ...bring in people and stuff? Could you ~~atx~~ talk a little bit about the debate in COFO about what would happen if you brought in white volunteers, good and bad, and this sort. And also you could sort of talk about how it actually affected ...and what you all talked about.

(Guyot) The debate was very real. There was a close ingroupishness ~~between SCLC, CORE~~ that was developed between SCLC, CORE and SNCC. SCLC at this time was working on basic literacy. It was ~~discussed~~ discussion in Greenville, Mississippi. We had a three-day meeting there to decide on some project.

(Howard) When was that, do you remember?

(Guyot) No, I don't.

(Anne) I have it.

(Guyot) It was at that meeting that the debate really ~~was~~ polarized. Moses as you pointed out, wanted to extend what we'd been doing on the question of national and international projection, putting the spotlight on Mississippi, bringing people with different frames of reference into Mississippi to find out that this is still part of America, and find out what services they had to offer the people of Mississippi and vice versa. And quite a few ~~other~~ people took the position that--you have to understand that the discussion was much more than a race discussion, much more than a class discussion, because a lot of experts in that room, people who could move a church on two minutes notice, or people that could go into a plantation and drive a 100 people out, could not read and write. So it was a question not only of white against black ~~black versus white~~, but skill versus nonskill. And added to the whole--

(Howard)?

(Guyot) Very definitely it was... It was hard to operate at two levels. It was hard to say, look, even if we bring in whites, you're not going to be threatened, you're going to still have your ... It was that... If they're going to come, they're more articulate than I am, they will have more money, they're white, and added to the whole success a lot of the myths that operate in the Southern mentality, that was very much how the argument went.

(Howard) Bob was for bringing them in?

(Guyot) Yes.

(Howard) Who was the strongest one against it?

(guyot) I don't know. It was a vocal feeling, very vocal.

(Anne) ...one more thing. ^{Was} /The Summer Project organized in light of the FDP's idea of challenging the convention?

(Howard) What was the main purpose of it? Freedom schools, music centers, etc.

~~(Guyot)x~~ Was the Challenge the main interest..?

(Guyot) ...

(Howard) Was it the whole thing? In light of the discussion how did ...all white volunteers....

(Buyot) It's very hard but I would say that the summer of '64 revamped the entire concept of politics for the people of Mississippi, both Negro and white. Now it didn't reshape any of the political institutions in the state,

but the whole question of mass involvement, the basic question of decision-making--not in the SNCC-like fashion--but for the very first time in their lives Negroes were allowing whites to live in their homes. This had, I'm convinced a very favorable reaction, both psychologically and politically. Now, I don't have a problems with the black and white issue there... and I'm convinced that a lot of Negroes were involved because of their somewhat naive and too Christian belief that everyone was created equal. And the involvement of white people did not cause problems. It offered problems to them because of the possibility of intimidation. But as far as an ethical problem there was none there. As is usual the organizers, historically, every since the first organizer, there's always been a void between the frame of reference of the organizer and those to be organized. That was somewhat evident not only in SNCC's evaluation of Mississippi in '64, and the political climate, because we were faced with the possibility of annihilation. I mean just pragmatic annihilation. The problem that was offered by the students that came down in '64 was of immense importance at that time, both to the people of Mississippi and to the organizers. We must never fool ourselves. There were two distinct ^{groups} ~~proofs~~ ^{XXXXXX} because there were quite a few-- We were known. Every official in the state had files on all of us; our names, all of our past history, what have you, and where we were more likely to be found in this town. With this in mind I think much more was accomplished in '64. It also sharpened the organizational skills of a lot of the organizers. We were forced to deal with new concepts and new experiences, new frames of reference, the Freedom Schools.