

ELLA BAKER
INTERVIEWED BY ANNE ROMAINE

SCEF OFFICE
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(Miss Baker) Protest..... Well, I think of course, we organized it in 1960. It came into being in the fall our organization, in the fall of 1960.....

The initial meeting in April of '60 and then subsequent monthly meetings throughout the summer. One of its first concerns was to work with the people who were in the black belt area. This was predicated upon the concept that there was a need to develop indigenous, what we call ^{initial} indigenous leadership and uh whereas in the ~~MM~~ stages the overall pattern of sit in protest. ^{SUPC RIB (HMS) SIT IN THE SIT IN PROTEST.} There was before 1961 quite a discussion going on ~~between~~ ~~XXX~~ dual thrust. In fact there was a possibility that seemed to loom that there would be two different groups. One that would emphasize direct non-violent action and the other that would engage itself in voter registration. I think one of the early uh, thrusts in that direction, stems from the, some direct contact with persons who had been thinking along the lines of political of uh..... one of which was Tim Jenkins who at that time was serving the NSA as its national uh national, I think they call it civil rights director, national activities, national activities I believe. And he had been a party to a discussion with ~~the~~ some old people uh in..... Virginia about the question of registration and I think the vote(?). He began to pool around him persons like Chuck McDew, Charles Sherrod, uh and uh I think ~~those~~ three, Chuck, Carlie, Charles Jones and they began series of discussions with persons outside the South. One for many..... Harry Belafonte was one such person and then as part of the protest uh, these fellas well on several occasions were at the department of Justice, ^{asking} ~~asking~~

questions about uh some aspects of discrimination and uh I think their first meeting or subsequent meetings with Bobby Kennedy who was then the atty. general, ~~he~~ ^{he} tried to sell them on the idea of voter registration as being the salvation and this generated a good deal of resistance in SNCC because it had full of the earmarks of uh implimentible concern on the part of the Kennedy ~~forces~~ who were sure of getting voting strength in the South by having Negroes register to vote. It was more that, than their concern for breaking down the barriers of discrimination. I think this indicates something of their earlier stages. Uh, However, I think it also ought to be born in mind that uh when the issue was posed as to whether the ~~student~~ ^{SNCC} groups should go into voter registration or continue direct nonviolent actionthere were those, especially Charles Sherrod who felt that you couldn't possibly engage in uh community organizing in the deep black belt areas without eventually running into the problem with the law and if you went into^{ed} political education you'd still run into problems with the law and you'd still have to have mass action.....demonstration. So I think that the realities of the situation demonstrated to the young people that there was no need for a great division between voter registration and mass direct action. When they first thought of getting into Mississippi, in 1960 uh, the summer of 1960 Bob Moses was in Atlanta. Apparently he had made an agreement with people of New York representatives of SCLC to go down and do ~~the~~ ^{some} volunteer work. But when he arrived, uh no one in SCLC had made any plans for him. I was serving then as the executive director of SCLC on my way out and so he and I struck up a relationship with A. James Stemlidge(?) who was serving as the secretary of SNCC

that summer and out of this uh he had some opportunity to learn a bit more about the South because I had certain experiences over a long period of years. And because there was a the fall plan for the conference of SNCC. One of the desires was to ~~reach~~ reach the Negro youngsters in Mississippi, Louisiana(?) and Alabama. And so ^{he?} undertook a trip part of which was to Mississippi and he was put in touch with a person like Amzie Moore. Amzie Moore who had been talking since, as far as I know, since 1950 something this whole big concept the need for organizing political in the Delta seemed to have inspired Mr. Moses and he decided to go back to Mississippi in summer of '61. He was committed apparently to teach the winter of '60-'61, but in the summer of '61 he came back and went into Mississippi went to McComb Mississippi and this was the beginning of the efforts. He was followed by other young people, John Hardy who was uh uh ~~perhaps~~ perhaps as a result of an attack on him by a registrar he was the basis of the first real suit on the Mississippi registrar and some of the other kids like Charles Jones went down to McComb and as you perhaps have heard the McComb story this developed into a program of voting resistance and the need for a national telephone line. Bob stayed there. Others went to Southwest Georgia. And the pattern for voter registration and political education which was one of interests(?) which Chuck McDew^{I think} should be credited with uh emphasized this from the beginning, he indicated he was ~~not~~ ~~XXX~~ not just interested in organizing people to register to vote, he was interested in organizing^{him} for political action

(Anne) Shall we go into the.....

(Miss Baker) inaudible

(Anne) well uh, you weren't involved in you say Jan. '64 was ^{in organizing (?)}

was the only place.....

(Miss Baker) Jan. '64 no I wasn't, you see I never was based in Mississippi. I ~~was~~ was called in frequently in workshops, consultations etc. but I was not based there. And in the organization, the concept of organization or organizing the MFDP or organizing the Freedom Vote really emanated from SNCC at regular monthly meetings or periodic meetings because uh, while Bob first ^{go} into Mississippi for political action there were others ~~XXX~~ who had conceived the idea that they called ...~~the~~ move on Mississippi, this was a massive movement. They had set up headquarters in Jackson, Mississippi. Diane Bevel, Diane Nash at the time, John, Jim Bevel and Paul Brooks and I think Bernard LaFayette ^{at the time} ~~and~~ had in mind a pushing of the..... nonviolent, direct action. So with these two forces already to function in Mississippi you had a great deal of discussion about SNCC..... and uh the progress from 1961 with the first efforts ~~the~~ with the first efforts which were made in the fall, Bob's uh continuing staying in Mississippi, helping out I think with such things as a political campaign which was on a normal level with Rev. R. L. P Smith I believe, in Jackson. And uh, this spread from one thing to another and then the..... was the freedom vote that was held in '63. So personally I wasn't there, I was set to go in but the way it was..... the ~~the~~ exchange of discussion with the young people and of course their relationship with the people in Mississippi, perhaps you can devine that one of the major emphasis of SNCC from the beginning was that of working with indigenous people, ~~not~~ working for them but trying to develop the capacity for leadership and for they had a lot to do with decisions that were made uh prior to the formation

of anything like the FDP or Freedom Fund. Well I don't think you can really pinpoint in that way because uh I think there are youngsters who came into SNCC ~~and~~ at that point who were people who were dedicated to the concept of other people of the rights of others and whereas maybe they may have picked up the phrase of indigenous leadership from something I can't say(?)
uh I would not disclaim, I think that there is very little that is original in human expressions and uh its true that all my life my concern has been that the most important things should be the development of people to take care of themselves, you see, I never believed in the strong leader. Because the strong leader exalts and produces a weak following so that I think, so if I had any influence I think it lodges in the ~~and~~ direction of the leadership concept that I believe in namely that leadership shouldn't be centered uh, you should instead of having what you call a leader centered group you have a group centered leadership. Now do you get the difference? That the major concern is that of the group and instead of trying to develop a symbolic leader you try to ~~uh~~ all the difference possible is the group so that you can develop leadership in the group.

(Anne) The spring of '64 you were working here in New York for SCEP?

(Miss Baker) Nope,

(Howard?) There was one question I wanted to ask before you go on. You mentioned Kennedy and I wonder did he follow up at all to help the voter registration and besides

(Miss Baker) Well, from what I understand, he was as I say instrumental in persuading certain groups in New York that they could contribute.

(Howard?) That it was legitimate.

(Miss Baker) Yes, that it was legitimate.

(Howard?) In what way .

(Miss Baker) No, not just a question of contributing to SNCC. There was an organization formed, something called the Leadership Conference what was it called, this fellow Steven Curry^(S?) that just got killed a few days ago , he and a some others had begun a series of meetings with heads, personall of the NAACP, the Urban League, the SCLC, SNCC etc. This came about to a large extent I think because in the initial stages of the Mississippi front, especially in 1962 and '63 Bob Moses and uh Dave Dennis of CORE had conceived of the plan of trying to develop a sort of united front and uh the ~~they~~ they were trying to do this because of to involve such as the local NAACP and to avoid the usual wrangle of who gets the money. They proposed an umbrella situation which was called COFO and out of the COFO concept and you see there were a number of ~~conferences~~ ^{conferences} for instance , I think I went with Bob once to talk to someone in the NAACP, but there was correspondence ~~XXX~~ with the top level of the NAACP and with other persons and so in the process and of course, Kennedy was interested in developing all the possible political support he could in the South, and so in the process I'm sure he used his influence on such ~~people~~ ^{people} persons as heads of foundations or monied people which gave them the right to ~~&~~ make this kind of contribution. As you know tax exempt basis anything that contributes to political action uh is not so easily exempted. I think that is the possible answer. As far as I'm concerned, I know that's about all the help he gave. I've heard that he help in persuading these people, this could happen and I do know that the speed with which it happened was greater than the usual speed that you

get in applications for exemption.

(Howard ?) And the other two things I wanted to ask, you talked a few minutes ago about, you said that SNCC realized after McComb the need for national help and I wondered you just talk about it, how they conceived of mobilizing the nation and also the second thing, that, which I guess was part of the reason for bringing in the whites for the freedom vote. And maybe you can talk about the problem of the freedom vote. I know there is a lot of discussion about whether to bring in whites and all that stuff, way back you know and if you could talk about those two things.

(Miss Baker) Well, uh as far as the uh the national help, the national help of course, the first efforts were in the direction of financial help because there was need for money and where else can you get it except outside of the South. That holds true even ~~XXX~~ now. And of course, in I think there is another factor here that has to be considered, namely the degree to which ~~you~~ people were sort of romantically or otherwise attracted to what was happening to the South. I think you could never underestimate the fact that up until say from the late 30's until then you had had primarily a silent generation. People who had not been accustomed to protest. People who had not voiced their opinion. They had been under the impact of the McCarthy period and when these Negro students began to submit themselves to all kinds of physical violence, intimidation and the things spread as it did with such rapidity. It became a sort of a magnet for the rest of the country. So it wasn't just a question of developing a national support it was also a question of providing opportunities for that drive on the part of young people, ^{especially} and others

who had social vision, especially in the North and the West, to help with something. So that was the first stage. Now as far as the whites getting involved, there were some few white students involved from the beginning. As you know, one of the ^{most} outstanding, if you don't know you can find it by looking it up, one of the most outstanding student sit-in efforts ~~was~~ in Nashville, Tennessee, and I think all the ... I believe that was his name, he was one of the first who was badly beaten and he was white, and there were several other whites who had participated in different sit-in demonstrations and so what you had then was all right in the pattern of involvement, and a higher degree of desired for involvement. And so in ^{Alabama} ~~Alabama~~ '63, when the idea of the freedom ballot was conceived in Mississippi, in fact before that time even, you had white students from the North and other parts of the country seeking affiliation with SNCC, so they were there.

And when Mississippi began to have reaction to Mississippi, you ^{attracted people} ~~you~~ like Alan Lowenstein more, and ~~people~~ you had people ~~coming in~~ coming in and I think he had some interest by being involved in different levels, and he involved some students out in Berkeley, I believe it was Berkeley..., so it wasn't a question of our staying calm. At that stage it was a question of ^{question} ~~absorbing people in~~ to what we thought we could absorb. That was in '63.

(man's voice) There is a question here that... talked about... taken over (Howard) ~~reorganize people~~ reorganize people, they just couldn't, it was physically impossible.

^{Miss Bobbie} (Howard) Well, the first, I am sure this was true because they did not have the experience, I am sure, and also it had something to do with the fact that those who were already organizers or project directors had some concern about the extend which they would relinquish their roles, and so I understand that in the

November '63 election that they did have some trouble about whites taking over but this I can understand too. See what you had was, in terms to the whites, to a large extent / you had people who had verbalized more of a ^{philosophical} ~~physophical~~ than political concept than the Southern Negroes had students. They ... lived ... political change and they were much more adept toward it, which in any situation I think where two groups of people meet, they are both trying to acquaint themselves with each other in some way, and so the whites no doubt have resorted to and to write easily ... their capacity to talk which might have been the same for the Negroes, and the Negroes may have fallen back on their own experience, their superiority in experience of knowing the ropes as it were for the situation, you now had the sense of content and it was not, however, until '64 program that there was a very highly, very conscious effort to involve whites. And one of the major reasons for that was political. I don't know whether anybody has mentioned this, but when you are repining with the fact that John Smith and all the other Negroes of Mississippi, who could get killed or what have you, just be another person killed, hurt, or so forth, the rest of the country would not arouse any concern. And so what we came to grips with is the fact that ^{since re} ~~that~~ ^{saw} ~~obviously~~ construction, the South had been left to deal with the race problem "as it ~~fit~~ fit." With the passage of agreement with the rest of the country. How then were you to arouse the rest of the country to sense this... How do you speak to it. You don't speak to it through the death of John Smith from Mississippi. But you do speak to it through the harassment of congressman's son or a governor's son or persons who have presence in their community. So there was the conscious effort of opening the doors to the great ^{demands} / ... you didn't have to go ... they were there pushing against the gates wanting to get in where the action was. This is something that

we will always have to deal with, and so we opened the gates on a conscience basis for the political impact that it could handle with the rest of the country. Now I understand that there are differences, wide differences, ... respective of evaluation of this movement. I understand some people feel very guilty having fought in so many... ways They feel that perhaps it did more harm than good, but I am not here to evaluate that. This is historical ... the way it did take place. were working for SCEF (woman's voice) In the spring of '64, you. N. in New York. SCEF *Miss Baker* was, a, SCEF ~~Howard~~) No, you see I by '64 I had become associated with SNCC but I was still in Atlanta, and it was in the summer of '64 I decided to move back to New York as far as base was concerned. I always made home, but I shifted and ~~decided to make~~ gave up my Atlanta base, and uh, Bob Moses and some others raised the question of the need for somebody to organize the national support. And I was asked to do it starting late Feb, late March and uh, even before I moved, before I moved back uh we went to the United Automobile Workers Convention in Atlantic City, whenever it was in May, I don't know, it was warm. And we saw Joe Rauh and somebody else there and sort of exploring what their support might be.

(Anne) Financial as well as.....

(Miss Baker) Well, that would be ~~arranged~~ raised but uh I don't think we got very much financial support from them, but we drew around(?) the woman and got her name, I think she is in the headquarters of Troy. Neither of them were in positions to commit, they could only use their influence and uh,

(Anne) What about Bob?

(Mrs. Baker) Bob had a short time to talk with Walter Reuther but Walter

uh, didn't do too much that he uh. How we got to talk to him at the convention as I recall was in a luncheon session that had been arranged for Walter to meet with the young people who were there. It was Bob and someone from SDS I forget his name now I could dig it up and someone from some other youth group who were on this program. After they had told their program, what they were doing, Walter gets up, acting as if nothing had been said, he proceeded to talk about what he was planning to do see, so he did not speak to their needs at all. And they didn't, I don't think, he had in mind a program that would focus Walter. And uh, so that, that's as much as happened there. At the convention. So we also ~~XXXXXX~~ conferred with persons like A. Philip Randolph and other people here in the New York area and one of the positions I took was that the leadership for this national effort should come from out of Mississippi. It should not be turned over as so often this happens to a New York based committee. So uh this is the way we started. We set up office. First we began to function out of somebody's office here and then we set up a full time office in Washington. And such persons as Walter Tillow, I think he is, I'm not sure whether he's at the U. E. now organizing, you can talk to him.

(Anne) I already have

(Mrs. Baker) Yes and uh, other persons, let see Walter and then there was this ~~guy~~ guy named Rich Ponds from Washington and uh, several people, Frank Smith who's now in uh Mississippi and uh others you know, were ~~XXXX~~ people working ~~XXXX~~ out of that office. Oh, Mike Miller who is now I think working I think he's based now in Kansas. Mos Mike was from the West Coast. And uh, these because the pivots around which entry was gained to different political agencies. And county, and conventions you see

(Anne) ~~SNCC~~ XXX Could you go into your strategy a little bit.....you know, first support.

KK of all do you know much about the financial ---did you organize it or who was sort of in charge of uh

(Miss Baker) Well you see it wasn't broken down into financial and political we had a central office and we made an effort to reach the political leadership in the Democratic Party in particular. At their conventions and so forth and ~~the~~ XXX had resolutions passed and copies of some of them are somewhere here now. But these various resolutions were passed with the idea of bringing pressure to bear upon the political leadership that would be at the convention. And there were enough states that had committed themselves at one degree or another in support of the Mississippi or petition to have won at the convention. This you see as far now in the process of meeting with groups, getting their resolutions you also attempted to get financial support. And then in that stage SNCC still had a very good financial machinery. So a large part of finance really came from SNCC. And the ~~National~~ Council of Churches, Commission on Religion and Race became very closely associated with the efforts they made and they made contributions as I remember. But our big thrust from the Washington office was trying to generate the political climate and support. So when you went to the convention uh you would have support for the seating of these people. But, I suppose you heard about uh Mr. Vice-President Humphrey having been delegated by the president to go and use his liberal relationship or his reputation as a liberal to uh really undermine any support.

(Anne) Now, K I wanted to ask you. Walter said that within a short period you had say built up at least 11 delegations, one right after another

(Miss Baker) That's right

(Anne) and then all of a sudden it just stopped and at the sametime and at the same time the editor of the U.A.W. legislative newsletter who had had a lot ofIn that was a suddenly cut off too and Walter didn't go into this he just said you knowlabor

(miss Baker) Well we of course ~~learned~~ through these stages. In the process of building support you don't always have the time to foldow up your loses, which you're doing to continue to mount support. Especially when you don't have anything, you don't have time, money, ~~We~~ didn't have money to send people to all conventions and you don't have enough personell, so you continue to try to mount your support by whatever ~~me~~ thods you could you see. And the ~~N~~ational ~~C~~ouncil of ~~C~~hurches, ~~C~~ommission on ~~R~~eligion and ~~R~~ace especially helpful in reaching the religious groups and in influencing some of the top civil rights groups to some extent. But, the counter force which was that which was mounted by Mr. Johnson I'm sure ~~XXX~~ in sending Humphrey out to meet with our chief, potential support and persuade them to the contrary. Uh, he was ~~speaking~~ seeking the vice-presidency and uh, this was his I think, this ~~sk~~ was the way Mr. Johnson was ~~m~~ easuring his capacity to be vice-president. See because he, there was both Humphrey and another man from Minnesota uh

(Anne) ~~Donald~~ Mundall

(Miss Baker) no, no it was another name, ~~who~~ he was another, McCarthy a very ~~fine~~ fine young man seemingly, but both were potentials, but uh, so the carrot was being dangled before Humphrey and he was assiduously working to uh off set these delegates ~~o~~ ~~We~~ later learned that, foreinstancē

at the convention we learned even at the convention we began to see support wane. Uh at the convention uh, people like Edith Greene, was so disgusted with what maneuvers that ~~had~~ had been taken place in that she had some concern, even expressed concern about whether she ~~was~~ ought to continue to me at least in ~~discussing~~ discussion whether she ought to continue in political action, I mean in the realm of politics. And uh, some women from California who was a delegate I don't know who she was, the one whose husband was promised the judgeship and overnight he was sort of reminded that the judgeship could be taken a, withheld and some body else who had some political or maybe some economic problems had been promised some kind of support. This was the kind of thing that happened at the convention. More importantly, I think the thing that happened, was that at the convention the delegations of different states had no opportunity to vote over anything, this was a party maneuver to keep the issue any issue, to keep this issue from coming up they had to literally had to keep any issue from coming up before the delegation. I remember the uh, the time, the day on which it was announced that our delegates had finally agreed to this compromise, I was visiting the Nebraska delegation, the delegation from Nebraska and they uh, the man who was in charge of the meeting apparently had been alerted to the stall in until he got some feedback or report from the man who I think was governor of the state and when the guy who was governor came in uh, I could tell what had taken place. The governor got up and oh, great kinds of fanfare, oh what have you, how he had been involved in certain kind of discussion and indicated that this had taken place and then uh, acknowledged my presence, of course with the hope that I wouldn't have anything to say. Of course, I took the position that the great ~~loss~~ loss was that of the people ~~and the~~ who were

at the convention, convention delegates who had had no opportunity to participate in any decision making. And I spoke to this effect and you can see that the people were let down, but the maneuvering had taken place. Now Mr. Laugh, for instance was ~~at~~ wearing many hats. He was a good friend of Hubert Humphrey over many years, he was Walter Reuther's paid council and he was high in Democratic circles, and at that stage I understand he was still interested in the possibility of being made the first mayor of whatever else you have in Washington, if home rule came. And so he had, I suppose, and he was special council for the M.F.D.P. ~~So~~ take all these different hats, you see the pressures of being torn. I remember at one stage of the game, he came into the delegations, when the delegates, you perhaps have heard when the delegates about the delegation being spoken to by such people as Mr. Senator Wayne Morse, Bayard Rustin said he had been called by Walter Reuther to come down.

(Anne) He said he had been called by Walter Reuther to come down because he could not reach any key or

(Miss Baker) yes, yes that's right

(Anne) or Aaron Henry or Ed King. Now wasn't Ed King there and

.....

(Miss Baker) Well not, but they were the typical supposedly, or they were ~~supposedly~~ considered to be pivotal in the Mississippi Delegation.

And when you said reached, that was certainly opened to debate as to ~~whether~~ ^{what he meant} by reach

~~that he could not reach~~ because in terms of reaching them by telephone he could have done so because we had 24 hour public telephones in a very crowded situation but it was public. So we interpreted that statement of reaching to mean that he couldn't get to them to influence them and so Bayard was sent as his emissary and uh, lets see *(Guy who?)* what he meant by reach off

what difference does it make we know what they meant by reach (laughter)
 at least we at that stage did, you ~~K~~ can do what you like uh, when uh, uh
 let me think the man who was council for the Commission of Religion and Race
 for the National Council Jack somebody, Jack Pratt yeah so that.....
 uh he spoke and a number of other people spoke and uh trying to Martin King,
 showing that this was the great opportunity ^{to accept this compromise} that uh it wasn't a loss, it was
 a victory and a ~~whole~~ whole lot of other stuff. But un, Bob Moses had
 something to say, and I only had, I responded to something that Raught/said .
 Walt, I mean Raugh made this pitch in this vein, that we had been known and
 demonstrated in the sit-in movement and so fourth and so on, the great
 heart of the Negro people had demonstrated its capacity for forgiveness and
 understanding and he would hope that in this situation we would still be able to
 demonstrate ~~of~~ this capacity for understanding and that Mr. Humphrey, Hubert
 Humphrey was running for the vice-presidency and the chances are he could
 lose it see. And so I got up at that point and made the statement to the effect.
 I felt that this was the kind of thing that we had to come to grips with and
^{those} though who claimed to be with us would be with us ~~and~~ when the going got rough
 as well as when it was easy. ^{And to us} ~~was~~ called upon ~~others~~ to be understanding of
 Mr. Humphrey's desire to win was saying forget what you need, your
 winning and support his winning. So anyhow this is the way the story went.
 I'm sure you gotten ~~XXX~~ others who, I wasn't part of but one session of the
 consultation see, ^{no not the----} so but with some of the other people I don't know
 who was there at the time but uh they.....King's suite you see.

(Anne) we you see uh

(Miss Baker) but they soon, they never invited me back.

(Anne) ~~XXXX~~ In King's suite, I understand there were, there was a group in the living room of credentials committee supporters and there was a group in the bedroom, Bob and Al Lowenstein and you

(Miss Baker) I was in the bedroom at that point, at one point

(Anne) And Joe ~~Raugh~~ ^{Raugh} said that at that time he understood that like Al told him or somebody told him later that in that room they went through every possible compromise that could be offered and decided and Bob talked about you know what he would encourage the delegation or what he would be willing to accept.....you know, what would be good for the one delegation and uh, this ~~was~~, well they said what if the seat half the delegation, what if they seat a quarter of the delegation what if they give two and rumor has it that Bob

(Miss Baker) Raugh

(no Raugh wasn't in that group)

(Anne) ~~Raugh~~ I meant ~~XXXX~~ whoever told Raugh this, said that the seating of two would be acceptable

(Miss Baker) Never, never, I'm sure that ~~XXXX~~ never Bob's position and Mrs. Hammer was in that room

(Anne) Mrs. Hammer was in that room

(Miss Baker) and she jumped as high as heaven and whoever told Raugh that they misrepresented that. Of course I don't have any recording of it, but there was never a question of the kind of seating that they would talk of which was uh a courtesy setting and asas I remember yes, he didn't agree. The thing that we were mostly supporting or stood by, or at least felt that that was the only viable compromise and that was all the delegates, both the ^{so called} regulars and the M.F.D.P. be subjected to I ^{believe} ~~mean~~ the loyalty test

and those who took the loyalty oath would be seated. And if this meant that so many of the regulars took it, that there was only room for two of M. D. D. P. then we could consider that. That's about all you see. The..... was those who would take the loyalty oath or some other consideration that that's entirely different from a courtesy seating of two without power of any sort. (Anne) One other thing that Raugh said, that uh this has come up in many tapes, in fact in Walter's ~~XXXX~~ discussion, that right before, this was on Tuesday. Right before Raugh went to the final critical period, ^{OF BEING A P} the delegates M. F. D. P. uh at the convention met and discussed the possible compromises and what they were going to accept and uh Walter said that the F. D. P. that Bob brought up what if you are offered two seats would you take it and they said no ~~XXXX~~ we would not and ^{.....} Raugh was in that room and it was Walter ~~XXXX~~ making that stand ^{wasn't going} and Raugh ~~XXXX~~ was to take that as the final stand and Raugh said what it this Raugh was told by ~~P~~ Leuther that this was the final stand. (Very muddled and inaudible)

(Miss Baker) The other top level operation

(Anne) that this was going to be the compromise and according to

Mendy Raugh should have gone in there and

(Miss Baker) and ^{checked with, got the permission of} ~~gotten permission from~~ the delegates instead of that

(Anne) inaudible, instead of that ^{said,} why, Raugh said that he did

he made a speech against it..... and said..... we have not done this and cannot accept this, *this is what he said in order to (CLOSE THE MEETING?)*etc *HE WAS THE ONLY ONE*

(Miss Baker) I don't think it came out that way. At that time. Of course

I don't think, yes
in the tapes that came back, there is no way for us to know, we can only take what's being said

ELLA BAKER

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(Anne) He told the resolutions, the people ~~to~~ to integrate the committee you know that as far as he was concerned you know it seemed pretty good but that he had to vote against it, I have to vote against it

(Miss Baker) Yes, but you see this is uh, uh double standard which is of course, uh has a as far as he was concerned he was not really representing the people you see, he couldn't be ambivalent, he was supposed to be the people's representative

(Anne) inaudible

(Miss Baker) he had to fight for that. What uh, anyway this is what did take place and both Mendy and Walter, Bob and uh, uh Eleanor Norton down here at ACLU, uh they perhaps were closest to the negotiations that I, but they didn't have any faith in them, plus the fact that I've always taken the position that the people who were the delegates and the people who were working closest with them, they were the ones to be in the lead of things. And Mrs. Hammer was called in, but then she was dropped from the negotiations and uh, there was some rumors to the effect that Ed King and uh Aaron Henry had accepted this compromise of ^{the} the courtesy delegation, the courtesy seating I think there was, I think afterwards they said they did not accept it that way. I don't know, but the point is that the delegates as a whole never accepted it that way at all. They took the position that they would rather go back home and say, and go back home without anything then to make that kind of a compromise you see.

(Anne) How do you, let's go on to my next question. How do you think affected Bob for one and you in you a him as a representative toward political involvement in the Negro South ^{well} within the Democratic Party and ~~within~~

in the mainstream of American politics?

(Miss Baker) Well, I would imagine that certainly settled any debate he might have had about the possibility ~~he might have had about the~~ of functioning through the mainstream of the Democratic Party especially if we were ^{pertained} having to have a coalition type relationship thatyou see, because basically ~~was~~ this was a coalition, we were depending on the liberal Democrats, and the uh within the..... of course that's the only thing you could have done there was no way of getting it carried inside ^{already} the party caucuses unless you had people inside, so I don't know how he was affected ~~affected~~, but I would think if he had any "Quote", you see personally I didn't have any

(Anne) inaudible

(Miss Baker) no, no you see I didn't have, it was a political difference I'm not a good politician but you see uh, I didn't have any ~~votes~~ hopes didn't expect people to be seated in the first place

(Anne) and you

(Miss Baker) no I didn't expect it to happen because what was there to be how could you expect it of a president who had very much concern about winning and who had evidenced his capacity to undermine by having sent certain people out to counter whatever was being done. You see, from the beginning I didn't expect, I think that I don't hope for these miraculous things to happen. And uh, but when you work with those, at the convention when you're talking with delegates, I can see that it could have happened if people had the chance to vote. But I know ~~you~~ I knew enough about political chicanery to know that if a vote is likely to go against you the power that be try to find ways of keeping that thing from coming to a vote.

And so this is what they did. Now I don't know that Bob really believed that they would be seated, Now maybe they did. I think there were some people who ~~really believed~~ ^{they} did believe, and I can understand from the political from the, let's call it the emotional climate that surrounded the whole '64 summer and Mississippi issue and the and the logic of it from the stand point of lack of loyalty as far as the Mississippi Democrats and the violations of Democratic rights that had pertained over the years, On the logic of it would dictate it, but the political uh consideration, ^{I think} political evaluation of the couldn't offer this as a promise, but I don't think. But I haven't talked with Bob ^{about this} but I should image it had great impact on him, I don't know. And uh, to some extent, I think the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was not organized to prove that you could function through the existing party. Uh, ~~they~~ followed the legal requirements, in order to justify their presence at the Convention and it was a testing force, and I think alerting process for people. I don't know. You have read, now who has, who knows, have you found anybody who expected the Mississippi delegation to be seated?

(anne) Well Mrs. Hammer

(Miss Baker) Mrs. Hammer said she did.

(Anne) At least from the beginning up to the Convention. (something about Raugh) she knew that

Howard
(Miss Baker) see Raugh you ~~were~~ ^{was} at Convention, see Raugh, ~~the~~

(Miss Baker) I was at the convention, the speech that Raugh made, I mean I was there see I worked on the project, and I thought, I ~~couldn't~~ ^{couldn't} conceive of how the thing could look. I mean I really, of course I really

I didn't understand the

(Miss Baker) it was at the convention

(Howard) I mean the way ~~R~~ough presented it he had 11 votes out of these 100 delegates

(Miss Baker) yeah, I know

(Howard)people country.....especially, you know I'm Southern, I'm from Louisiana, but I had a very exaggerated about how liberal the North was you know,

(Miss Baker) and how much influence they could wield

(Howard) yeah

(Miss Baker) Well, I could understand how Miss Hammer would think because after all she, it is sort of an emotional, religious type thing, you know a moral type thing

(Anne) yeah

(Miss Baker) And you can't expect a person who in '62 was a sharecropper without any political experience to have reached in '64 to have doubts about the thing and as you said the manner in which Rough explained it, would give anybody grounds for saying, you see that's the logic of it, that's the law ^{least}

(Howard) he was pretty open, of course when he

(Anne) no he said....

(Miss Baker) I think Rough was wearing several hats all along.

(Howard) I don't know, he was

(Miss Baker) how did he justify his position.

(anne) Well, he said that that

(Howard) he realized the limitation you know, he realized....

how much he was against it. But I

(Miss Baker) Well I don't think you had to get to the convention to realize that.

(Anne) No, I think he said that all through that he decided to take interest(?) participate(?) that he you know in back of his mind, he kept saying in back of my mind I knew that was something they'd never accept. He told me. yes it is. He told me he decided to put it out of his mind(?)

(Howard) he just put it out of his mind

(Anne) He said that was the most. political pressure that he has ever been involved in or ever heard of these political.

(Miss Baker) Now if he had his doubts, maybe he has uh uh a certain amount of visionary capacity you know, and maybe this, ^{if} and I can make be even more generous maybe he can have enough of of hope you see like others hope that people would act. I mean maybe it may be that but I could see very early in the game that he was playing, wearing many hats because uh when you confer with him and then I mean he was there and then uh he would have a call would come through from Humphrey and uh he ~~wasn't~~ would absent yourself you see and uh, but I thought he ~~N~~ at least had, what I call legal ~~ex~~ integrity which he was giving the best that he had of legal advice for the procedures, I think, I would give him credit for that, but I didn't have any, any doubt that he was

(Anne) had several allegiances

(Miss Baker) yes, these allegiances were there, and I, I felt that they were bound to catch up. That if there was a choice between allegiance

(Anne) Well, I

(Howard) he wouldn't chose F.D.P?

(Miss Baker) the F.D.P. with Harlip(?) that he would advocate all others of course.

(Howard) I think I, in fact..... inaudible.....

(Miss Baker) Well, I would, I guess it's too much to ask I'd like to what uh, see some of these, see what his evaluation was at some stage I never talked with him

(Anne) ^ can send you a copy of the

(Miss Baker) yeah, I like that

(Anne) The University of Wisconsin Do you have anything else to *in*

(Miss Baker) no