

MISSISSIPPI REPORT July 28 7:15 p.m.

Good evening. The following program is largely an attack upon the official Democratic Party of the state of Mississippi. It is to be expected that the leaders of that organization may demand separate, but equal, time.

The Mississippi State Democratic Party rejects the leadership of the National Party--in the words of campaign literature issued by now-Governor Paul Johnson "Both the National Republican ~~Party~~ Party and the National Democratic Party are the dedicated enemies of the people of Mississippi."

In its 1960 platform, the Mississippi State Democratic Party opposed U.S. ratification of the Genocide Convention, the Human Rights Convention, and U.S. participation in the World Court. The Party condemned "integration and the practice of non-segregation." In its words, "The Democratic Party of Mississippi stands today where it has always stood with feet firmly planted on the solid foundation of the Constitution of the United States, pure Americanism, and the traditional Southern American Way of Life."

The Democratic Party in Mississippi accepts for membership those and only those, who will subscribe to its principles. It controls the government of the state, and firmly resists any attempt by Republican organizations to capture positions of importance. In his campaign for Governor, Paul Johnson emphasized that an end to the one-party system in Mississippi would split the white vote, and, in the screaming capital letters of Governor Johnson's leaflet give the balance of power in Mississippi to our minority group!"

The Republican Party in Mississippi, as anyone who watched the Republican Convention on television can testify, is committed equally with the Democrats to white supremacy.

In its battle with the Republicans, the Mississippi Democrats have had to reject the national platform of the Democratic Party as a move toward socialism and an appeal to "have-not minorities in the heavy populated urban centers."

The Mississippi Democratic Party is pledged to put forward an unpledged slate of electors for the Presidency.

The undoubted fact that racists are firmly in control of the political process in Mississippi combines with another aspect of the state's tradition. 525,000 whites are registered to vote. Of 422,000 Negroes of voting age, 28,000 or 6.6% are registered. In the preceding program, we discussed the probable consequences for Negroes who attempt registration.

This white-dominated political structure can be attacked in only one way, according to civil rights leaders now conducting the Mississippi Summer Project. The link of the Mississippi Democratic Party with the Democratic Party at the national level must be broken. The eyes of the Democratic Party must be turned to the possibilities inherent in the new base of political power in the South.

To this end, Freedom Registration is taking place in Mississippi this summer. To this end, the Freedom Democratic Party has organized in Mississippi.

The Freedom Democratic Party has set up unofficial registration books, and will register in them any Negro or white of age, whether

officially registered or not. These books will provide a mechanism for Negro organization across the state.

The registration process carries with it freedom schools--the subject of a later program--community centers, and Freedom Democratic Party Candidates.

Three Negroes are running for Congress and one for the U.S. Senate in the Democratic primary. If defeated there, they will run as Independents in November.

At the same time, these candidates are the focal point of the Freedom Democratic Party's organizational efforts. Registered members of the Freedom Party will participate in every precinct, in every county, in elections for delegates to the Democratic National Convention. Armed with the freedom registration and led by the Freedom candidates, these delegates will fight at the Convention in Atlantic City for the unseating of the "regular" Mississippi delegation.

Who are the Freedom Candidates? From Sunflower County comes Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer. Mrs. Hamer is 47. In August 1962, she registered to vote. That same day, her family was ordered to leave the plantation where they had been living, and working.

The 2nd Congressional District, where Mrs. Hamer lives, is 59% Negro. Its current representative in Congress is Jamie Whitten, who, Mrs. Hamer points out, has a voting record that whites may find unpalatable as well. She points to Whitten's killing in Committee a bill to train tractor drivers, including unemployed whites. Sunflower County is also the home of James Eastland, its largest landowner. Mr. Eastland's plantation recruits its labor from Parchman Prison, among other places.

From the 3rd Congressional District, James Monroe Houston, a 74-year old retired Machinist, is running against Robert Bells Williams. Mr. Houston's first civil rights arrest came in 1934, when he was at a meeting called to discuss the New Deal.

Reverend John E. Cameron is campaigning for the 5th District seat of William Meyers Colmer, second in command of the House Rules Committee.

The Freedom Party's candidate for the Senate is Mrs. Victoria Jackson Gray, one of the leaders of the registration drive in Forrest County, Mississippi. Mrs. Gray stressed Unemployment, Automation, Inadequate Housing, Health Care and Education as the "real issues" in Mississippi. She opposes Senator John Stennis.

These candidates will lead the Freedom Party delegation to Atlantic City. These candidates, and the delegates duly elected, will carry the message of the death of Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman to Atlantic City. They will carry, too, a cogent argument about political realities, and they will know they have the support of a number of delegates from other states.

The attack on the racist delegation will be carried on two bases. The first, and most tenuous, finds its logic in an oath adopted at the Democratic Convention in 1952. Still acutely aware of the Dixiecrat walkout of 1948, the Convention required of delegates a statement that "It is understood that the delegates to the Democratic National Convention, when certified by the state Democratic Party, are bona fide democrats who have the interests, welfare, and success of the Democratic Party at heart..." And so forth. As meaningful political policy, the oath is today a moribund creature. Joseph Rauh, Jr., an attorney and delegate from

the District of Columbia, hopes to breathe enough life into it to present a good case to the credentials committee, based on Mississippi's defection from the platform and candidates of the national party.

One must admit that the notion of springing a loyalty oath on a Southern Democrat has its ironic overtones, though I would say that the use of the oath reveals a certain insensitivity about the historical role and function of such oaths in the past.

But the main thrust of the Freedom Party's argument will be that President Johnson and the northern liberals had better put up or shut up. President Johnson, a CBS reporter said last week, has read a poll indicating Goldwater is leading in the South. The presence of the Freedom Party poses a political choice for Johnson--and gives him the alternative of caving in to the push from the party's Southern wing, or launching a new appeal to the North and to the Southern Negroes and white moderates.

So far, the convention looks like this. The credentials committee is not yet chosen. When it is, it will contain 108 members. All of these members must vote to seat the Freedom Party in order for there to be a minority report.

When the minority report is on the floor, eight states must request a roll call vote.

As of one week ago, six state delegations are on record as in favor of seating the Freedom Party in place of the regular Democratic Party delegation. They are Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, Colorado, Oregon, and Massachusetts. The Executive Committee of the California State Delegation has passed a resolution to the same effect, and its action must be ratified by the delegates.

The Executive Committee of the party in Washington, D.C. resolved to unseat the Mississippi regular delegation, as did the executive committee of the New York party.

A floor fight seems quite possible at this moment, unless Johnson puts the heat on state delegations to withdraw their pledges in favor of something called party unity.

A New York Times article of Monday, July 27th, said from Washington that a compromise might be reached, resulting in both delegations being seated, each casting half of Mississippi's convention votes. The Times noted that this solution was adopted in 1914, when two delegations from Texas showed up.

Thus, from unofficial registrations, from voter registration classes in the shadow of charred timbers of burnt churches, from the fears and hopes of Mississippi's dispossessed, to the Democratic Convention in Atlantic City, the Freedom Party begins its work.

The fight of the Freedom Party for recognition is not fun and games in Atlantic City. The Party faces a challenge from important interests with a vested interest in segregation: In the Senate last September, Senator Humphrey spoke in the aftermath of the bombing. Humphrey came down heavily on what he termed the "Southern establishment", those who "control banks, factories, news media, and who contribute heavily to politicians." "I know the power of these men," Humphrey said, "And I also know that much of their power is linked with, and subservient to, the economic power of the Northern and Eastern Banks, insurance companies and other corporations. "And so--for profit...the whirlwind of racial hatred and violence has been encouraged."

To the extent that this Northern establishment is represented in the Democratic party, and to the extent its financial commitments demand that it oppose all but the most orderly--and the most illusory--concessions to Negro demands--to that extent the job of the Freedom Party is made more difficult.

But the financial power of those who dominate the industries is not all that is at issue. At issue, too, is the financial power of the agrarian whites, like Eastland, whose plantation has already been mentioned. At issue are wages in Sunflower County which are lower than the per capita annual income in pre-Revolutionary Cuba--\$300/per year for a cropper; \$150/per year for a laborer. In all Mississippi, Negroes and whites alike stand awed by ~~the~~ mechanization. In 1950, 8% of the Delta cotton crop was machine-harvested. Last year, 60%. Plantation owners like Senator Eastland are most unlikely to have a constructive response to this situation.

At issue, too, is the system of authority in the Senate and House. Senator Eastland, for example, controls the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee and the Judiciary Committee--the graveyard of civil rights bills. The Southern Representatives, reelected religiously well into senility, command the important committees.

The tactics of the Freedom Party, combined with Section 2 of the 14th Amendment, calling for reduction of the number of representatives in Congress from any state which denies a class of its citizens the franchise--such a double-pronged offensive would be salutary.

This work can be echoed in the North, as registrars fan out into communities to sign up citizens and talk of the realtors' initiative, proposition 14. The work of the Freedom Party is

echoed in letters to Democratic national convention delegates to hang tough when the push is on to take a racist to lunch and seat the regular Mississippi delegation.

This is not a game. It is not playing at politics. There is an anger abroad in this land. It is an anger that seethes in the fields of Mississippi. It is an anger compounded of the insult of serfdom and the impact of automation. It is an anger born of oppression as real in Harlem as it is in Ruleville, Mississippi. Trigger-happy cops roam the streets in both places.

I confess a sense that here and now we are living in a time when every decision-making and decision-enforcing device in our society is being tested. The courts, from the Municipal Courts in San Francisco--or Hattiesburg--to the Supreme Court; the executive and the legislature. The means of making decisions are being tried ~~tested~~ by the choices that confront them. It is perhaps an indication of the institutional stress when a Republican governor who one week chastises his opponent for the Presidential nomination as a gunboat diplomat can the next week with perfect equanimity dispatch the National Guard to deal with disaffection in his own state.

The Freedom Party is a part of this. The problem it poses to orthodox Democrats is part of the greater problem.

The Convention in Atlantic City, if the delegates have ^{and economic} courage enough, can be a new beginning for racist political/power ~~in~~ within our system of government. The beginning of the end.

Thank you and good night.

--Michael Tigar