

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
360 Nelson Street, SW
Atlanta, Georgia
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for the week preceding
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NEWS OF THE FIELD

#10

ALABAMA

Negro candidates across this state's Black Belt will enter political races for the first time since Reconstruction May 3rd. 85 Negroes are candidates for office in the Democratic primary on that date and over 40 will be chosen at special conventions held at county courthouses that same day. Because they are uncertain of the correct legal procedure (the law provides two procedures for nominating third party candidates) the freedom organizations will not only hold conventions on May 3rd but will also nominate "independent" candidates by petition of twenty five voters.

The candidates--freedom party candidates and democratic candidates--live in Autauga, Barbour, Bullock, Choctaw, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Jefferson, Montgomery, Mobile, Perry, Sumpter and Wilcox counties and will be aiming at offices ranging from a seat in Alabama's Senate and House of Representative to positions as sheriffs, tax collectors and assessors and coroners.

SNCC has pointed out that this year when Alabama Negroes will participate in county and state elections for the first time, it is important for new voters to examine carefully who controls the Democratic party in Alabama.

In Lowndes county, for example, the chairman of the county Democratic Committee, Robert Dickson, is a defendant in a federal court suit charging that he has evicted Negro tenant farmers from his land because they registered to vote. This same man, who controls the Democratic Party in Lowndes raised the qualifying fees for candidates in the May 3 primary from \$50 to \$500. This means that Lowndes Negroes whose average income is about \$1,100 a year would have to pay one half of their income or more in order to run in the Democratic primary. If Negroes should win in the primary and their elections should be contested this same Mr. Dickson would decide the case as chairman of the county committee.

With the road blocked toward participation in the Democratic party, many Negroes in Lowndes have decided that if they form their own party in the county -- the Lowndes Freedom Organization -- they will be able to control the party and make it responsible to their needs between elections as well as to elect their own candidates. SNCC considers this participation in local politics -- every day participation and not just once a year on election day -- a healthy and creative development for democracy in Alabama. Certain steps have, unfortunately, been taken to prevent freedom party organization. For example, Hayneville sheriff Ryals has refused to protect the participants in the May 3, 1966 primary.

Members of the freedom party, thus, told the United States Justice Department they will protect their own political convention May 3rd, if the government does not offer protection. In a letter to Ass. US Attorney, General John Doar, SNCC worker Stokeley Carmichael said Negroes in Lowndes county will "look to such resources as they can muster to provide their own protection" if a request to federal authorities goes unheeded.

Lowndes County Sheriff Ryals has stated that the Freedom Organization cannot use a vacant space near the courthouse building. Ryals said that such a meeting would "cause too much confusion" for voters in the Democratic primary which is being held that same day. The law is clear on the day the freedom elections must be held. To hold them on any other day except the 3rd would constitute a misdemeanor.

April 29 County Probate Judge Harrell Hammond told a group of Lowndes County Freedom Organization candidates that he had gotten an interpretation from the Alabama Attorney General's office on the legality of the May 3 mass meeting and on the acceptability of the forms that will be used to nominate the candidates by petition. Hammond said the attorney general's opinion was that the mass meeting was in accordance with Alabama's statutory provisions for the nomination of candidates by organizations of electors seeking to qualify as political parties. Hammond further said that the forms for the nomination of the candidates were legally correct in every respect.

Hammond said that in view of these interpretations, he would do everything in his power to cooperate with the holding of the mass meeting, and with the independent nominations.

However, said Hammond, he has no power whatsoever over the courthouse and its environs and, therefore, can do nothing about Sheriff Ryals' refusal to permit the holding of the mass meeting!!!!

Greene county, Alabama. Report of Lester Marlin Core, SNCC worker, who has been working in tent city, Green County doing "common labor around the tents

Tent city consists of 4 tents, with a little misery equally distributed among them. In the first tent is Mrs. Wynett Bell, in the second tent is Wiley Bell who is head of the large Bell family, in the third tent is Mantz Bell who's daughter suffers terribly from an infected ear. In the last tent is found a woman who is having a difficult pregnancy.

Tent life is a constant danger; whites are constantly harrassing the tents, riding slowly past in cars full of drunk men who hurl vile epithets.

In order to support the SNCC project in Greene, two SNCC workers are holding jobs as cowboys and giving their checks to SNCC. The two workers, known as "Fuddin and Bo Cat's brother", head cattle on local ranches.

Food has been filtering into tent city to fill one of its most crucial needs from Stillman College. One of the other crying needs now is a kitchen tent.

GEORGIA

Atlanta. A three-day conference of Southern College students sponsored by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) hopes to attract more than 250 students here this weekend.

The conference, scheduled for April 29, 30 and May 1, will be held on the campus of Gammon Theological Seminary here.

College students from Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee and North and South Carolina are expected.

Featured speakers will be Dr. St. Clair Drake, Chairman of the Department of Sociology at Roosevelt University in Chicago, Miss Ella Baker, an advisor

to SNCC and staff member of the Southern Conference Educational Fund, and Julian Bond, SNCC Communications Director and Representative-elect to the Georgia House of Representatives.

The Conference hopes to introduce SNCC's current and summer program to college students and recruit workers for summer projects.

MISSISSIPPI

"Benton County Freedom Train"---a Benton County publication.

"Eastland to run again. Senator James Eastland of Sunflower County, who has been the US Senator from Mississippi for 25 years, is again seeking re-election. He will enter the Democratic primary election on June 7th.

In a short statement, the Senator who has consistently voted against federal programs to help poor people, said he felt it was his duty to run again and preserve sound, constructive and conservative government."

Earlier this week, he showed what he meant by "sound, constructive and conservative government." He advised Mississippi school boards not to comply with the new guidelines for school desegregation set by the federal government.

"Eastland already has two opponents for Senate. One is the Rev. Clifton Whitley of Rust College, Holly Springs, who is running with the support of the Freedom Democratic Party. The other is Republican, Representative Prentiss Walker, who in 1964, won the 4th Congressional district seat in Mississippi.

Clay County. Clay County Freedom Democratic Party calls for nation-wide boycott of Woolworth's, J. C. Penney's and Sears and Roebuck

The Clay County Freedom Democratic Party in co-operation with the Clay County Council for Community Concern and the Ministerial Alliance, has been boycotting the stores in downtown West Point, since March 26. They are demanding that Negroes be hired in sales positions. All the stores which employ Negroes, six in number (of which two are white owned) have been excepted from the boycott.

Five letters have been sent to all the stores, the first in November 1965, two in December, one in January and one in March. Only one reply has been received, and it was from a group "of interested businessmen" who chose to be anonymous. It said that their businesses were small and that they could only hire qualified people. The FDP has sent about 25 people to various stores, especially Woolworth's, J. C. Penney's, Sears and Roebuck and Western Auto because they are all national chains. They sent high school graduates, many of whom had several years of college education, and some of who were college graduates. Not one was hired.

In early March the manager of Carty's Department Store telephoned Mr. Rick Boyd, a member of the FDP Executive Committee whose name appeared on the letters. He asked Mr. Boyd to come see him at the store at 6:30 PM about the letter. Mr. Boyd asked if the other committee members could come. He was told no. He asked if he could come while it was still light. No. Finally, Mr. Boyd asked that the meeting be held at the FDP office on Cottrell St. When this was also refused, he concluded that the manager was not sincere in discussing the employment of Negroes and just wanted to get him alone at night in a vulnerable position in order either to have him arrested for stealing or else to beat him up.

According to the 1960 U. S. Census there are 15 Negroes employed in any kind of clerical work in Clay County or one tenth of one percent of the Negro population but 1029 whites are working in sales positions in the county, or 11%.

On Saturday April 23, a group of local citizens or civil rights workers were arrested while picketing in downtown West Point with signs urging people not to shop where they can't work. Eleven people were arrested and charged with either "obstructing the sidewalk" or "loitering". The bond was set at \$100 each. The whole group was bailed out at 1:30 PM Sunday, and \$900 of the bail money was contributed by local citizens. The trial is Thursday. There have been identical picket lines for every Saturday since the boycott started, so they can conclude that the City Fathers must be really feeling the pinch.

Today, Tuesday, the police arrested Mrs. Eliza Hampton at the FDP Center for "selling clothes without a permit" and "selling in a building" which had no

been inspected by the City Health Department. Mrs. Hampton and other ladies have been selling used clothes for several monthss, and yet no one was arrested until today. This seems to show again that we are winning. Mrs. Hampton was bailed out by a local citizen.

The FDP is leafletting all over Clay County for everyone to come to West Point on Saturday, April 30, to march dosntown in mass numbers. A FDP laader says, "We must show that harzssment arrests will not break our determination to get better jobs. Instead theyjwill only streng- then our resolve to fight on."

Continuing, the FDP spokesman said, "Tody after Mrs. Hampton was arrested we sent telegrams to the natinal head-quarters of Woolworth's, J. C Penney's and Sears and Roebuck informing them that we are calling a nation wide boycott on thjeir stores, because of their West Point store's failure to Negroes. We most strongly urge you to support our actions in your area by protesting telegrams to thses stores: Woolworth Building, New York, NY; J. C. Penney Co, 1301 Avenue of the Americas, Ny, NY; Sears and Roebuck, Chicago, Ill."

Blanton, Miss. Jim Smarts of Blanton, Mississippi was killed April 27, 1966 in Blanton's store.

Sources report that Smarts had been deeply troubled for several days. April 26, Smarts, who is 61, went into the store and spoke with Mr. Money Montgomery. Smarts was talking about borrowing some money from him. Montgomery called the police. J. K. McNeal (who is well known for harr-

ssing and jailing people who had their children in the newly integrated white schools and those who had registered to vote) showed up alone. Negroes have been aware that McNeal was "itching to kill a nigger." At first he attempted to handcuff Smarts, who said that he hadn't done anything and was not going to be handcuffed. McNeal backed up and shot Smarts, first in the hip and then in the side of his stomach. Seemingly the second bullet killed him instantly.

Unita Blackwell, a SNCC worker, called the FBI and informed them of this crime. Agent Helgson of the Jackson FBI Office said that he would be in Sharkey County Tomorrow (4/29/66) to investigate this case.

There seem to be many witnesses to this crime. However, at this point, Negroes are keeping their mouths shut tightly.

Rolling Fork, Mississippi. Jimmy Lee Mathews, home on furlough before going to Vietnam, was beaten by a member of the city police force of Rolling Fork, Mississippi (Sharkey County). On having reported this to the local board, they instructed Mathews to hire a lawyer, BUT THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING THEY COULD DO. As the course of activities goes, Mathews was stopped for no apparent reason and moved to get out of the car, he told police that he had to get some air. He was beaten with a pistol in the chest.

Philadelphia The Kosciusko community raised \$400 to get Gunter Frantz out of jail after he was arrested during civil rights demonstrations there.

VIRGINIA

From "The New Virginia" "Virginia Students' Civil Rights Committee plans to field 30 full-time workers in southside during the summer months of 1966. Project work in six counties that were the focus for last summer will be continued. Organizers will possibly expand eastward into other counties of the Fourth Congressional District.

"A strong emphasis of the summer project will be voter education.

Intensive voter education will be done in preparation for the federal election

in November, 1966. A Virginia government handbook will be used by or-

ganizers in educating people as to the political structure of Virginia on both the state and local level.

"Workers will be offered subsistence wages. Campus groups are encouraged to raise funds through special campus projects to support their student workers in the field. Students will be housed in the local communities and VSCRC will provide routine medical and automobile expenses."