



ONE MAN -- ONE VOTE

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NEGROES WIN ASCS POST, BUT IRREGULARITIES CHARGED

During November, 1965, 149 Negro farmers and sharecroppers ran for election for positions on Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation boards in 12 Mississippi counties. 75 were elected, and their victory signals the beginning of the end of discrimination in this crucial federal program.

Set up during the 'thirties, the ASCS is a major effort on the part of the federal government to help farmers at the "grassroot" level have more control over farm prices and their incomes.

ASCS county committees, being farmers elected by other farmers and tenants living in the county, control and administer four federal programs.

ASC CONTROLS CROPS

Each county is divided into communities. Persons involved in farming operations nominate and elect individuals to serve on the community ASCS committee for one year and to be delegates to the county ASCS convention, which chooses the all-important three-man ASCS county committee.

It is the county ASCS committee which gives out cotton allotments, decides who gets extra acreage, hires the measurers, decides who gets Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) loans at harvest time, and hires the office manager.

Traditionally, ASCS county and community committees have been lily white. In

largely rural areas, such as Mississippi, this policy has been disastrous for black farmers.

During the momentous Freedom Summer of 1964, a small group of SNCC staffers and summer volunteers began work in Mississippi on what was called the "Federal Programs Project", designed to acquaint Negro farmers with various federal programs.

What began as an effort to educate Negro Mississippians of federal assistance became, in addition, a demonstration of the ineffectiveness and discrimination of most federal programs in Mississippi and elsewhere in the South.

FIRST WINS IN '64

Last year, for the first time, Negroes ran for ASCS positions, despite much harassment and brutality.

This year the idea spread to Alabama. SNCC has already begun action to void this year's ASCS elections in that state on the basis of fraud and other means used to prevent Negroes from being elected to the county boards.

On November 19th, SNCC charged fraud in the Alabama elections. The greatest evidence of fraud occurred in Wilcox County where Negroes are 78% of the population. Here, in three communities, ballots show the 120 voters voted only for the same three white men,

WILL THE PANTHER
EAT THE ROOSTER?
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out of five white and two Negro candidates. There were no votes registered for the other two white men or for the Negro nominees.

In Lowndes County, Negroes, who represent 82% of the county's population, won only 20% of the positions for ASCS county convention delegates.

In Greene County, the ASCS chairman tried to block SNCC staffer John Liutkas' entrance to the polling place, but was finally pressured into allowing him in. Negro farmers who wanted to witness the ballot counting were made to sit against the wall apart from the counting and were unable to see the actual proceedings.

The Mississippi elections have turned out to be similar to those in Alabama. The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party has been active in urging Negro farmers to run.

Farmers in Clay County issued this statement November 26th: "Negro farmers of Clay County are challenging the right of white men to completely dominate their lives because of the importance of the ASCS committee. This year Negro farmers are willing to stake their lives if necessary to have a voice in this committee..."

After travelling as a guest of the MFDP in four Mis-

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Vote Fraud In Arkansas

SNCC's Arkansas staff has charged fraud in September 28's school board elections, in which 30 Negroes ran. They cited the following examples:

In Forrest City (47% Negro) the first 2 Negro candidates suffered a 4 to 1 defeat. Poll-watchers saw Negro voters turned away from polling places after the polls closed, while allowing white people to enter and vote. Judges held Negro ballots submitted on time until after 6:30 p.m. deadline and then threw them away as having been entered too late. They then prevented the 2 representatives of the Negro candidates from watching the official count until after it began. Poll-watchers saw ballots marked for the Negroes called out and recorded as votes for the white candidates.

In Gould, (82% Negro), the margin of defeat was 3 to 1. In one ward, poll-watchers counted 272 people who voted, but 288 ballots were found. Of these, 150 voted for the white candidate; 138 for the Negro.

In another ward, only 7 votes were cast for the Negro, but at least 12 people will sign affidavits that they voted for the Negro candidate.

West Memphis' (42% Negro) Negro candidate lost 10 to 1. Over 1,000 ballots were missing, according to poll-watchers for the Negro candidates. Also, Negro representatives were not allowed into the polling place until after the count had begun.

The tactics in Helena (56% Negro) were even more direct. Police and police dogs were stationed at polls in heavily Negro districts. Negro voters were sent home for registration slips.

The intimidation proves successful - the Negro candidate lost by almost 3 to 1.

LOWNDES COUNTY FORMS LOCAL POLITICAL GROUP

"The white folks think they can let a few of us vote and fool us. They just don't see that we're now startin' to see how to use that vote to help ourselves instead of helpin' them." This is how one woman from Lowndes County talked as she discussed the newly formed Lowndes County Freedom Organization.



DEMOCRATIC PARTY
OF ALABAMA

When SNCC first went into Lowndes County in February of this year, they went with the idea of not only carrying on a voter registration drive, but with the idea of educating people about how they could use that vote.

At that time, none of the 5,000 eligible Negroes were registered. Between March and August (when the voting rights act was passed), only 250 more had been registered. Although hundreds more had gone to the courthouse in an attempt to do so, they were subjected to a variety of tactics of harassment.

At the same time that local officials tried their best to keep Negroes from registering, they had registered 117.9% of the local whites.

Finally a federal registrar was sent into the county in September, and the number of Negro voters sharply rose. Within two months the number stood at 2,000.

Alabama law requires that if 20% of the electorate votes for the LCFO candidate, the party then becomes an official one in the county and must be put on the ballot.

This plan of independent political organization -- where Negroes will make their votes count -- will be carried out not only in Lowndes County but in several other Alabama counties as well. Groundwork is now being laid to run independent candidates in these counties with the idea of eventually spreading out into 20 counties.

Knowing that they will be unable to pierce the present white power structure, they came up with what they considered a viable alternative - an independent political organization, organized on the county level. The people of Lowndes County refused to make meaningless the votes they fought for by using them to elect one oppressor over another.

Therefore the idea of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization became one where every one could have a vote in determining the use to which his vote could be put. A major thrust of the organization will be felt at the local and county level, for this is the level which most affects the Negro of the Black Belt -- the sheriff, jury commissioners, tax assessors, board of supervisors and board of education.

Lowndes County Negroes are also determined that any Negro they elect will be responsive to them and their needs. This can only be done by supporting people like themselves for political office.

News Notes

CALIFORNIA: Several hundred California grape-pickers are now on strike for higher wages. These Mexican, Filipino and Negro pickers have been on strike since the summer. They are asking those who sympathize with their cause to boycott all Schenley products as the grapes they pick are used in the manufacture of Schenley whiskey.

MISSISSIPPI: Six crosses were burned in Bolivar County the night of December 10. Victims of the burnings included an active member of the Freedom Labor Union and a candidate in this year's ASCS elections.

MISSISSIPPI: Within the next week federal judges Cox, Coleman and Russell will hear an FDP reapportionment suit. The suit asks that the state legislature be declared illegal and that an independent agent reapportion the state.

ATLANTA: James Forman, SNCC's Executive Secretary, has been indicted by the Fulton County Grand Jury. Forman is charged with malicious mischief and violating Georgia riot laws. Charges stem from demonstrations at two Atlanta restaurants in January of 1964.



Negroes in American History:
A Freedom Primer, by Frank
and Bobbi Cieciorka.

'BAD BAKER' WORKERS CITE ASCS STEAL

"Bad Baker" is the term used by SNCC staff workers in Southwest Georgia when they speak of Baker county. Workers have been in the county since the summer organizing around voter registration, ASCS elections, and other issues vital to the Negro community.

Baker county (59% Negro) was the setting for the famous 1943 "Screws case" in which the then-Sheriff Claude Screws and other officers

ASCS -- cont. from p. 1
Mississippi counties, Rep. Joseph Y. Resnick (D.-NY) said he had found so much discrimination that he was going to recommend the ASCS elections be voided and new elections held under stricter federal supervision. He also called for a non-governmental commission to investigate all complaints about ASCS elections anywhere in the South.

Clearly there are grounds for investigation and probably invalidation of the 1965 ASCS elections in Alabama and Mississippi.

Efforts are being made by SNCC and MFDP workers to assemble evidence of election fraud, violence, and intimidation to present to whatever agency or commission investigates -- if they investigate.

FREEDOM PRIMERS NOW ON SALE!!
This book, originally written for the freedom schools, tells the story of the Negro in America. Though the language is basic, the questions posed by the Primer are challenging for all age-groups. Many drawings accompany the text. Price: \$1.50@ for 19 or fewer; \$1.00 for twenty or more.

were indicted and prosecuted for beating to death a young handcuffed Negro mechanic, Bobby Hall, and were ultimately acquitted.

The county's Negroes still remember the Screws case since the present Sheriff, Warren Johnson, and his three deputies have killed "at least one Negro apiece."

One of the strongest men in the movement, Mr. Hosey Miller, was shot in the back last March by a white man who claimed that Miller had stolen his cow. The murderer has yet to come to trial.

It was in this atmosphere of harassment and violence that ASCS elections were held in the county in September. Only Negro landowners were sent ballots, although all those 21 years and over who work the land are eligible to vote -- tenant farmers and sharecroppers included. Negro farmers' names were placed on the ballot without their knowledge or the knowledge of the Negro community. Write-in votes are allowed, so the Baker County Movement canvassed among the several hundred eligible Negro farmers for a slate of three write-in candidates.

At least 44 persons swear they correctly marked their ballots for the write-in candidates, but the county committee reported that only 20 votes were cast for the write-ins and that all 20 were disqualified for some irregularity in marking.

Protests to federal authorities concerning the elections have as yet been fruitless. An investigator was sent to investigate the matter but nothing has yet been done to remedy the situation.

Poor Peoples Group Aids Co-ops

Members of the Poor Peoples' Corporation of Mississippi recently voted to allocate loans and grants of \$2,933 to six new self-help cooperatives in the state.

The PPC, organized this summer, is composed mainly of poor Negroes from Mississippi and anyone else who pays the

25¢ yearly dues. The purpose of the PPC is to raise money which will be lent out to start self-help businesses and cooperatives -- as decided by the membership. Funds which are raised are only spent after the members decide where they will go. Groups are expected to repay loans when their businesses begin operating at a profit, so that others can take advantage of the PPC plan.

There are now many cooperatives throughout the state which were started with the help of the PPC. Most of them are sewing or leatherworking co-ops. One of the most ambitious is the Prairie Sewing Group which organized quickly over the past few weeks to prepare samples and renovate an old store-room for their factory. "We worked Saturdays and on Thanksgiving to make sure we'd be ready on time for the PPC meeting," one spokesman said at the Dec. 1 meeting. The coop plans to hire 17 women.

The Ruleville Sewing Co-op plans to hire 17 women also and make hand-made quilts which will sell for \$12 and \$25. The Mt. Olive Quilting

Group plans to employ 20 women and has 35 members. Their quilts cost \$20 to \$35. A Bolivar county organization, the Shelby Sewing Group, has 41 members and is planning to make dresses, hats, handbags and children's smocks. The Hopedale Sewing Project expects to make regular and baby-size quilts for \$18 and \$5.

Most of these co-op members either were unemployed or worked as domestics at \$8 to \$15 a week. Some had lost jobs because of civil rights or voting activities.

There are other co-ops in Canton, where ex-domestics make cotton dresses and other clothing; in Mileston, where leatherwork is made, in Adams County where Natchez workers produce leather coin bags; and in McComb, where ladies' handbags will be made. There is also a ladies' sewing co-op in McComb.

The PPC plans to buy raw materials in wholesale lots for the cooperatives to cut down expenses. The PPC also plans to open a training center at their Jackson office, which will teach people how to run a business and use tools and machinery necessary to produce skilled handicraft work.

HELP!

This issue of the voice comes at a time when SNCC staff members are involved in various programs in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Virginia, Mississippi and North Carolina (as well as in Washington, D.C., Columbus, Ohio, and Harlem), and when the financial status of the organization is at its lowest point in two years. At the time of this writing, SNCC is drastically (\$14,000) in debt, while a number of payrolls have not been met and will not be met in the future unless our friends come to our aid.

In future, the voice plans to explore more programs and ideas in depth -- depending on financial resources for paper, ink, and so on. This part is up to you. The New Year brings with it new challenges -- we hope that you will help us meet them.

Yet the work in the field continues. SNCC staff members are working on questions of agriculture, poverty and independent political organizations. We have devoted this issue to articles which explain some of these programs (although not in depth for lack of space).

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