

## Report on Suite for Voting and Political Party Rights

For some years now the civil rights groups have been working to encourage Negroes to register to vote, and more recently the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party has encouraged Negroes all over the state of Mississippi to exercise their fundamental political rights as Democrats by attempting to participate in the recent precinct elections. In coordination with these efforts a far-reaching suit has been brought to secure these ends in the Courts.

The suit, filed in the United States District Court, is brought by eleven citizens of the State of Mississippi on behalf of themselves and all other citizens, Negro and white, of Mississippi. There are three kinds of plaintiffs:

1. persons who have attempted to participate in Democratic Party politics in Mississippi, such as running for public office as Democrats;
2. persons who are qualified potential voters, and who have attempted to register to vote, but who have been rejected;
3. persons who are registered voters, but who charge that their votes are meaningless because so many others of their class have been denied registration that their votes do not count for much, and because the Democratic Party of Mississippi is planning to remove all democratic choice from the ballot in the coming presidential election.

The suit is brought against the State of Mississippi, several of its chief officials, including the governor, secretary of state and attorney general. All the officials of the Mississippi Democratic Party are defendants, and so are all of the state's voting registrars.

The plaintiffs ask the Court for two main things:

1. an order compelling the registrars of voters to register Negro applicants by the same standards under which most white voters were registered prior to 1954 (when the registration laws were changed) and subsequently. These standards would not include the literacy, good moral character and constitutional interpretation tests. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals and the U.S. District Court recently gave such an order to the registrar of Panola County; this suit seeks to make an order like this apply to all Mississippi registrars.

2. The suit farther seeks to upset the hold that a small minority of politicians holds on the Democratic party machinery in Mississippi. The plaintiffs contend that the recent law pertaining to an unpledged slate of electors in a presidential election denies to them their fundamental rights to vote for the candidate of their choice. They further seek to have the people presently in control of the state branch of the National Democratic Party surrender the use of the name "Democrats" as long as they do not subscribe to the national platform or support the National Democratic candidates for president and vice president.