

1963

[Draft campaign speech. Aaron Henry, "freedom vote" candidate for Mississippi governor. Nov. 1963]

Those of you who have been following the campaign of my opponents, Paul Johnson and Rabel Phillips, have perhaps been confused by all their arguments over how well off the state of Mississippi is. Johnson, the "stand tall with ~~Rab~~ Paul" candidate--I'm never sure whether he is running in a physical health contest or in ~~in~~ political election--has been ^{assuring} ~~ensuring~~ everyone that our state is terribly prosperous--and all because of the brilliant political ^{leadership} of Barnett and himself. You can hear him citing this figure and that figure which ~~stand~~ are supposed to show how well-off everyone is in Mississippi. Phillips--who I think must have one time been a professional fighter of some sort since he always seems to be threatening to k.o. the Kennedys--tells us something very different. According to our Republican ~~aspirant~~ aspirant, Mississippi is indeed in a bad state; but, of course, ~~and~~ everything could be quickly straightened out if the Republicans were elected to office. ~~Afterwards~~ ~~it~~ Only the Republicans, he tells us, can scrimp enough on our state expenditures to balance the budget and thus save ~~the~~ our economy.

In all these arguments about the state of ^{our} ~~the~~ economy, about balanced and unbalanced budgets, and about rates of industrial growth or lack of growth, ^{it is striking that} there is never a mention ~~of~~, never a word, about how the people are making out. Never a word about how people are living and how much money they are making. ~~All these~~ ~~talked~~ ~~about~~ ~~are~~ ~~facts~~ ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~so-called~~ ~~facts~~ ~~are~~ ~~just~~ ~~a~~ ~~lot~~ ~~of~~ ~~facts~~ ~~about~~ ~~budgets~~, ~~profits~~, and growth rates.

Why? Why is it that our politicians simply refuse to talk about the people of Mississippi and their needs? Why is it that our politicians do not acknowledge ~~that~~ the fact that Mississippi is the poorest state in this country? Why is it that our politicians never mention the fact that there are hundreds and thousands of families--mostly but not all black people--who are living in terrible poverty? Why is it that none of our politicians talk about the fact that 51% of the families of Mississippi make less than \$3000 a year and that 37% of the families of Mississippi make less than \$2000 a year--an income hardly enough to keep a family alive? Why is it ~~that~~ that none of our politicians show any concern about the terrible shacks which ~~so~~ many ~~are~~ people in Mississippi have to call home? Why is it that none of our politicians talk about raising the standard of living for the people of Mississippi and of guaranteeing every citizen a decent wage? Why is it that none of our politicians, in all their talk about industrial ~~growth~~ growth, never mention that ~~the~~ factory wages in this state are on an average \$30 less a week than the national average? Why is it that none of our politicians talk about the fact that most workers in Mississippi have no paid ~~vacation~~ vacation, no sick leave, no unemployment compensation, and no retirement benefits? Why is it that our politicians ~~never~~ ignore ~~the~~ discussion of the increasing number of people in our state who are being made jobless by the spread of automation? Why is it that our none of our politicians speak out in support of abolishing the sales tax which places ~~so~~ much of the burden of taxation on the poor, ~~and of creating ~~tax~~ an income tax in~~

Why is it that none of politicians plead for

~~its place~~ which, by taxing the ~~masses~~ wealthy more heavily, would provide the needed revenue for building new and ^{better} schools, new and better hospitals, and new and better roads. I could go on all night about what our politicians find it convenient to ignore.

But why? My friends, you do not hear the politicians of this state talk about how the people of this state are making out because they do not care. They do not care because most poor people in this state are black. But they also do not care because the concern of the poor ~~is~~ is not their concern.

They do not care because real power in this ~~state~~ state is lodged, not in the hands of the people where it belongs, but in the hands of a wealthy few who are not concerned about poverty, about low wages and shack houses. They do not care because

in many cases they themselves are bossmen or plantation owners;

because they themselves

~~who~~ have become rich from cheap labor, ~~the~~ from the absence of labor unions, and from a high level of unemployment.

(which serves as a constant reminder to the employed that they can be easily replaced if they get out of line).

They do not care because in our state men seek political office not from any sense of public service, not from any desire to serve the people, but simply for what they can get out of it. In our state politics is a career which not only gratifies individual ambition but often makes rich ~~the~~ people of those who hold office.

These are political conditions which plague our ~~state~~ state.

These conditions exist because there is no democracy in

~~it~~

Mississippi. These conditions exist because Negroes in this State are denied their right to vote. These conditions ~~exist~~ exist because our politicians are elected by only a minority of the people of this ~~xxx~~ state. These conditions exist because without democracy we can not have politicians who represent the people and who care about their needs. These conditions exist because our politicians are able to deceive the majority of whites by perpetuating the lie of white supremacy. These ~~xxxxxxxx~~ conditions exist because our politicians, by their hate-mongering, have created an atmosphere of deceit which keeps whites from every learning of their real plight--both economically and psyschologically.

Blacks and whites can unite and will unite once the truth is made known. Once true democracy is established, we ~~will~~ ^{will} ~~have politicians~~ have politicians who will truly represent all the people of Mississippi and who will speak for their needs. Once the lies and ~~deceit~~ upon which our evil system of segregation~~x~~ and racial oppression is founded are exposed, we will have politicians who believe in honesty and in public service. Think for a second what ~~x~~ true democracy ~~xxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ in Mississippi would mean and you will see why our politicians have become so desparate in ~~recent~~ ^{the} years since the beginning of the ~~in~~ freedom movement. Think for a second what would happen if all Negroes in Mississippi had the right to vote. What Mayor, what sheriff, what county supervisor~~xxxx~~, what ~~senator~~ congressman now in effice would win reelection. The answer I think is obvious: none.

the political atmosphere
If every citizen in this state enjoyed the right to vote ~~participation~~
in Mississippi would be ~~something~~ entirely different from what
it is now. Candidates for office would not disregard the needs
of people. Political debates would not be contests in hate-mongering.
Candidates for office would not simply talk about budgets, ~~and~~
profits, and growth rates, but would get down to things that
mattered to people: the guarantee of decent wages, of retirement
~~and~~ benefits, and of sick leaves; the assurance that workers
made jobless by automation would be retained and that in the
meantime they would be provided with unemployment compensation;
the guarantee of a decent education and of decent housing
conditions. These would be the issues of a political debate
between candidates for office if a true democracy existed in
Mississippi.