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APPENDIX B
"HOW NEGRO DEMOCRATS FARED"

(The following is a summary of a longer report by the same title describing, through the affidavits of the participants, the experiences of Mississippi Negroes who attempted to take part in Democratic Party precinct and county conventions this summer.)

This past June Negroes in several parts of Mississippi attempted to attend precinct meetings of the Mississippi Democratic Party. These meetings, in which all registered voters are theoretically entitled to participate, form the base of a pyramid which culminates in the Democratic State Convention. It is in the course of this series of meetings that state party officials and National Convention delegates are elected. In this Presidential election year the Negro Democrats were not only fighting for their right to be included in the party. They also sought to insure that the state party would remain loyal to the candidates of the National Democratic Party in November. To accomplish this, they pressed for the election of delegates who shared their views, as well as for the adoption of resolutions affirming loyalty to the National ticket.

The amount of Negro activity in the precinct meetings was sharply circumscribed at the outset by the outstanding fact of Mississippi politics: the massive disfranchisement of Negro voters. The climate of fear that pervades the state acted as a further check: a sworn affidavit from a resident of Neshoba County, for example, explains that no Negroes went to precinct meetings there "because it was impossible... to make the attempt...without suffering great economic and physical harm."

In eight precincts (in six different counties) Negroes went to their polling stations before the time legally designated for the precinct meetings (10:00 AM), but were unable to find any evidence of a meeting. Inquiries addressed to public officials proved futile: some officials denied knowledge of any meeting, others claimed that the meeting had already taken place. In these precincts Negroes proceeded to hold their own meetings and elected their own delegates to the County conventions.

In three precincts (in six different counties) Negroes found the white precinct meetings, but were excluded from the meetings. In Hattiesburg Negroes were told that they could not participate without poll tax receipts, despite the recent Constitutional amendment outlawing such provisions.

In ten precincts (in five different counties) Negroes were allowed to attend the meetings, but were restricted in some way from exercising their full rights: some were not allowed to vote, some were not allowed to nominate delegates from the floor, others were not allowed to take part in choosing those who tallied the votes. In several meetings the Negroes were unable to introduce their resolution calling for loyalty to the National Party, in others they were unable to bring their resolutions to a vote.

In six precincts (primarily in the liberal town of Greenville) Negroes were allowed to participate fully in the precinct meetings. However, in some cases they were included only after white voters stalled the meetings until well past 10:00 AM in an effort to phone up enough additional white voters to offset an unexpectedly large Negro turnout. In all but one precinct (in Greenville) the resolution of party loyalty was defeated.

On June 23, 1964, Negroes tried to take part in the second level of Democratic Party meetings, the County Conventions. Most of these Negroes had been elected delegates to the county level by all-Negro precinct meetings. One, however, was a delegate from a multi-racial meeting in Jackson.

In Canton (Madison County) Negro delegates were at first unable to locate the County Convention, as the meeting was not being held in the legally designated place. When they did discover a group of whites who were in the process of drawing up a slate of delegates, they tried to join the meeting. They were informed that there would be no County Convention this year. The white group claimed to be the County Executive Committee and told the Negroes that the meeting was open only to members.

In Greenwood (Leflore County), another hard-core area, Negro delegates were also denied the right to take part in the County Convention. The whites presiding over the meeting refused to recognize their credentials on the grounds that their precinct meeting had not been "official". A white group claimed to be the delegates from the same precincts. (At the precinct level the preceding week Negro groups had been unable to locate the white meetings; they were told there were no meetings; one group, which had arrived at 10:00 AM was informed the meeting was already over).

In one of the more "liberal" areas of the state, Meridian (Lauderdale County) Negro delegates attended the County Convention, but were not allowed to participate fully, nor were their credentials ever recognized. The meeting refused to consider their resolution of loyalty to the National Democratic Party.

In Ruleville and Greenville, Negroes did not participate as delegates, but were allowed to attend the meetings as observers. None of the white delegates from the lone precinct in Greenville which had taken the "radical" stand of adopting the Negroes' resolution on party loyalty showed up at the County Convention. (Ruleville: Sunflower County; Greenville: Washington County).

In Jackson (Hinds County) a Negro delegate, who represented one half of his multi-racial precinct's single vote, was seated with his Negro alternate in the back of the Convention room. His credentials were not seriously questioned and he was not prevented from participating in the meeting. However, the other half of the vote, a white woman, was seated with her white alternate at the front of the room, in the proper seating location for their precinct.

In Vicksburg (Warren County) Negro delegates were unable to nominate delegates from the floor to supplement the list already drawn up by party officials. However, they were allowed to participate in some aspects of the meeting and their opposition to the unpledged elector resolution received press coverage. One Negro delegate, who had elected herself because no meeting was held in her precinct, was not recognized as an official delegate, even though there was no white delegate from this precinct at the convention.

The above summary of the experience of Negroes who attempted to participate in the county and precinct meetings of the Mississippi Democratic Party unequivocally substantiates what Negroes have been saying to officials of the National Democratic Party for years:

1. Negroes are discriminated against by Mississippi's traditional Democratic Party. They are not wanted as members of this party, and are not permitted to function in the party's operation.

2. Mississippi's traditional Democratic Party is opposed to the programs and policies of the National Democratic Party and will not commit themselves to support these programs and policies. Nor will they commit themselves to support the Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates to be selected by the National Party.

The Negro voters who attended the precinct meetings felt that one aspect of the functioning of the white Democratic Party came as a surprise to them - as a result of their attendance at those meetings: They discovered that whites do not attend the precinct meetings except in token numbers and that the delegates selected are usually chosen in advance by some party official. They felt that the role of the whites in the meetings was primarily to ratify lists of names drawn up by others. They concluded that officials of Mississippi's traditional Democratic Party have been very lax in attempting to create a widely based party and in attempting to actively involve as many people in the party's machinery as possible.

The fact that in most areas Negroes were not treated so crudely at the county level can perhaps be attributed to the very different social composition of the county meetings. The county conventions are run by the top political figures in the area. Negro delegates also observed that most of the other delegates were professional men, businessmen, and the like - the so-called finest men in the community. These people did not feel threatened by the presence of a few Negro delegates, but only irritated. Consequently the whites simply ignored the Negroes.