

ARKANSAS VOICE

VOL. 1, NO. 1

Little Rock, Arkansas

MAY 27, 1965

Registration Easy Under New Statute

LITTLE ROCK, ARK. - A new Arkansas law makes it easier to register to vote.

The new statute provides for registration without paying a poll tax.

The only requirements for registration are: be at least 21 years old and living in Arkansas for one year, in the county for six months and in the precinct or ward for one month.

The County Clerk, at his office in the County Court House, will be the new registrar. Formerly, the County Sheriff was in charge of registration.

Once registered, a person does not have to register again, as long as he votes regularly.

At this date there are no registered voters in the state of Arkansas which means there can be no school board, county, state, or national elections.

The new registration date has not been announced but will probably be in July, in time to have registered voters for elections in September.

The new election law was passed in a statewide election last November.

People's Conference Calls For Action



OVER 50 PEOPLE attended the Arkansas People's Conference at Ferncliff near Little Rock.

FERNCLIFF, ARK. - Over 50 Negroes from throughout the state of Arkansas attended a two-day conference here sponsored by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

The conference called for increased activities in voter registration, school desegregation, federal programs and community centers.

The purpose of the meeting, according to State Project Director James Jones, was to bring together the persons most affected by racial discrimination.

Local people from the eastern counties called for action:

-To register as many people as possible under the new voter registration procedures.

-To stop ballot box corruption.

-To publicize the harassment of Negro people seeking to vote and politically organize.

-To show that the so-called freedom of choice actually of-

MORE HARASSMENT IN WEST HELENA

WEST HELENA, ARK. - A 57 year old mother of eight related increased white harassment here since help. a white civil rights worker.

The Negro lady, Mrs. Lottie Lamar reported that her family has suffered continual harassment since she began assisting SNCC worker Howard Himmelbaum last February.

In April, a rent collector for a local

real estate company refused to accept Mrs. Lamar's rent, forcing them to move.

When Himmelbaum confronted the realtor he was told, "We put some people out last year and there was no trouble. You see, we know our niggers a little better than you do."

Neighbors rallied to Mrs. Lamar's support by threatening to move also. Within

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PEOPLE'S

"The 'leaders' couldn't stop us because they weren't leading," Rev. Ben Grinage of Pine Bluff exclaimed.

"We were tired of waiting for the Negro 'leaders'," he went on, "so we organized a group of students and went down to eat at Woolworths. The 'leaders' tried to stop us. They said we were hurting relations between the races in Pine Bluff. But the students kept on demonstrating."



"The students were expelled from school and thrown out of the dormitories but local families took them in. Finally the whites had to come to us because the students were leading. They had to ask us to stop." He concluded, "The leaders are the people who do things."

The first SNCC People's Conference, at a camp near Little Rock, Arkansas, ended with over 50 people from many counties in the Arkansas Delta talking about "people and freedom."

One of their conclusions: "The leaders are the people who do things."

At the meeting people from throughout the eastern part of the state exchanged ideas and techniques. A housewife from West Helena talked to a farmer from Star City; a Negro student at the formerly all white university talked to a factory worker from Forrest City. They all talked about people and programs, about "How to get people involved and then, what to do."



PEOPLE FROM THROUGHOUT Arkansas talked, ate and lived together during the two day conference.

PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS

People at one workshop talked about what a rights worker called "bottom up organizing." A heavy-set Negro man stated- "You have to get people involved and you have to communicate with them." Another Negro shot back, "But how do you get people involved?"

"Essentially the people here are saying," a rights worker explained, "we must stop telling people what their program is.

THE PEOPLE ORGANIZE

"Even before SNCC came to Star City we had organized the Lincoln County Civic League," said Mr. William Green.

In November, 1964, Green ran for the State House of Representatives in Lincoln County in the heart of the Arkansas Delta. He lost the election because of fraud at the ballot box. Two years before Green was elected Justice of the Peace. He is the first Negro in the state to hold that position. After the election, the state told him he was no longer a Justice of the Peace. The position is still in contention.

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Freedom Party Says 5 Must Go

JACKSON, MISS.- The Mississippi Freedom Democratic party (MFDP) has asked the U.S. House of Representatives not to seat the five member, all-white, Congressional delegation from this state. Three Negro women will replace them if the challenge succeeds.

Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, Mrs. Annie Dene, and Mrs. Victoria Gray will be seated in place of the three alleged illegally elected Congressmen. New, free elections would be held for the remaining two Congressional seats.

The MFDP charged that the five Congressmen were sent to the House in elections where Negroes have been excluded from participating in the political life of Mississippi.

In January, a number of Congressmen asked that the Representatives from Mississippi not be sworn-



People discussed voter registration, community centers, school desegregation and federal programs.

in until the charges of the MFDP could be investigated. This move was unsuccessful but drew the support of 149 Congressmen from all over the U.S.

The MFDP has continued its challenge taking testimony throughout the state of Mississippi.

Presently, the House is deciding how much of this testimony to publish. The law requires that the House decide by July 4 whether or not to seat these five members.

The MFDP is receiving support from the SNCC, CORE, and Martin Luther King.

SNCC is organizing a force of 1,000 students to go to Washington in June and July to attempt to persuade the Congress to deny seats to the Mississippi Congressmen.

The MFDP is a political organization formed last year in Mississippi because Negroes were denied Party participation.

WEST HELENA

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seven days, five houses owned by the same company in that row were vacant. Himmelbaum stated, "The rent collector came back and pleaded with the people to stay."

A SNCC worker explained, "Organizing to vote is as much a part of voting as casting the ballot. And when someone is harassed due to association with organizers, then basic voting rights are also challenged."

STATISTICS AVAILABLE

"The General Condition of the Arkansas Negro," a statistical survey, is available from your local SNCC office

FERNCLIFF CONFERENCE

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fers no relief to school segregation.

-To challenge school boards and districts which continue to evade compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

-To establish community centers where people can play, learn, correct educational handicaps and meet together without fear.

James Forman, Executive Secretary of SNCC, addressing the conference on Saturday evening, emphasized that the fight for freedom in Arkansas was not isolated but part of a general movement throughout the South.

SNCC leaders here stated that future conferences will be held on a smaller scale to allow more local people to attend.

"The meeting allowed the SNCC staff," Jones said, "to find out what the people want and are concerned with."

SNCC plans a summer project here and we wanted to find out the most important areas to work in," Jones added.

The summer project will bring 50 volunteers to assist the SNCC staff to expand its programs.

The Arkansas Voice is published by the Arkansas Project of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

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