



Anne Moody

COMING OF AGE IN MISSISSIPPI

1968

Pt. IV: The Movement

Ch 26: Excerpts

Lenora moved in the next day. The only thing she had to move was a shopping bag. She didn't come with any clothes, just Lenora.

That night she opened the icebox and found two gallons of ice cream. "Moody, what's the ice cream for? Can I have some?" she asked.

"Sure, Lenora, help yourself. It was for my birthday which was Sunday," I said. "There's a coconut cake in there, too, if you'd like some."

"You want me to fix some for you?" she asked.

"No, thanks," I said. "I don't think I could eat it."

But suddenly I had an idea. We could use the ice cream and cake to give a party for the high school students. Maybe a party would stir up their enthusiasm again. I couldn't wait till George came in to ask him what he thought about it.

We gave the party Saturday night and it turned out to be a great success. There were so many high school students there that finally the party became a rally. We all went out in the yard and sat on the grass and sang freedom songs for hours. One of the students told me that the principal of the high school had forbidden anyone to come. I was glad he had — it seemed to have boosted attendance. Ten students volunteered to speak in church services throughout the county on Sunday and to spread the word about the clothes we were going to give out the following Wednesday. They did such a good job spreading the word that when Lenora and I turned the corner to the office early Wednesday morning, there were about two hundred Negroes already in line outside it.

The minute I saw them there, I got mad as hell. "Here they are," I thought, "all standing around waiting to be given something. Last week after the church bombing they turned their heads when they passed this office. Some even looked at me with hate in their eyes. Now they are smiling at me. After I give them the clothes, they probably won't even look at me next week, let alone go and register to vote.

As Lenora and I opened the door, the crowd almost trampled us in the rush to get inside. We told them nothing would be given out until Annie Devine, a Negro insurance lady, arrived. She knew most of the

families, and we hoped her presence would help prevent people from taking things they could not use. While we all waited, the Negroes were making comments about the clothes. Some said things like, “Them white folks in the North is some good,” or “Look at them clothes, just as brand new as they came outta the store.”

When I told them that I would like to have their names and addresses so we could inform them of the next shipment, they all looked like they were ready to leave the office. I heard one lady whisper, “It’s just a trick to get us to vote.” I found myself wanting to deliver a sermon, but instead I left a pencil and paper on the back desk next to the door and asked them to put down their name and address as they left. After this, the tension eased. I knew they would not leave their names. Just in case, however, I stationed Mrs. Chinn at the back of the office. “Over and over again I could hear her saying, “You people needn’t be scared or ashamed to sign your names. We ain’t gonna use them to get none of you in trouble. All Anne and the rest of these CORE workers are here to do is help you people. They have even been trying to get food to some of you.”

It took us all day to give the clothes out. I had never in my life seen people who were so much in need. After we gave out most of the best coats and things, people started coming up to me telling me that they were desperate for a coat, a pair of shoes — anything. At five o’clock, I was exhausted. I looked at Mrs. Devine and Lenora and saw that their hair was white from the dust and the lint from the clothes. When I looked in the mirror, I discovered mine was too.

Around five-thirty, a group of people who had just gotten off work came to the office. I told them that everything was gone. A lady looked at a box of clothes in the corner and asked, “Can I look through these? I might find something I can use in there.”

“If you would like to, yes. But these things aren’t that good. Most of them are just rags,” I told her.

Before I could finish answering her, she had begun to search through the things. About five other women and two men joined her. They turned the box over on the floor, pulling everything out. They were snatching for old rags and panties and bras. The men were taking shorts that didn’t even have elastic in the waist or were without seats.

When they left, Lenora burst out laughing, “You see, Anne, I told you they weren’t rags.”

“I see that,” I said, “and I don’t think it’s funny. It’s a damn shame people have to be this poor in America — the land of plenty.”

“Well, Anne, we’ve started them now. We have to get some more clothes, else a lot of Negroes will be plenty mad because they were left out,” Mrs. Devine said.

“We’ll never get enough clothes to supply all of the Negroes in Madison County,” I answered. “I think we would do better trying to get them jobs so they can buy their own.”

“I could sure use one,” Mrs. Chinn sighed. “I ran out of food three days ago.”

“How many signed their names, Mrs. Chinn?” I asked, deliberately changing the subject. Every time she talked about her financial condition she got terribly depressed. I not only got depressed, but felt guilty about the way she and C.O. exerted themselves to help us and how much they had suffered because of it.

“Only twenty,” she said. “It’s a shame. Some of them had the nerve to tell me, ‘Minnie Lou, I can’t sign my name, but you know me. Let me know when you people get some more clothes in.’ I felt like killing them. If it was left up to me, I wouldn’t give them anything. That’s all Niggers is good for, looking for something for nothing.”

When Lenora and I opened the office the following morning, people were constantly dropping by to see if we had any more clothes. However, when I asked if they were registered to vote, the answer was always no. And none of them had any intentions of trying to register in the immediate future. I began to have the feeling that either we came up with an idea or project better than voter registration or we would have to get out of Canton. . . .

In mid-October we attended a COFO meeting. COFO was a state-wide coalition of all the national civil rights groups in Mississippi. The meeting had been called to decide about running Aaron Henry, the state NAACP president and chairman of COFO, and Ed King of Tougaloo on a freedom ballot in the

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION TO VOTE

1. Write the date of this application _____.
2. What is your full name? _____.
3. State your age and date of birth _____.
4. What is your occupation? _____.
5. Where is your business carried on? _____.
6. By whom are you employed? _____.
7. Are you a citizen of the United States and an inhabitant of Mississippi? _____.
8. For how long have you resided in the district? _____.
9. Where is your place of residence in the district? _____.
10. Specify the date when such residence began: _____.
11. State your prior place of residence, if any _____.
12. Check which oath you desire to take (1) General _____;
(2) Minister's oath _____ (3) Minister's wife _____;
(4) if under 21 years of age at present, but 21 years by date of general election _____.
13. If there is more than one person of your name in the precinct, by which name do you wish to be called? _____.
14. Have you ever been convicted of any of the following crimes: bribery, theft, arson, obtaining money or goods under false pretense, perjury, forgery, embezzlement or bigamy? _____.
15. If your answer to question 14 is "yes", name the crime or crimes of which you have been convicted and the date and place of such conviction or convictions: _____.
16. Are you the minister of the gospel in charge of an organized church, or wife of such a minister? _____.
17. If your answer to question 16 is "yes", state the length of your residence in the election district _____.
18. Write and copy in the space below, section _____ of the Constitution of Mississippi.

19. Write in the space below a reasonable interpretation (the meaning) of the section of the Constitution of Mississippi you have just copied:

20. Write in the space below a statement setting forth your understanding of the duties and obligations under a constitutional form of government.

21. Sign and attach here to the oath or affirmation named in question 12.

The Applicant will sign here

INSTRUCTIONS

1. You have just completed the form used to register to vote in Mississippi.
2. Go to the Court House in the County seat of your home county.
3. Ask the circuit clerk for an application to register to vote.
4. Pay your poll tax in January.

YOU PAY TAXES SO YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO VOTE.
ONE MAN ----- ONE VOTE.
REGISTER NOW AND TELL YOUR FRIENDS.

Voter registration form, Mississippi, early 1960s

upcoming election for Governor and Lieutenant Governor of Mississippi. It was believed more Negroes would cast their votes in the freedom election than were registered already. COFO planned to rally up enough support so that thousands of Negroes in various counties might participate. This, they thought, would prove to the nation that Negroes wanted to vote and would vote if they were not afraid to do so.

I couldn't see us mobilizing the Negroes around a false campaign. We had enough problems getting them registered to vote period. As it was, they had shown very little interest in the gubernatorial election since Coleman, the liberal Democrat, had lost to Paul Johnson in the primary. Now that the only choice was between the Republican, Rubel Phillips, and Johnson, the Negroes just didn't give a damn.

At the COFO meeting Aaron Henry asked the workers for their opinions about the freedom vote. I voiced my opposition to the whole idea. Right after that, an NAACP member from Clarksdale got up and went on and on about how she thought it was such a good thing. She ended with, "I don't think the young lady [meaning me] has worked with Negroes in Mississippi. To my knowledge, most of the Negroes in Mississippi would participate in such an election." She made me so mad I was standing before she was seated.

"For your information, Mrs. P——, not only was I born in Mississippi, but I just happened to be born in Wilkinson County, in southwest Mississippi, the toughest spot in the state. Because of my civil rights activities the last two years at Tougaloo, I have been barred from Wilkinson County. For the last five months, I have been working in Canton, another stronghold of the Klan. I think that should qualify me to have an opinion about the matter and a right to voice it." I took my seat and an old man got up.

"I think that the young lady was right," he said. "We should be thinking of some other way to impress upon the people of the county the importance of the vote. If we hold this freedom vote, all the white folks is gonna say is that we want to take over everything, that we want to rule things. I just want to be represented and given the right to vote in all the official elections. If I am asked to vote in an unofficial election, then that right is taken away by my own people.

Aaron Henry decided to select a committee to settle the issue. As it turned out, I was the only person on the committee opposing the freedom election. However, once it was decided to hold it, I reluctantly agreed to try to get votes.

The following week, Dave came into Canton to

move two of us out to work on the freedom vote in other areas. Doris volunteered to go to Natchez and Lenora was sent into Hattiesburg. Doris had only been in Canton a little over a month and she was glad to get away. I had become too valuable in Canton to be moved, since I was now well known by most of the Negroes. Besides that, I didn't have the energy to go into an entirely new area. I would not have been able to stand the strain.

We had only three weeks to rally up the Negro vote. Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Chinn helped me in Canton, while George, Mr. Chinn, and a few other men worked throughout the county. It was hard trying to explain the freedom election to the local Negroes. Most of them couldn't understand what we were trying to do — they thought we were trying to trick them in some way.

By this time, I had finally realized that the future of the Negroes in Mississippi didn't depend upon the older people. They were too scared and suspicious. It was almost hopeless to try and educate minds that had been closed for so long. All their lives their minds had been conditioned to Mr. Charlie's dos and don'ts. If we wanted to educate the vote, I thought, we should have been working with minds that were susceptible to change — ones that were open, inquisitive, and eager to learn. (I had a feeling that the whites in Canton knew that too. Why else had those five teenagers been shot at the beginning of our work in the area?) . . .

A few days later, Doris was back. She had tried to help get Negroes in Natchez organized and failed. From what she said, the Klan ruled the entire area. CORE didn't get enough cooperation from the Negroes to be able to stay. Doris seemed to have undergone quite a change. She was twice as scared as before. Now she was jumping in broad daylight. She still insisted on sleeping with me, with her rifle in the corner.

The county fair in Canton was the next coming attraction for Negroes in Madison County. Because the fair was segregated, (a week for whites and a few days for Negroes), we thought at first of boycotting it. However, since we could use it as a means of contacting Negroes, we decided not to. Thousands of negroes usually flocked to the fair from all over the county. We made special leaflets to pass out to them advertising the freedom vote.

The first day the fair was open to Negroes, Doris and I found hundreds of them, just as we expected. We ran into a group of high school students who had worked for us, and soon we had lots of help distributing the leaflets. I was feeling good at first but I soon became disheartened as time after time Negroes shook their heads and jerked back their hands when we offered leaflets to them. On top of this, I noticed that my favorite cop was there. When he saw me, his eyes lit up. Instantly he began to follow me around. He really puzzled me. I began wondering whether he was someone from my hometown. Maybe he had been sent from Centreville to bump me off, I thought. Whenever he noticed me looking at him, he would put his hand on his pistol and watch my reactions. A few of the high school boys volunteered to act as bodyguards for me. They had heard of his threat the night of the farmers' meeting. Until we finished distributing the leaflets, Doris and I were surrounded by these boys. The cop was only a few paces behind each step we made.

After handing out all the leaflets, we bought tickets to take a few rides. Doris and I decided to have a contest with the little race cars. We were surrounded by our group of high school students chanting to us. Since I couldn't drive, I just kept holding up traffic and slamming into people. Doris drove along smoothly, all the time laughing at me. The boys kept yelling, "Come on, Moody! Wheel, Moody! Come on, show Doris up!" Each time I crashed into someone, they cracked up laughing.

Next we played Pop the Whip. This game was on a wheel similar to a merry-go-round, but slanted to the sky. The person finishing up at the end of the whip seemingly would be thrown out of his seat. The wheel turned fast, and soon all the other passengers had had their turns at the end of the whip and were off the wheel. As Doris and I were about to come up to the end ourselves, all of a sudden the wheel stopped. We were now at the very top of the wheel. I looked down to see what was going on, to discover "my cop" talking to the man who operated it. My heart went blup, blup, blup, almost flooding on me. I couldn't open my mouth. Doris looked down and got hysterical. She started screaming, "Mister, please don't kill

us! Oh, God help us! Please let us down.” She was about to jump out of the seat and I had to wrestle her to hold her in. The high school boys were at this point surrounding the cop and the operator. We were up there for nearly ten minutes before they brought us down to the platform and released us. As we stepped out of the seat, the cop laughed and laughed. The crowd that had gathered around the wheel slowly walked away.

Back at the Freedom House that evening, I found another letter from Mama. As usual, it was full of pleas, begging me to leave Mississippi. I was mad with Mama and with Doris. Here was Doris driving me crazy and so was Mama. I took three sleeping pills and still was unable to sleep. I would have taken more, but I was afraid that one more would put me to sleep for good.

The next morning, I got up feeling awful. I could feel myself choking. It was like the choking feeling I’d had around the time I left home. “Maybe if I can just go out in the woods it will go away,” I thought. I started thinking of how to get to the country and of a good excuse for going there.

Finally, I decided to go out to Mrs. Chinn’s parents’ farm. Mrs. Dearon, Mrs. Chinn’s mother, had promised to organize the farmers in her area. It was just natural for one of us to stop in and see how everything was going. It always made me feel good to see Mrs. Dearon. She was the youngest, most energetic old woman I had ever known. When I suggested to Doris that we go out to the country to get some fresh air, she thought it was a great idea. After all, the Dearon farm was the most beautiful I had seen in Mississippi. It had huge cedar trees, a small lake and a lonely and delicious atmosphere. I was thinking that maybe a little fresh air might even cure Doris of the jibbies.

We dressed in blue jeans, long-sleeved shirts and wore long socks and boots to keep the briars from sticking so badly. I couldn’t wait to get out in the woods and listen to the beautiful sound of singing birds. As we were walking down the street to find someone who might drive us out to the Dearons’, I noticed that Doris was carrying her rifle and Lenora’s old pistol.

“Where in the hell do you think you are going with those guns?” I asked.

“We can do a little hunting while we are out there,” she said.

“Hunting! Are you crazy?”

“You like to hunt. You told me yourself you did. What’s wrong with us taking the guns out in the country with us? We might even kill a rabbit or something for dinner this evening.”

“There’s nothing wrong with carrying the guns out in the country,” I said. “However, there is something wrong with you walking around with them in Canton. If one of them stupid-ass cops or some white-cracker saw us, we would be two dead fools lying in the streets. First thing they would say after killing us is that we went berserk and shot at them. Leave the guns here, and if we can find someone reliable to take us, then we can carry them.

“Let’s find C.O.,” she said. “He’ll carry us.”

“Yes, I know, and he’s reliable too, hmm,” I said sarcastically.



Singing outside Freedom House, 507 Mobile St., Hattiesburg, Mississippi, July 1964 (building also housed the headquarters of civil rights leader Victoria Gray’s campaign for the U.S. Senate on the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party [MFDP] ticket)

Now that Doris had suggested that we take the guns, I was not so sure that I wanted to go. Then it occurred to me they might prove helpful if we ran into some white crackers out there. If we threatened to shoot them, or maybe gave them a warning shot, we wouldn't be killed or beaten — or whatever they might do to us. "Maybe we just better take them," I thought.

We looked for Mr. Chinn for about an hour before we found him. After we told him we were going hunting, it took almost another hour to convince him that we could handle the guns. Finally, though, he agreed to drive us out to the country, and around noon we were walking up on the Dearons' porch, guns and all.

Mrs. Dearon greeted me with a hug and kiss, saying that she was glad we had decided to come out and pay them a visit. But then she just kept looking at me as though she knew something was wrong. It was not like me to run out in the country and take a whole day off from my work in Canton. After we told her why we were paying her an unexpected visit, she seemed to understand. Anyway, Doris and I were off in the woods before she got around to questions like could we use the guns. Just as we were running down the hill from the house, C.O. yelled, "Don't you all kill each other! I'll pick you up about five-thirty or six."

"O.K.," I answered, and we were on our way.

It was so peaceful walking through the woods. We walked for about an hour before realizing we were supposed to be looking for rabbits. We started looking, and soon enough we found them. They were jumping up all around us. Every time one jumped, we jumped too—and here we were, dressed like men, with guns in our hands. I realized how nervous we actually were. Finally we gave up the idea of killing rabbits and just walked some more. We found all sorts of interesting things, an old graveyard, a running brook, and some bright yellow and red autumn leaves. When we could barely pick up our feet, we headed back to the Dearons' house.

As we came through the yard, we could smell the chicken frying, but we were too tired to walk up the steps. We just sat on the edge of the porch and fell back. I found myself falling asleep smelling that chicken. Suddenly I had the feeling someone was standing over me. As I opened my eyes, I heard Mrs. Dearon saying, "Well, you two look wore out, What did you kill?"

"Nothing," I said. "But we saw pretty near fifty rabbits, though."

"I didn't hear no shots. Then I started wondering what you all were doing."

"We just walked and walked until we couldn't walk any more," I said.

"You two come on inside," Mrs. Dearon said firmly, "You should be pretty hungry by now."

By the time I finished two or three hot pieces of chicken, some good collard greens, and homemade cornbread, I felt like a new person. Especially behind two good cups of coffee. I felt so good that I sat there and told Mrs. Dearon how good her chicken was, that I hadn't had a good home-cooked meal in years. I found myself flattering her just like one of those Baptist ministers would do. However, I really enjoyed that chicken dinner — unlike most ministers. With me it wasn't routine. . . .

Now that I was on my way back to Canton, I began to feel choked up again. I hadn't been cured, after all, and this meant something to me. Before, the woods had always done so much for me. Once I could actually go out into the woods and communicate with God, or Nature or something. Now that something didn't come through. It was just not there any more. More than ever I began to wonder whether God actually existed. Maybe God changed as the individual changed, or perhaps grew as one grew. Maybe my upbringing in the Church had had a lot to do with the God I knew before. The God my Baptist training taught me about was a merciful and forgiving God, one that said Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, and a number of other shalt nots. Since I had been part of the Movement, I had witnessed killing, stealing and adultery committed against Negroes by whites throughout the South. God didn't seem to be punishing anyone for these acts. On the other hand, most of the Negroes in the South were humble, peace-loving, religious people. Yet they were the ones doing all the suffering, as if they themselves were responsible for the killing and other acts committed against them. It seemed to me now that there must be two gods, many gods or no god at all.

That weekend I went to Jackson and stayed with Doris and her parents. While I was there, I stopped into see Bobbie, one of the high school girls who had worked with us in Canton part of the summer. It was at Bobbie's house that I had one of the most horrible scares in my life. She showed me a Klan leaflet that she had gotten from a friend of hers who lived near a white neighborhood. (Often in Jackson, Klan leaflets were thrown up on Negro porches by mistake, because the lines between Negro and white neighborhoods were pretty confusing.) I couldn't believe it, but it was a Klan blacklist, with my picture on it. I guess I must have sat there for about an hour holding it. Bobbie told me that she had planned to come into Canton to tell me. There were pictures of Medgar Evers, James Meredith, John Salter, Bob Moses, Joan Trumpauer, Reverend Ed King, Emmett Till, and two Jackson ministers. There were also pictures of other Negroes who had been killed, with X's marked across their faces. Medgar's face was also marked out. This piece of paper shook me up worse than all of the letters Mama had sent me. She had been warning me, and I had ignored her. Not only that, I had even stopped answering her letters to discourage her from writing. The only reason I could see that I was singled out on this list was that I was the only one from my hometown working in the state. Perhaps they thought I would somehow encourage the rest of the Negroes in Centreville to speak out. Now that I had stopped writing to Mama, I didn't even know exactly what was going on.

Most of the people on this blacklist were already out of the state. Medgar had been killed; James Meredith, Joan Trumpauer, and John Salter had left. One of the ministers was in Africa. He had made such a sudden exit that I had wondered at the time if he was running from a serious threat. Most of the people didn't worry about the daily threats, but making a Klan blacklist wasn't taken as lightly as that. This meant much more. In spite of the fact that I didn't want to worry about it, I did. I began to wonder even more about that cop in Canton, the one that looked at me so hard. I wondered how long the leaflet had been out. All that weekend I thought about it. I wanted to tell Doris about it, but I knew better. She was scared enough already. She would drive me crazy. "No, I just better keep it to myself," I thought. "It's better that way." These were my troubles, and each of us had our own load.

We headed back to Canton on Sunday evening. Next weekend would be spent on the freedom vote; therefore, we had plenty of work to do during the week. Monday we were up bright and early trying to rally up a little more support. The rest of the days we spend pushing and begging people to participate in the election. November 1, 2, and 3 were the three days delegated by COFO for casting freedom ballots. The state's gubernatorial election was to be held on November 4, a Tuesday. COFO held the freedom vote just prior to the state election so that the freedom votes could be tallied and publicized the day of the state gubernatorial election.



During the week leading up to the vote, there was too much confusion, too many threats, and too much work. The whites in Canton as well as throughout the state had, by this time, heard about the freedom vote. They were as confused about it as many of the Negroes were. However, they weren't so confused that they didn't try to counter it with violence. Twenty-five cops were added to the Canton police force. They were buzzing all over the place.

On Friday, I was walking around in a daze. I didn't only feel choked up, as I had been feeling for two weeks, I felt I was carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders. It was too much of a burden for me. I sat around in the office and made sealed boxes with holes in the tops to be used as ballot boxes at our polling places. I



Freedom Summer volunteer Rev. James "Jim" Nance talking with unidentified African American residents while conducting voter registration canvassing, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, summer 1964

felt like robot, and worked like one, too. We got everything set up for the voting and went back to the Freedom House.

Late that evening I tried to go for a walk and my feet felt as if heavy iron bars were attached to them. I could barely move them. I got a block away from the Freedom House and turned around. I went back and sat on the steps. It was there on the steps of the Freedom House that I decided to leave the project for a while. I sat there trying to analyze what was going on, and discovered that I couldn't even think any more. It was like my brains had gone to sleep on me or frozen.

On Saturday, the first day of the freedom vote, I volunteered to serve as a vote taker at a polling

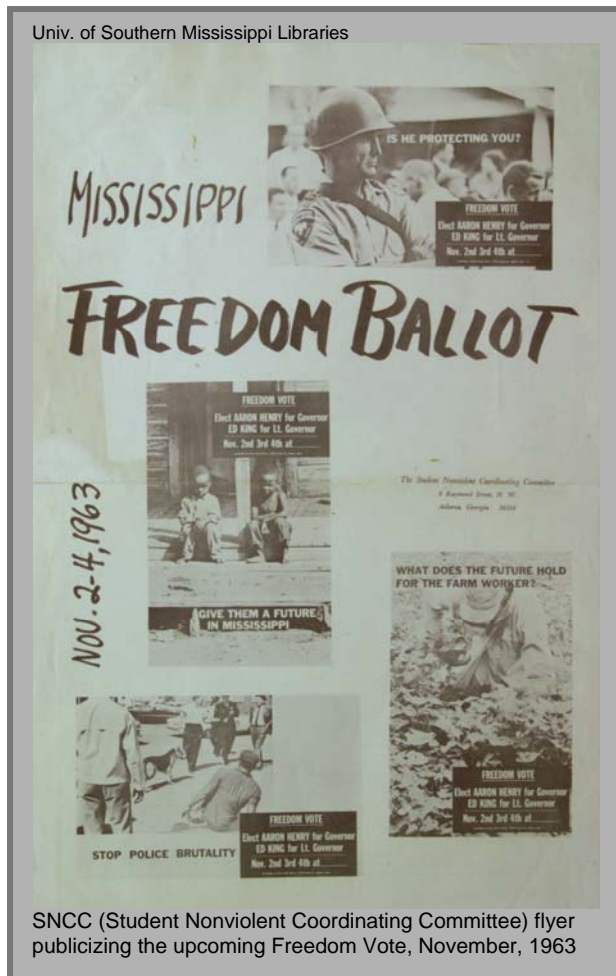
place. I was too tired to go out on the streets and canvass. Dave came into Canton and brought in a few more people to work during the vote. Several high school students volunteered to work also. There was lots of fresh young blood around to work. This pleased me. Dave had hoped that Madison County would get more votes than other counties participating. He felt as many of us once did, that perhaps one day Madison County would be looked upon and serve as a model for Negro progress in the state.

I sat there in the office all morning and only a few Negroes came in, although the teen-agers on the streets with ballot boxes were having better luck. Some of them came in a couple of times leaving a full ballot box carrying out an empty one to fill up. The longer I sat there, the madder I got. I didn't feel as if we should be going out in the streets with ballot boxes. If Negroes truly wanted to vote, they would have come in the office and done so. "They know it's just a freedom vote," I thought, "They also know Aaron Henry is a Negro. After three weeks of walking and talking until we were collapsing in the streets, these are the results we get. I knew it from the beginning. Until we can come up with some good sound plans to help the Negroes solve their immediate problems — that is, a way to get a little food into their bellies, a roof over their heads, and a few coins in their pockets — we will be talking forever. They will never stop being scared of Mr. Charlie until we are able to replace the crumbs that Mr. Charlie is giving them. Until we can say, 'Here is a job, Sam. Work hard and stand up to be a man.' Not until we can do that or find some way for Sam to do that, will Sam stand up. If we don't, Sam will forever be a boy, an uncle or just plain Sam, the recipient of crumbs."

I sat there on that stool until I couldn't take it any more. I picked up one of the sealed ballot boxes and walked out in the streets. Now the streets were completely saturated with cops. They were following workers everywhere. Some of the teen-agers practically ignored them. But I could see their effort wasn't helping much. The teen-agers might ignore the cops, but the Negroes whose votes they were soliciting weren't. In fact they were so much aware of their presence that they almost ran when anyone held the ballot box before them, and asked had they voted. I made several attempts to get people to vote and gave up. I just went over and sat on a bench in front of a grocery and just looked at all those Negroes. I could estimate there were about five thousand in the streets and maybe more. It was Saturday, and they were out, almost all of them.

After three days of walking and pleading with Negroes to demonstrate their desire to vote, our polls closed. Polling places had been set up all over the county in churches, small Negro groceries, and even in

some of the Negro homes. When all the results were in and counted, to my surprise 2800 Madison County Negroes had cast votes in the election. The largest number of votes came from polling places out in the country where voters were not openly intimidated by the cops. However, several of the poll managers reported incidents with local whites.



The total number of votes cast by Mississippi Negroes was 80,000. This was about 60,000 more than the number of Negroes officially registered in the state. But since there were more than 400,000 Negroes of voting age (twenty-one and older) in Mississippi, the 80,000 votes didn't greatly impress me — even though Negroes had not voted in Mississippi in significant numbers since Reconstruction. "If it took this much work to get 80,000 votes," I thought, "then we'll be working a lifetime to get the 400,000 and some registered."

The last evening of the freedom vote, I told George and Doris that I planned to leave the project for a while. They didn't take me seriously, though. They just sort of brushed me off. However, after I told Mrs. Chinn and a few other Negroes the next day, they believe I meant what I said. No one seemed to see that I was on the verge of a breakdown. I think the fact that I found myself on the Klan's blacklist brought it on faster. Had I stayed there another week, I would probably have died from lack of sleep and nervousness.

After George and Doris realized I was actually leaving, they tried to talk me out of it. The day before I was to go, I went to the office and found large posters on the wall saying, "Winners never quit and quitters never win," or "If a task is once begun, never leave it 'til it's done."

I had expected them to understand. Somehow I got the feeling they thought I was leaving the

Movement for good. I expected George to understand, because he knew I was always so serious and took things pretty hard. He was more philosophical. If things didn't go right, he would just say, "We have to try harder." And he had other things going for him. He mixed well with the people in Canton. He had a lot of other men to hang out with. He had Mr. Chinn to rely upon. He could go out and drink beer with the men every night or so, and he had lots of girls. His life was pretty normal in many ways. With girls, things were different. We weren't allowed to go anywhere, and there wasn't anything we could do to relax. People were always overprotecting us. I knew Doris wouldn't stay long; she was too scared. She would leave soon after I did.

I was not sure myself that I was not leaving for good — and this really made me feel bad. I had gotten so tired of seeing people suffering, naked and hungry. It just seemed as if there was not end to it, or at least "the Vote" was not the way to end it.

Later on during the day, Dave Dennis came and talked to me. He started telling me about what a good worker I was, and all that shit. It added to the feeling George had caused me to have. But Dave knew that I had made up my mind, and he didn't really try to pressure me to stay. He said that he hoped that I would not leave the Movement for good, that he could tell I had a certain compassion for the work and these were the kind of people the Movement needed most. I found myself wishing I had just left without telling anyone that I was leaving.

The next morning George and Doris drove me to the train station in Jackson. Before the train pulled in, I found myself sitting in the white waiting room with a white civil rights worker I happened to meet. She was a fund raiser for CORE. Sitting there in the station, I got the same feeling I had in all the other sit-ins I had participated in. I remember getting up once, and going to the Negro section to ask the Negroes there if they knew the white section was desegregated. Then I knew that I would never really be leaving the Movement.

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THE STUDENT VOICE

VOL. 4, No. 4 The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, 6 Raymond St., N.W. Atlanta, Ga. 30314 NOVEMBER 11, 1963

Over 70,000 Cast Freedom Ballots

HENRY - KING TICKET TOPS MOCK ELECTION

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI - Over 70,000 disenfranchised Negroes in 200 communities throughout the state cast "Freedom Ballots" in churches, schools, poolrooms and "votomobiles" over a three-day period here.

For many, participation in the mock election was their first adventure into politics. The Freedom Vote candidates, Dr. Aaron Henry of Clarksdale and Rev. Edwin King of Jackson, received almost all of the votes cast, with less than 300 split between Democratic and Republican candidates.

There were 78,388 Freedom Votes cast. Henry received 72,869.

Henry, state NAACP head and president of the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), indicated the mock vote gave Mississippi's non-voting Negroes "a real choice between candidates." Both Republican and Democratic candidates ran on segregationist platforms. The Freedom Vote candidates - who also received write-in votes during the regular election November 5 - urged the state to provide "justice, equal education, jobs and voting rights."

The Freedom Ballot platform called for an end to segregation, including all public accommodations; fair employment at a \$1.25 minimum wage; better schools and a guaranteed right to vote.

Robert Moses, director of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's Mississippi vote drive and director of COFO said the campaign was "a political breakthrough in Mississippi." COFO leaders hope to use the activity surrounding the drive to push Negro vote attempts in the state.

Over 100 campaign workers

SELMA DRIVE FOR VOTES CONTINUES

SELMA, ALABAMA - A vote drive begun here in January, 1963 has mushroomed into the testing ground for SNCC's "One man - One vote" campaign.

Over 680 Negroes have appeared at the registrar's office since October 7.

They have braved wind and rain - and the possibility of being jailed - to stand in line outside the registrar's office waiting for a chance to take Alabama's complicated voter test.

In 1961, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission listed only 9% of the county's eligible Negroes as voters. A SNCC study (see SNCC SPECIAL REPORT: SELMA, ALABAMA) outlined the county's history of disfranchisement and listed instances of official interference into voting procedures.

When SNCC Executive Secretary James Forman addressed the first mass meeting called by the newly formed Dallas County Voters League, city and county police and members of the special "posse" surrounded



DR. AARON HENRY



REV. EDWIN KING

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6 Freed In Americus Vow To Continue Work

AMERICUS, GEORGIA - Three field workers from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) - who escaped a possible death sentence when a three-judge Federal panel freed them on Friday, November 1 - still face other charges here.

The three-Donald Harris of New York, Ralph Allen of Melrose, Massachusetts, and John Perlew of Denver, Colorado - were jailed here August 8 and charged with attempting to incite insurrection, unlawful assembly, rioting, obstruction

of a lawful arrest. Harris and Allen are charged further with assault and battery. All were denied bail.

Two others, 14-year-old Sallie Mae Durham and 19-year-old

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Dr. Aaron Henry, during a stop on his statewide tour, shakes hands with voters in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. His companion is SNCC Field Secretary Gerald Bray. (SNCC Photo)

Mississippi Election

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ed, they indicate that Negroes here had no choice between Democratic and Republican candidates, and if permitted, Negroes here would register to vote in large numbers."

ARRESTS PROTESTED

ALBANY, GEORGIA - The jailing of three SNCC voter registration workers here October 7 was protested to President Kennedy. The three-Willie Ricks, Shirley Gaines and Lavetta Christian - were charged with "disorderly conduct" after they accompanied Negroes to the Dougherty County Courthouse.

Charges Dropped Against Worker

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA - Charges against a SNCC worker for "trespassing at the University of South Carolina" were dropped.

Sam Shirah, 20 was arrested October 2 going into a movie theatre with four Negroes. Charges were dropped Oct. 4 when the City Recorder's Court ruled the prosecution had no case.

Fair Boycotted, Policeman Hired

DANVILLE, VIRGINIA - Danville Negroes were urged to boycott the annual Danville Fair to protest at the city's rigid segregation policies.

Avon Rollins, SNCC worker here, said the city has hired its first Negro policeman.

Newsletter of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) announcing the Freedom Vote in Mississippi, 11 November 1963 (pp. 1, 4)

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