

BENTON
COUNTY

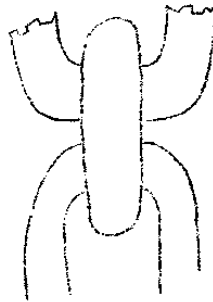
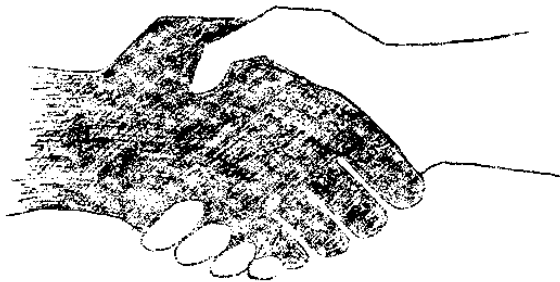
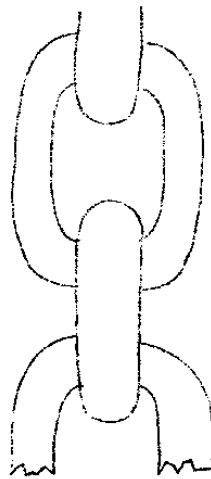


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Published by the citizens of
Benton County, Mississippi.
Beulah May Ayers, editor

"It's that Freedom Train
a'comin'; Get on board,
Get on board."



THE ONLY CHAIN A MAN CAN STAND
IS THE CHAIN THAT LINKS HAND TO HAND

Citizens Club Meeting a Success!

On Tuesday, October 6, 1964, an all-county meeting of the Benton County Citizens Club was held at Mount Bethel Church in the first district. Mr. Henry Reaves, president of the Citizens Club, conducted the meeting, and the following speakers gave reports:

Mr. Earl Price, president of the Benton County (Mt. Zion) Voters League, and Mr. Jesse Jones, president of the North Benton County (Sims) Voters League, spoke on voters leagues and freedom schools and the importance of going down to the courthouse to register to vote, even if you fail the test.

Mr. Art Emory of the National Sharecroppers Fund spoke on the oil cooperative set up by the Negro citizens of Hardamon and Fayette counties, Tennessee, and invited the members of the Citizens Club to join it.

Miss Beulah May Ayers, editor of the Benton County Freedom Train, spoke about the newspaper and invited all who wanted to write articles to give them to their district chairman or to mail them to Aviva at 100 Rust Avenue, Holly Springs. She also announced that all those interested in helping edit and publish the paper would meet every Saturday at 12 noon at the Holly Springs COFO office (100 Rust Ave.) where they would learn how to put out a newspaper and help in its publication.

Miss Aviva Futorian of COFO discussed the Youth League, the freedom schools, and the libraries. She announced that voter registration classes and Negro History classes were being held every Tuesday and Thursday night at 7:30 at Sims Chapel, and that any other group who wants to set up freedom schools at their chapels should contact her.

Mr. Robert Smith of COFO discussed the ASCS elections at the

meeting. He explained that all farm owners, tenants, and sharecroppers were eligible to vote in these elections. He also explained how the Negroes would be able to put their own representatives on the ballot, since the federal government controls the ASUS and is very concerned that it be run fairly. Mr. Smith ended his speech by discussing the problem of "Uncle Toms" and how they should be treated by the rest of the Negro community.

Mr. W. Lloyd Peterson, a member of the FHA committee in Benton County, spoke about the FHA and how Negro farmers can obtain loans from it.

Miss Marjorie Merrill of COFO spoke about a new project called the Benton-York project. The people of York, Pennsylvania, have become interested in helping out with the problems of Mississippi and have decided to have families in York "adopt" families in Benton County. These families will write to Benton families at least once a month as a way of getting to know them. The York families want to help the Benton families wherever they are able. All those interested in writing to a York family should contact their district chairman or a COFO worker and write down their name, address, number and ages of children in their family.

During the meeting some citizens expressed fear that Benton County might become like Fayette County with all its citizens being turned off the land. Aviva was asked for her opinion on this. She said, "I don't think this can happen any more because the nation has since become aware of the horror of Mississippi and is watching the state very closely. Also many Negroes think that if they go to the white man with their hat in their

(continued on the next page)

hands, he will 'be nice.' But the only result that has is making the white man think he can do anything he wants to the Negro and can get away with it. So he has beaten, lynched, and burned Negroes. I think change will come only when the Negro shows the white man that he can't get away with his savage behavior. And we can do this only by supporting each other in our determination." She gave an example: Rev. Beard was fired from his job as a bus driver because of his stand on civil rights--but he was alone at the time, and no one protested against this. Then this summer when Mr. Price was threatened with losing his job, the rest of the bus drivers threatened to quit. Result: Mr. Price still has his job.

More discussion was held, and the meeting was closed with the traditional singing of "We Shall Overcome."

Libraries Expanding

The Benton County library program is rapidly expanding. In addition to the main library at Mt. Zion Chapel, there are at present libraries in the homes of Lora and Clay Batts and Rev. and Mrs. John Beard. There is also a youth league library at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Evans which is supervised by their daughters, Earnestine and Janevial. These libraries are open to all citizens of Benton County, and books may be taken out for a two-week period.

By next week, there will be an additional two libraries set up. Any citizen interested in setting up a library in his home should contact any of the officers of district chairmen of the Citizens Club or any of the COFO workers.

Rainy Day Freedom Days

THE NEXT RAINY DAY VOTER REGISTRATION WILL BE HELD AT SIMMS CHAPEL BEGINNING AT 9 AM ON THE DAYS THAT IT RAINS.

THE YOUTH LEAGUE WILL ALSO MEET AT SIMMS ON THESE RAINY DAYS.

Citizens Club District Meetings

District meetings of the Benton County Citizens Club are being held all this week in order to select candidates to place on the ASCS committee ballots for the December ASCS community elections.

"I feel certain that if the Negroes of Benton County are all united, they will be able to elect their own representatives to these committees in at least three out of the five county districts," said Robert Smith, COFO staff worker who has been assisting the Citizens Club with the ASCS election information.

The district meetings are being held at the following times and places:

First District: Mt. Bethel Chapel
Thursday, Oct. 15, 7:30 PM

Second District: Sims Chapel,
Tuesday, Oct. 13, 7:30 PM

Third District, Mt. Zion Chapel,
Wednesday, Oct. 14, 7:30 PM

The next all-county meeting of the Citizens Club will be held on Tuesday, October 20 at Hebron Chapel. Special guest speakers will be present to report information concerning farming needs, and reports on the club's many projects will be presented.

Classes for College Held

College preparatory classes are being held at the home of Earnestine and Janevial Evans. The classes are taught by Aviva Futorian and Frank Cieciorka and are based around the study of World Civilizations. The course will consist of the art, literature, science, and history of various civilizations.

At present there are 12 students in the class, three from Marshall County. The first class dealt with the meaning of history. Getting into college was also discussed.

FARM REPORT:

by Robert Smith

The ASCS is a branch of the Department of Agriculture. Its purpose is to aid farmers, to tell them of the different programs that the Federal Government has made available to them.

In the past the ASC committees have not been informing the Negro of any programs, and the reasons are quite plain. They feel that the Negro farmer is satisfied being a sharecropper, but we all know that every man wants something that he can call his own.

Here is the chance we have all been waiting for. The time has come to unite, to have Negroes as committeemen, to be given our fair allotments, to be told of the other programs in which the government has made available to farmers. The way to do this is to have Negroes placed on the ASCS by getting every farmer in Benton County to vote in the ASC election. If we miss this chance, we will be cheated out of our allotment once more. Let's unite and win the ASC election.

What does the Mississippi Negro want?

by Burne Alexander

This is the question asked most frequently by both the White and the Negroes. The answer to this question I shall state as simply as possible:

We want freedom, we want full and complete freedom.

We want justice, equal justice under the law. We want justice applied equally to all regardless of creed or class or color.

We want equality of opportunity. We want equal membership in society with the best in civilized society.

We believe that the federal government should intercede to see that Negroes tried in white courts receive justice in accordance with

the laws of the land.

These are some of the things we the Negroes in Mississippi want. We also want to register and vote.

Why do we need a Community Center?

by Beulah M. Ayer

The Negro children of Benton County haven't had the opportunity to attend a community center. There is no place in Benton for the Negro to go for recreation. We don't have any books to refer to but the school textbook--this is awful because a child can't get all of his learning in the books that the county furnishes.

Physical exercise is important to a growing child, but we don't have a recreation center for the young people. Even if we want to go to a fair, we have to go all the way to Memphis which is a long way to go. The white people of Benton County have a fairground, but the colored people are not welcome there, when county activities are going on.

The Negroes do not have the opportunity to learn as some of them desire. If they are not able to pay their way through college, they don't have the opportunity to get further than high school. There is no place for a high school student to get a job to enable him to pay his way through college, so he ends up going away to another city or to the cotton field.

The Negroes do not have a swimming pool. If they learn to swim, they have to learn in some pond, which is not healthy because it is not sanitary. The Negroes of Benton county know nothing of art or poetry because they don't teach it in Benton. If anyone wants to learn anything about art, they have to leave Benton, so that is a loss to the county, because the people that leaves don't come back to stay.

A Report From the Delta :

by Charles Cobb, SNCC worker

Some twenty thousand pounds of food and clothing had been issued in Ruleville, attracting people from around Sunflower County and nearby Leflore and Tallahatchie Counties, resulting in nearly 300 registration attempts over a four day period. Sitting on the steps made damp by the cardboard patched ceiling of the old rotting house, watching them shuffle by, beaten down by oppression, my role in reporting the plight of the delta Negroes facing a winter without food or money--a winter of starvation (and at least one baby has died of starvation), became that of a recorder of conversation:

"You can make it pretty good, until last month, this month, and next month; 'cause by that time, you owe everybody."

"I can tell you and the world that I have caught hell as long back as I can remember."

"Ain't one of us in this room that's kids known what it's like to have a glass of sweet milk and a couple of eggs in the morning. We ain't had nothin."

"I have been so hungry stayin' at a white man's place, that when I did eat somethin", I had to eat it gradually."

"Ain't gonna say we ain't got to suffer some, but we been sufferin' all our lives, so it ain't gonna make a bit of difference now."

"People as desperate there as those children I used to see on T.V. they send a package to."

"Was a time when Negroes farmed, they could get money from white folks, but now, the whites are freezing them out."

"Bad a shape as we in, there's a heap of folks in worse."

"If this food keeps on comin', and I get something to keep my kids 'agin', I don't intend to chop no white man's cotton. I'll work on voter registration, not 'til the white man says 'well done.' You lookin' at a woman that's done some sufferin'."

"After I went to the courthouse to register, my boss put me out of the house. When I asked him, 'What you got against me?' he said, 'Nothing, I just don't want you on my place.' Right this morning, my life is not worth a nickel in Sunflower County."

But of course, there is no life that's worth the effort of living it, if you are a black man in the Delta of Mississippi.

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(Editors note: there was not enough room to include all the articles in this issue, including the Negro history section. We will try to get them in next week and will add a Negro Poetry section. Meantime, all articles are welcome--give them to your district chairmen of the Citizens Club or send them to Benton County Freedom Train, 100 Rust Ave., Holly Springs, Miss.)

We Shall Overcome!