

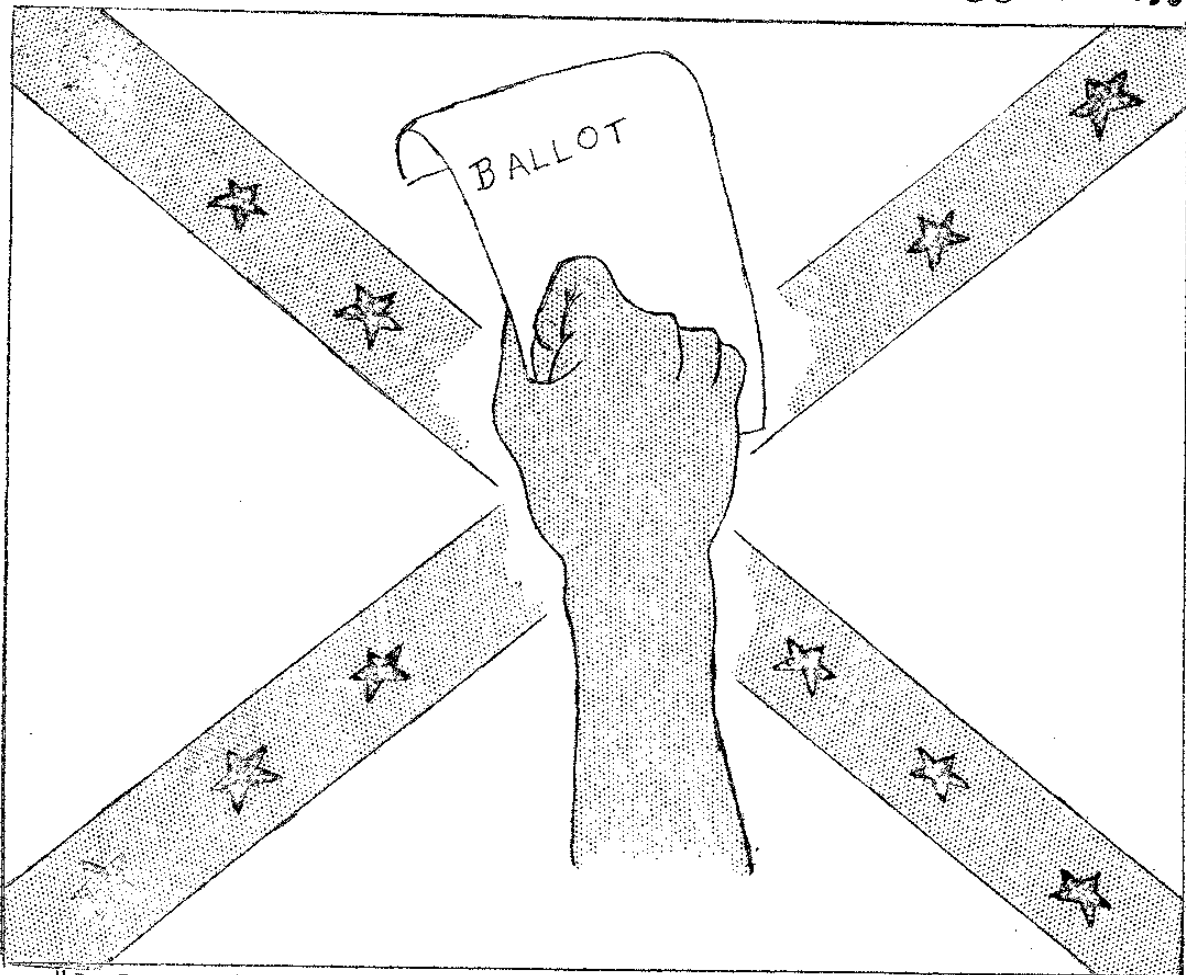
benton  
county



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THERE'S A NEW WORLD COMING..



"J. Lawson Mathis. . . is hereby permanently enjoined from engaging in any act or practice which involves or results in distinction based on race or color between Negro citizens and other citizens in the registration for voting process in Benton County..."

--from the final judgment handed down by  
Judge Claude F. Clayton, on May 11, 1965

# BENTON NEGROES WILL VOTE!!

Mr. Nicholas Flannery, the moustached Justice Department lawyer, breezed into town last Thursday, carrying an order from Judge Claude Clayton banning discrimination against Negro voters.

The court order brings to a close the U.S. Government's suit against Lawson J. Mathis, registrar, for discriminating against Negro voter applicants. The suit began last September, was supposed to come to trial in December, and has been in the process of being settled ever since that time.

The way is now open for Negroes to become registered voters in Benton county. The old books will be kept, meaning that those people who were registered voters before the suit began will remain registered voters. And the new books will be open to all citizens who can read and write, regardless of race.

From now on, voter registration in Benton county will take place as follows:

1. People will be registered weekdays from 8 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. until 5 p.m., and on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to noon.

2. You do not have to pay poll tax in order to register (but you should pay poll tax if you want to vote in state and county elections).

3. At least three people can register at one time.

4. As soon as you fill out your application, you sign the book and become a registered voter. There is no two week waiting period.

5. The application consists of such questions as name, age, add-

ress, etc. (the first 17 questions of the old application). If the applicant makes a mistake in filling out the application, the registrar must point out the error and give him a chance to correct it.

6. The application also has a part which asks the applicant to COPY (but not interpret!) a section of the Mississippi Constitution. The section to be copied cannot be longer than 4 lines.

7. The judge's order will last for a year, giving enough time for all Benton county citizens to become registered voters.

Mr. Flannery said that he went over these rules with Mr. Mathis very carefully and that Mr. Mathis seemed very willing to cooperate.

It is expected that voter registration will begin around June 1, giving Mr. Mathis time to get new books. Mr. Flannery will be back in the county before that time, and he will probably speak to the Citizens Club.

Voter registration classes are being planned to go over the applications and to teach literacy to those who have trouble reading and writing.

## NOTICES:

The Freedom Train is now taking classified ads from Benton County residents--free of charge. If you have anything for sale or want to buy something, send the information to the Freedom Train, Rt. 2, Box 100, Holly Springs.

To our northern readers: the Freedom Train is now taking subscriptions: \$10.00 per year. Send requests to the same address.

ONE MAN-ONE VOTE

## Farm problems to be discussed

Three county officials have been invited to speak to the citizens at the next all-county meeting of the Citizens Club this coming Tuesday night at Samuels Chapel. The meeting place was changed from Hardaway to provide a more centrally located meeting.

Many farmers in the county have expressed interest in knowing more about new crops, new methods of farming, establishing cooperatives, getting federal loans, crop allotments, and the future of the cotton market. Because of this need for information, the Citizens Club has invited Mr. Gordon Stone, ASCS county manager, Mr. Raymond Shields, FHA county supervisor, and Mr. James Miskelly, county extension agent, to speak to the group on these problems.

The Citizens Club has not yet heard from the three men. If, however, they are unable to come, they have been invited for two weeks from this coming Tuesday. The men have been invited to speak at 9 p.m. The regular meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. SHARP in order to complete regular business by the time the guest speakers arrive.

Everyone should have in mind questions concerning their own farming problems to ask these men. A question period will follow their talks.

On Saturday, May 15, some farmers from Benton and Marshall counties met to discuss the establishment of farmers cooperatives for the purpose of buying large farm equipment and planting new crops. A report on this meeting will also be presented on Tuesday night.

## Kindergarten planned

During this past week, plans for a pre-school in Benton county were discussed at the district meetings.

Two sponsors from the Marshall county program, Mr. Shelby Gipson, and Mr. Bobby McKinley, spoke to the citizens.

The purpose of the pre-school centers, they said, is to assist poor people of the community by giving them jobs in the centers, to introduce small children to school and the desire to learn, to obtain medical care for them, and to make them sure of themselves.

The money for this program is given by the federal government to the community, not to outsiders. According to the speakers, it should not be part of the regular school system, because then it would give jobs to people who already have jobs instead of those who really need jobs. This program is designed to help people in poverty, not those out of it.

The community must work together to get and carry out this program. You can do this here in Benton county, said Shelby, because you have proven that here by sticking together.

Mrs. Reaves, chairman of the Citizens Club pre-school program, went to Mt. Beulah, Miss. over the weekend to find out if the Citizens Club, rather than Mr. Bennett, will sponsor the program.

All citizens are urged to write to Washington if they feel that Mr. Bennett should not sponsor the program and that the Citizens Club should. Explain why you feel the way you do about it.

(Continued on the next page)

# NEGRO HISTORY & LEGEND

by Alberta Tipler, Mary Peterson,  
Janevial Evans, and Earnestyne Evans

In last week's issue of the Southern Advocate, the following was part of an article on the Civil War:

"When told over and over they were freed, the slaves' answer came back, 'Whut we want to be free bout? Who gwine keer bout us? Who gwine git a doctor when we sick? Is we got a place to go? We bleegeed to stay.

"An unmistakable attitude would be assumed when a Federal officer or any connected with the Yankees entered a home. Aunt Phoebe, holding her turbaned head high, would take short steps, roll her eyes and let her lower lip fall a little. There would be a strained politeness. After they had gone, the trite but true remarks of Aunt Phoebe kept the family entertained with 'Po White trash wid no mannas' for weeks."

After reading this, we felt that we should answer it because it was an insult to the Negroes of Benton county, and because there are probably many whites who believed the article, since Mississippi schools do not teach real Negro history either to the white students or the Negro students.

First of all, we can't really believe that Negro slaves talked in quite that dialect. While it is true that slaves were not allowed to learn to write and so they were hardly educated, we suspect that perhaps the author's grand papa told him the story and that this grand papa talked like that--and so it was written down as it was told.

And about Aunt Pheebe--just whose "aunt" is she? We remember Fannie Lou Hamer saying, "I don't have any white nieces and nephews, so if you can't call me Mrs. Hamer, call me Fannie Lou."

But to get down to more serious issues, can anyone really believe that the Negro enjoyed slavery, that he didn't want his freedom, and that he hated the Yankee soldier? Let's look at history:

If slaves had been so attached to their masters as was claimed, there would have been no need for a fugitive slave law which said that runaway slaves had to return to their masters. Why would slaves run away if they were so happy? And there would have been no task for Harriet Tubman causing her to risk her life so many times in helping slaves to flee from their masters.

Even before the end of slavery, there was a longing to be free. Slaves often sang of it; even the most sluggishly minded slave could hardly miss the dual meaning of these lines:

"I got a right--we all got a right,  
I got a right to the tree of life."

Many slaves struck out alone and unassisted. To do this they had to really be determined to leave. They revolted against their masters.

And the Old South never forgot the slave uprising led by Nat Turner, which resulted in the death of 60 white men.

As soon as the Civil War broke out, Negroes began to make themselves free. Whenever the Union armies drew near in battle, the slaves poured into their lines. An example of how the former slaves felt about fighting on the side of the Yankees is the following speech made by a former slave who fought in the Civil War:

"If we hadn't become sojers, all might have gone back as it was before; our freedom might have slipped through de two houses of Congress and President Linkum's four years might have passed by and notin' been done for us. But now tings can never go back, because we have showed our energy and our courgge; and our naturally manhood.

"Anoder ting is, suppose you had kept your freedom witout enlisting in dis army; your chilen might have grown up free and been well cultivated so as to be equal to any business, but it would have been always flung in der faces--'Your fader never fought for his own freedom'-- and what dey answer? Never can say that to dis African race any more."

With the Civil War ended and with slavery gone, the Negroes throughout the country were optimistic, linking their freedom to a deepening sense of patriotism. 'We are part and parcel of the great American body politic,' declared a convention of colored men in Kentucky. Like farm workers everywhere, the former slave wanted to have land of his own and to work in his own patch.

A Yankee General, Rufus Saxton, sent a glowing report to Washington on the Negro soldiers: "They have shown that they can appreciate freedom as the highest boon; that they will be industrious and provident with the same incitement which stimulates the industry of other men in free societies."

Another witness to the civil war, John T. Trowbridge, noted that "they felt great pride in supporting their families. They were all willing to work when assured of their rights."

We feel it is important for white southerners to begin to inquire about the old myths they learned as children about Negro slaves and Negroes in general. The white southerner has always claimed to understand the Negro better than anyone. But Colonel Higginson, a Yankee soldier who led a regiment of Negro soldiers, wrote: "There is no charge more unfounded than that frequently made to the effect that the Negro was best understood by his former masters. It would be more reasonable to say that the Negro as a human being was really LEAST understood by those to whom he represented merely a check for a thousand dollars, or less, from a slave auctioneer."

There are far too many good Negro history books out now for the writer of the Southern Advocate article to go on believing his old childhood stories. Let us be mindful of the things we say and the effect it will have on others. Let us work shoulder to shoulder and hand in hand so that we may overcome TODAY.