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county**

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

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EDITOR

Benton Negroes testify to voter discrimination

Last week, hearings were held at Rust College in connection with the FDP's Congressional Challenge, as part of an attempt to prove to the United States Congress that Mississippi discriminates against Negro citizens who try to vote and that, therefore, the Congressmen from Mississippi were not legally elected and should not sit in the Congress of the United States.

Testimony was taken from Negro citizens from Benton, Tippah, Marshall, and DeSoto Counties as well as from COFO workers to show that there has been discrimination in voting.

Mr. Henry Reaves testified about his attempts to get people to register, how fearful they were, and how his wife was fired from her job at Old Salem because of his activities in the freedom movement.

Mr. John Farese was present as the lawyer for the state of Mississippi, and cross-examined the FDP witnesses. He claimed that Mrs. Reaves was fired because Mr. Foster was jealous of her and was afraid she would get his job. Mr. Farese also said that the whites and Negroes in Benton got along just fine. All of his claims took the form of questions.

Mrs. Bobbie Louise Harris testified about her experiences of going down to the courthouse to register. Mr. Farese asked her about the brand new Negro school's gym, and about how the white school has an old gym. The FDP lawyer then asked Mrs. Harris, "Would your child be allowed to go to that old white school?"

Mrs. Burne Alexander testified about taking the voter registration test 14 times in the last two years--along with her husband--and still failing to qualify as a registered voter.

Other witnesses were Rev. Beard, who spoke of harassments he has been victim of since he became active in the movement, and Mr. William Beck who testified to poll tax problems he had had.

This coming Thursday, Feb. 11, "unfriendly" witnesses who have been subpoenaed by the FDP will be called to testify at Doxey Hall at Rust College. The hearing will be public, and everyone is invited. Public officials will be called on to testify to discrimination against Negroes who try to register. Among those who may testify are Sheriff Ash of Marshall County and Attorney John Farese of Benton County.

Mt. Zion to hear Board of Education report

At the next meeting of the Benton County Citizens Club, to be held on Tuesday, Feb. 9, at Mt. Zion Chapel, Mr. Walter Reaves will present a report on the School Committee's visit to the Board of Education.

The Committee went to the Board last Monday with a report on the bad conditions at Old Salem and a petition signed by over 300 adults asking for the removal of the principal of Old Salem together with four teachers. Mr. Bennett was present and defended Mr. Foster. He also denied many of the complaints made by the Committee's report.

Also present were six men who apparently came to defend Mr. Foster. They were: Frank Elmore, Clea Matthews, Delphus Hicks, Maso Gibson, Charlie Baird, and Henry Baird.

The meeting at Mount Zion will also discuss further action to be taken by the community if the Board does not act on the complaints.

newsbriefs :

*Classes at Mount Zion are open to all citizens of the county. They are Wednesday nights, at 5:30.

*Applications for cotton-measurers are still being taken at the ASCS office.

*Food is urgently needed for families in Banton and Marshall Counties who have ended up with no settlement from their white landlords. Anyone who has any extra food may bring it to the COFO office in Holly Springs.

*Y'all come to the next basketball game at Old Salem--if it is not cancelled as the last two have been. We SHALL overcome!

We want our freedom!

by Mardell Watkins

Our teachers at Old Salem--something needs to be done with them. You cannot invite friends to come and visit your school unless you want the sheriff to come and get them and carry them to jail.

We will fight for our freedom. We have been taking it slow, but it is time to go fast now.

We have some teachers who stay in the hall laughing and going on, not in their rooms doing their jobs. Some parents do not come to the PTA meetings. But they need to, so they can do something about Old Salem.

I don't think Old Salem is a nice school.

A question for Mr. Bennett

by Henry Bostic

Mr. Bennett, this is what we would like to know: You all don't want the Negroes to go to your school, and the Negroes don't want to go; but if we can't have the privilege of asking for a principal and teachers who will do the job like it should be done, we will have to go to somebody else's school, because we are not going to put up with some of the teachers that we have now.

Which side are you on?

by Loyal Thompson

Some people are attending our meetings without good intentions, but just to report back. They should bring the ones they report to. They are all welcome. We have never ejected anyone, and I don't think we will.

Remember: when the victory is won, they will want the same privileges as those who have suffered for the cause.

Which side are you on?

Congressional Challenge Explained

Many people have asked about the hearings that took place last week and about the lawyers that have been in Mississippi taking testimony from Negro citizens. Many people are asking if this is part of Mr. Flannery's trial. The answer is, no, it is something altogether different. Mr. Flannery's trial is this: Mr. Flannery works for the United States Department of Justice which is suing the registrar of Benton County, Mr. Mathis, for violating a federal law by discriminating against Negroes who try to vote. If Mr. Mathis is found guilty, new standards will have to be set up that will be fairer for all citizens who try to vote. The trial was supposed to be December 1, but on that day Mr. Mathis' lawyers admitted his guilt and asked that the trial be called off. The judge postponed a trial in hopes that both sides-- the U.S. government (Mr. Flannery) and Mr. Mathis could reach an agreement on new standards for fairer voters tests. No decision has been made on that case yet.

On the other hand, the hearings last week go way back to last October when we had the Freedom Vote in Mississippi. That election did not count, but it showed that over 60,000 Negroes in Mississippi would NOT have voted for the five men who were elected in the regular (Nov. 4) election. In the Freedom Election, thousands of Negroes voted for Fannie Lou Hamer. In the regular election, thousands of whites voted for Jamie Whitten and 4 other Congressmen-- since few Negroes can vote in Mississippi, Jamie Whitten won the regular election.

So the question was, do these five Mississippi Congressmen really represent ALL the people of Mississippi? The answer, according to the FDP was NO. The FDP felt that the election of these five congressmen was illegal since not all the qualified citizens of Mississippi were allowed to vote.

So, on January 4, 1,000 Negro Mississippians went to Washington to Congress and challenged the election of these five Mississippi Congressmen. They claimed that Mississippi discriminates against Negro citizens in voting. But they had to PROVE this claim. That is why the hearings are being conducted now. All over the state, Negro citizens are being called to testify to voter discrimination. Also, white officials are being called and asked questions about discrimination. There is now judge at these hearings. Instead, the evidence is all written down, and in June it will be presented to Congress. At that time, Congress will decide whether to allow the five Mississippi Congressmen to remain in Congress or to "unseat" them because they were not legally elected by all the citizens of Mississippi.

What's the difference? Why I like freedom

by Jacqueline Richard

What is the difference between white people and colored people. I want to know. Don't you? I think it is not anything but the colors. White people do not have any color. But colored people do. I think that is the difference.

by Stephen Mason

What I like about freedom is this: everything that has been done in the dark is coming to light, and freedom is shining all over in Mississippi. I thank God for freedom. God is in front of freedom.

Negro Literature Section

FINE ACCOMODATIONS

by Langston Hughes

In two seconds they'd be pulling out of Atlanta, going North. The long platform was busy with people, redcaps, baggage trucks, travelers, and relatives waving farewell. The New York Limited had a heavy load. Peter Johnson, porter, stood beside the Pullman steps. He looked down toward the engine and saw the last mail bags being thrown into a coach ahead. "'Bout to be hitting it," he thought, when a hurrying redcap, bending under the weight of three big bags that seemed to be loaded with iron, cried, "Here we are, buddy!"

Behind the redcap came a large elderly well-dressed Negro, followed by a young colored man with a portable typewriter and two brief cases. Porter Peter Johnson smiled as he took one of the two brief cases which the young man carried.

"Drawing room A," said the redcap.

"Rich colored folks, thought Peter Johnson, and a thrill of pride ran through him that two members of his own race were riding the crack New York Limited--in an expensive drawing room at that!

Peter Johnson knew that in the South the railroad people sometimes gave Negroes the drawing room for the price of an ordinary berth, just to have them out of sight, but that would never happen on a crowded train where space was booked a week ahead. No, these Negroes had obviously paid good money for a deluxe trip north in such fine accomodations.

"They ain't sporting people," Peter Johnson said to himself, noting the quiet attire of the elderly man, and the nervous college-boy face of the younger passenger. "He must be some big shot, the old fellow, professor, or a bishop, or a race leader. I'll find out directly."

But before Peter Johnson could ask the redcap who the man was, he had gone. The train was pulling out. By and by, as the train hit the suburbs and gathered speed, and the porter had changed into his white jacket, he came back to drawing room A and knocked on the door.

The porter entered and smiled, bowed, and began to put the bags up out of the way. The elderly brownskin man was sitting by the window, his hands full of papers. The young man was not in the room.

"Going all the way?" asked the porter, busying himself with the bags.

"Washington," said the elderly man, "to the White House."

"Oh," said the porter, with admiration. "It's an honor to be carrying you on this train." He must be a big Negro, Peter Johnson thought, I'm glad we've got race men like him.

"I am called to see the President," went on the elderly man pompously, "concerning Negro labor."

"They gonna raise wages, ain't they?" asked the porter.

"In some instances, yes," replied the man, studying his papers.

"I thought for everybody," said the porter.

"We are hoping to adjust that," answered the man. The porter left.

That night when Peter Johnson came to make up the berths, the elderly Negro was not there, but the younger one was there, and he said to the porter, "I used to work on the road, too."

"What's your business now?" asked Peter. "You look like a educated fellow."

"I graduated from Columbia. Now I'm assistant secretary to Dr. Jenkins here, president of Attucks Institute, perhaps the most important Negro school in the South."

"I'd like to send my son there when he's big enough," said the porter. "I got a boy twelve years old."

"I'd send him to a Northern school," advised the secretary. "I work down South, but I don't like it. It's still full of prejudice."

"But Dr. Jenkins is a great leader, ain't he? I want my boy to know some of the big men of his own color. Anybody the President calls to Washington must be a fine man," declared the porter simply.

"It's your saying you'd like to send your son to that school that gets me," said the young man slowly. "Don't send him there."

"But I thought Dr. Jenkins was a fine man," said the porter.

"My father was a better man," said the young fellow, "and he was a porter. He wanted colored people to stand up and be somebody. To fight for their fights. To organize. He worked like crazy to put me through school. And he sure wouldn't like what I'm doing now."

"What do you mean, he wouldn't like it," asked the porter.

"I'm going to give this job up--even if it does pay a good salary, even if it is a 'position'. Dr. Jenkins is a big man, I know, and a famous Negro--but the way he keeps big is by not playing square."

"What do you mean?" asked the porter.

"Well, take this labor relations thing," said the young man. "He's NOT going to Washington to help Negroes get higher wages, nor the same wages the whites get. He's going to Washington to get the authorities to excuse from the fair employment code those industries in the South where Negroes are employed, to get them to allow white factory owners to pay Negroes less than they pay white workers. Do you know why? Because the white trustees of his Southern school are men who employ Negroes, who make money off of Negroes, and who don't want to pay us a living wage. You see, that's the way he keeps on being such a B@#@ man --bowing to Southern white customs. That's how much Dr. Jenkins cares about his race. His people. He never opened his mouth about the boy who was beaten to death by the police near his campus last month. I'm fed up. It makes me feel guilty just typing out these reports for him to take to Washington. They look good, but are intended to help keep poor black people just where we've been all the time--poor and black!"

"I thought he was a REAL leader," said the porter sadly.

Just then the door opened and Dr. Jenkins entered, the butt of a nearly smoked-out cigar in his mouth.

"Did you finish the survey?" he asked his secretary.

"Yes," said the young man, "but I didn't agree with it."

"It's not necessary that you agree," snapped Dr. Jenkins as the porter went out. The rest of his words were lost as the door closed and the train roared through the night.

For a moment, the porter stood thinking in the corridor. "The last Negro passenger I had in that drawing room was a pimp from Birmingham. Now I got a professor. I guess both of them have to have ways of paying for such fine accommodations."