

NOTES ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE YOUNG DEMOCRATS OF MISSISSIPPI,  
held in the Heidelberg Hotel on Saturday, August 14, 1965.

Hunter Morey, SNCC worker and long-time organizer of the YD's, was temporary chairman of the meeting. Elections were held, shortly after the meeting began at 10:00 A.M., to elect permanent chairman. Gordon Henderson, political science professor from Millsaps, and Johnny Frazier, Negro NAACP worker in Jackson and former Tougaloo professor, were nominated. Nobody knew who was for what. Tougaloo kids voted 11 to 1 (Regina Drake) for X Frazier, who was elected by a vote of about 90 or 100 to 20. Immediately, before getting a constitution, before hearing reports of the credentials committee, or anything else, Cleveland Donald, NAACP member and YD from Ole Miss (Negro), moved to amend the agenda and have elections for officers immediately. Included in his motion was the changing of the names and numbers of officers, particularly including the naming of two co-chairmen, one white and one Negro, instead of one YD president.

This was approved. Then a process of nominations and closing of nominations began. But first, let me x discuss HOW the motion to change agenda and number and names of officers was approved.

Discussion was cut off at the 13 minute mark, after 13 minutes of confused questions and very little discussion, by Frazier, who said that the 20 minute limit for discussion had certainly passed. The request, as per rules, of a 6 minute extension, was denied.

During the rapid-fire nomination and election of officers, it wasx noted that Hodding Carter III, nominated for co-chairman with Cleveland Donald, was not going to be in Mississippi next year, having won a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard. Frazier said that this wasn't important, for he was sure that other officers could fill the gap. Then a lad from Syracuse, New York, was nominated and elected for a Vice-Presidency I think; his credentials were challenged to which he replied that he was born and bred in Mississippi and he had only been living for 8 years in Syracuse and he was planning from then on to live in Mississippi again. No answer to the credential challenge was given -- no proof that he x had lived in the state for the preceding 6 months.

During this part of the meeting, Professor Gordon Henderson came over to me and said, with a sickly smile, "I hope someone during the day gets up and protests the systematic x display of discrimination that is going on."

11:33 A. M.: motion was made to postpone ~~xxxx~~ further elections till after lunch by Joyce Brown. The chairman ruled the motion out of order because "the revised agenda had already been agreed on by a vote of this convention." This is illegal. Any agenda can be changed at any time by majority vote according to the rules adopted a short time earlier by the convention itself. At this point Kenneth Dean, of the Human Relations Council, took the microphone and said what are we doing here, why is there no discussion? Why is debate cut off? No answer but confusion. The performance of the chairman became so bad that at one point Hodding Carter III himself was ~~xxxxxxxx~~ cringing, holding his head in his hands.

11:58 -- nomination of Negro from Syracuse, as described above.

12:01 P. M. -- chair ruled that only members of the credentials committee could

ask for a recount! (Cf. Roberts' Rules, for heaven's sake!).

12:02 -- Charles Moore was elected on an aye-nay vote. Standing vote was requested. All other votes had been standing votes. Request was denied by House.

12:05 -- point of order was raised and denied by Chairman, who said he would not accept any points of order until the person raising it could cite the "page, chapter, and section" of Robert's Rules.

12:07 -- this was done -- namely, page, chapter, and section of Robert's Rules with reference to point of order procedure was cited, ~~making~~ which makes no mention of any requirement that the person cite Robert's Rules. This was ignored by the chairman.

12:18 -- (approx. time). Motion for a 15 minute recess was made. This was denied by chairman. But according to Roberts, a motion to recess takes precedence. Instead, two more nominations and "elections" were run through, until finally growing protests about the recess denial were heard and the motion was accepted, then was voted down by the convention.

During the votes for officers between 12:18 and 12:45, it was ~~xx~~ apparent that strength of the Tougaloo-Independent-FDP group was growing. Yet the counts remained about the same, about 105 for the NAACP-Ole Miss-Hodding Carter etc. group and about 65x for us. Counts were at this time being made, chaotically, from the speaker's platform by the Secretary, who was from Ole Miss. Mr. Dean challenged one vote, when the ~~speaker~~ counted 64 for us; Dean said he counted 89. A recount Secretary was made. Result: all agreed that the correct count was 91!

All business transacted between the call for recess and the acceptance of that motion is, according to Robert's, null and void, incidentally.

1:00 P. M. It was pointed out to the chair that it was now 1 PM, time for lunch, even according to their revised agenda. The Chair said "I will now entertain a motion for a twenty-minute extension." This was moved, seconded, and approved by the standard vote of 105-115 for the NAACP ~~xx~~ vs. 85-99 for us (all votes were in this range, after 10:45 or so).

1:16 P. M. Vote on an office was 104 to 93. Errors in counting had been made up to an error of 27 votes, as noted above, so we requested a "division of the house" (see Roberts), meaning putting each group in a group and filing past the counters to get an accurate tally. This was denied by the chairman.

1:15-1:35: during this period, the doors were generally blocked by NAACP people, in particular by Bennie Gooden and about 3 to 4 others. I personally had to go up there and angrily bring in a 15-year old who was coming in with a white tag to sit in the visitors' section when Gooden grabbed him and pushed him out saying he was not yet 16 (anyone was allowed in theory to sit in the visitors' section, which was specifically set up for people who didn't qualify to vote).

1:20 -- it was pointed out to the chairman that the 20 minute extension had ended. Frazier said "I know what time it is. Do you think I don't have a watch?" and he displayed his watch. The meeting continued. At about 1:25 Frazier mentioned something about their being on a "three-minute extension," an extension which had never been voted on or approved ~~by~~ or even ~~x~~ moved.

YDP NOTES, August 14 meeting, p. 3.

At 1:33 P. M., the meeting still in session on the "three-minute extension," ~~the~~ our group ~~x~~ won its first vote. Joyce Brown was elected National Committee-woman. Great cheers sounded through the hall. The vote was about ~~10~~ 113-109. At this point Frazier announced immediately that the three-minute extension was gone and lunch recess was declared. (No vote on it, of course).

~~Afternoon~~ During lunch I contacted three or four delegates from Millsaps and one or two from Ole Miss. I lamented with them the unfairness of the chairman, as well as his general incompetence. They agreed, even though they had voted on the other side all morning, that it had been a sorry show. They wanted to do something. I suggested that the first thing to do would be to replace the chairmah with ~~x~~ Gordon Henderson, ~~who~~ who was certainly not part of our group, but who would be competent and impartial. They approved wholeheartedly of this proposal, but worried lest the FDP get in and elect "their own chairman," and then run the meeting as an FDP steamroller just as the meeting up to then had been an NAACP steamroller. I said, well, the best thing for you to do to prevent this would be to make the first move, to suggest the censure and removal ~~and~~ of Frazier as chairman, and to then propose Henderson. This would keep you, and perhaps, everybody, on good terms, and would show that many people on the "other" (NAACP) side were interested in fairness. This seemed reasonable to them.

I had earlier made the same proposal -- that the first order of business should be the removal of Frazier, a move which many people ~~in~~ could support -- to Mrs. Sanders of the FDP, in written form, and she was excited about it. I suggested it also to Bob Smith, ~~the~~ to the bearded Negro COFO leader, to Ed King, and to Hunter Morey. Obviously, and as Morey indicated, I was really acting out of place, for they were thinking along the same lines already, of course.

I also suggested that after Henderson was installed, the next move should be not the removal of the morning's officers, but the approval of the constitution, as agreed-upon by the Convention Committee the preceding evening. Such a move would automatically force new elections, at least of some officers, for the constitution did not call for dual co-chairmen, for instance, ~~f~~ but for a single president.

I then went downstairs and talked to Bob Oswald, ~~who~~ and I said that Frazier obviously had to go. Smith from Millsaps (Jon Smith) was with me. Oswald agreed. He said he was going to ask Frazier to step down, and then they would have new elections. If Frazier didn't, Oswald recognized that a motion would then come from the floor to unseat Frazier, and Oswald gave every appearance of being resigned to such a move. I told Oswald that though I couldn't speak for everyone, it was likely that Henderson would be nominated.

We then went back upstairs. The meeting was reconvened, and we heard an excellent address by Charles Morgan, Birmingham lawyer who was pushed out of Birmingham society and wrote A Time to ~~See~~ Speak. He made several allusions to the divisive conduct of the morning's meeting.

Then nominations were opened for some office, I think for the first of the Congressional District offices. Jon Smith was sitting next to me, and asked me what was going to be done about the chairman. It was evident that Frazier wasn't going to resign, and Bob Oswald stopped by and told me so in the aisle.



YDP NOTES, August 14 meeting, p. 3.

At 1:33 P. M., the meeting still in session on the "three-minute extension," ~~the~~ our group ~~it~~ won its first vote. Joyce Brown was elected National Committee-woman. Great cheers sounded through the hall. The vote was about ~~to~~ 113-109. At this point Frazier announced immediately that the three-minute extension was gone and lunch recess was declared. (No vote on it, of course).

~~Afternoon~~ During lunch I contacted three or four delegates from Millsaps and one or two from Ole Miss. I lamented with them the unfairness of the chairman, as well as his general incompetence. They agreed, even though they had voted on the other side all morning, that it had been a sorry show. They wanted to do something. I suggested that the first thing to do would be to replace the chairmah with ~~a~~ Gordon Henderson, ~~who~~ who was certainly not part of our group, but who would be competent and impartial. They approved wholeheartedly of this proposal, but worried lest the FDP get in and elect "their own chairman," and then run the meeting as an FDP steamroller just as the meeting up to then had been an NAACP steamroller. I said, well, the best thing for you to do to prevent this would be to make the first move, to suggest the censure and removal ~~and~~ of Frazier as chairman, and to then propose Henderson. This would keep you, and perhaps, everybody, on good terms, and would show that many people on the "other" (NAACP) side were interested in fairness. This seemed reasonable to them.

I had earlier made the same proposal -- that the first order of business should be the removal of Frazier, a move which many people ~~in~~ could support -- to Mrs. Sanders of the FDP, in written form, and she was excited about it. I suggested it also to Bob Smith, ~~the~~ to the bearded Negro COFO leader, to Ed King, and to Hunter Morey. Obviously, and as Morey indicated, I was really acting out of place, for they were thinking along the same lines already, of course.

I also suggested that after Henderson was installed, the next move should be not the removal of the morning's officers, but the approval of the constitution, as agreed-upon by the Convention Committee the preceding evening. Such a move would automatically force new elections, at least of some officers, for the constitution did not call for dual co-chairmen, for instance, f but for a single president.

I then went downstairs and talked to Bob Oswald, ~~who~~ and I said that Frazier obviously had to go. Smith from Millsaps (Jon Smith) was with me. Oswald agreed. He said he was going to ask Frazier to step down, and then they would have new elections. If Frazier didn't, Oswald recognized that a motion would then come from the floor to unseat Frazier, and Oswald gave every appearance of being resigned to such a move. I told Oswald that though I couldn't speak for everyone, it was likely that Henderson would be nominated.

We then went back upstairs. The meeting was reconvened, and we heard an excellent address by Charles Morgan, Birmingham lawyer who was pushed out of Birmingham society and wrote A Time to ~~See~~ Speak. He made several allusions to the divisive conduct of the morning's meeting.

Then nominations were opened for some office, I think for the first of the Congressional District offices. Jon Smith was sitting next to me, and asked me what was going to be done about the chairman. It was evident that Frazier wasn't going to resign, and Bob Oswald stopped by and told me so in the aisle.

I said to Jon "You've got to go over to the ((floor)) microphone and make the motion to unseat him." At this time, there had been a few seconds of silence while waiting for a nomination, and Ed King and others were hovering near the microphone, waiting to either make the motion to unseat the chairman or to make a test motion to ask for a parliamentarian (a parliamentarian had been requested, and was desperately needed, earlier in the day, but somehow nothing had come of it). Jon Smith stepped up, and amidst a sudden hush, said (approximate quote): "Mr. Chairman, before we go into the nominations, I would like to make a motion. I move that the convention censure and remove its chairman, and that nominations be open for a new convention chairman." Frazier kind of laughed, and a wild burst of applause came from the entire back two thirds of the meeting. The motion was seconded, and Hodding Carter immediately moved to table. His motion was seconded, and a vote was held. ((missed opportunity: a plea should have been made for support for ~~this motion from the NAACP, the~~ unseating Frazier. The NAACP delegation included several people who might have voted against their group, and the MSU and Ole Miss delegation might have been convinced by such a plea. Nobody thought of it, and the vote came immediately.)). The vote for tabling was 113 for, 175 against, on an honest count by Dean, the Secretary, and several others. The motion to censure and remove and open nominations, after being stated once more by Jon Smith, was passed 175 to 116.

The chairman, Frazier, then started to make rambling "outgoing remarks," and yielded the chair to Hodding Carter, III, who shouted "all those who are loyal Democrats are hereby invited to walk out and meet downstairs." The NAACP group and the whites up there walked out. Charles Moore walked out. The Millsaps delegation, except for Moore and perhaps one other, stayed. The Ole Miss delegation walked out. About 15 people, perhaps 20 but not more, stayed from their whole group, mostly Negroes from out of Jackson who pleaded with Charles Evers as he left that "this was senseless, don't walk out," and came back into the auditorium to our meeting. Also, about five Negro students from Jackson walked out to the lobby but came back in.

I and Mrs. Sanders and a couple of others pleaded over the banister with Evers and others as they were leaving, as did several of "his own" people. His response was only a bitter and vindictive "We goin' out!" (direct quote).

We felt bad. We nominated Henderson. We then nominated ~~that~~ Bob Smith, President, and pretty much went down the list of officers agreed on the night before (or at least discussed the night before) and elected them. Hodding Carter won an office (Treasurer) over opposition (over W.R. Rogers of Tougaloo). This was all done after the approval of the agreed-upon constitution, and after declaring the earlier elections therefore invalid. Three vice-presidents agreed to relinquish their seats if they could be filled by Hodding Carter III or other persons from the other group -- these three were Ed King, Chester Rash, and one other guy. A motion was proposed by Joyce Brown to admonish all officers to do all they can to get the other group back in.

We continued through business, passing several resolutions, denying others, etc., and finally broke up. Negotiations were begun with Carter. Jon Smith was nominated for 3rd district congressional representative; unlike Carter, Jon felt bad about his going off to grad school next year, and it was agreed that Millsaps should replace him with their choice when Jon leaves. Jon was also very worried about newspaper coverage of this, since he wanted it made clear that he acted ~~a~~ out of concern for fairness, and not as any part of the structure of the FDP, and he worried especially because he said his mother

YDP notes, August 14 meeting, p. 5.

is a die-hard segregationist. Henderson was going to speak to Reporter Bill Minor, Times-Picayune, and AP.

People on the NAACP, AFL-CIO, white moderate faction:

Johnny Frazier, paid worker for the NAACP, student at Tougaloo in the past, but not very good student, and, to be fair, a stooge of the NAACP who was out of his depth both in running the meeting and in figuring out what he was being used for (I hope this terminology doesn't alienate anyone. It is the truth, and truth is often very important, even when polemic.)

Hodding Carter III. Runs the Delta Democrat-Times. I knew him three years ago. Seems unable to give a considered judgement of COFO -- just unable. I don't mean that he has to support COFO, but COFO, and FDP, confused and multi-group as they are, are simply not the monolithic black-only conspiracy that he thinks they are.

I therefore believe that Hodding went along with the unfair parliamentary procedure honestly believing that this procedure, with the split and walkout (of one group or the other), was the ONLY way to avoid an FDP steamroller.

In other words, I credit Hodding with ~~honesty~~ integrity.

But on the other hand, I and I mean this not polemically, the same strategy is used by the John Birch Society in their attacks against Communism, and they too must be credited with integrity. That is, they too must be credited with believing that the unfair tactics they use are the only thing to do against an opposition that will otherwise crush them.

Hodding Carter III and the John Birch Society! Really, though, the comparison is valid.

Cleveland Donald. Ole Miss Negro student. That takes courage in itself. NAACP member, member of Ole Miss's delegation of Young Democrats. I think Donald may yet be swung back from supporting the tactics and the groups he supported at the meeting. I don't know. At least he's willing to talk about it.

Robert Oswald. Seemed to be the master planner behind it all. But this is a malicious thing to say, for this means that Oswald planned the whole Convention Committee meeting Friday night simply to lull the "other side" into not getting all their people there immediately. Who IS Oswald? Not a laborer. Not in NAACP. In regular Democratic Party in the state, but from Jackson County (Pascagoula), a loyal Democratic county. Seems to be trying to set himself up for a position if and when Miss. goes Natl. Democratic again.

Emmett Morris, Pres. of Jackson State student body. NAACP.

Bob (?) Silver, James Silver's son, in Ole Miss delegation. Perhaps can be convinced that he was in the wrong group, using wrong tactics.

Charles Moore, Millsaps grad, my friend. Charles was non-thinkingly on "their" side, even though he should and did know that "our" side



was not made up of FDPers, but of Tougaloo students, other independents, and, yes, FDPers. Disappointing, this Charles. I never would have guessed that he would not only go along with, but even defend, such a suppression of civil liberties. And, in conversation at his home later the evening, when I convinced him (which was easy) that Frazier's performance had been disgusting, he then tried to disassociate himself and his group from Frazier's performance, saying that Oswald and Carter, etc., had tried to get Frazier to calm down. But this overlooks the fact that the basic betrayal was the (a) election of a partial (Frazier) rather than impartial (Henderson) chairman, and (b) the change in agenda, to get the NAACP candidates through immediately in the morning, in spite of the pledge of no elections till after lunch. No, Charles was in on these betrayals, betrayals not of the FDP, ~~xx~~ to which he obviously didn't have and needn't have had any loyalty, but betrayals of standards of decency, betrayals of straight promises, and betrayals of all ~~x~~ rights of expression in a parliamentary meeting. After such a performance, neither he nor any member of that group has the right to criticize any similar steamroller the FDP should mount (so far it has ~~xxx~~ mounted none).

Chester Rabb, Tougaloo student, lab assistant, my best friend on campus. Not a member of FDP, not particularly politically aware and not at all active, but one of the most active opponents of the Frazier machine after he saw ~~xx~~ what it was.

Regina Drake, Willy Roy Rogers, Eugene Carter, MacArthur Darby, etc. Tougaloo students, they listened to Cleveland Donald Friday night and went into the Saturday meeting with an open mind. All 11 students ~~x~~ there at the beginning of the meeting, except for Regina Drake, voted for Johnny Frazier (as, of course, did the Millsaps people); all became appalled at his tactics, as did the 20 or so other Tougaloo students who came later.

General comment: if I were a Negro, if I were staying at Tougaloo as a white teacher, I would be careful never again to enter a meeting at which Charles Moore, Johnny Frazier, Hodding Carter, Bob Osgood, and most of all, Charles Evers control a majority. I will never trust them as a group again, unless I find that some of them have changed (as I think some will), or unless they find they can make some realistic appraisal of the "other side," including the FDP.

For ~~x~~ this opposition was NOT FDP dominated nor controlled. At the first, for instance, a great deal of our moves were suggested by Charlie Blank, Mike Sorgen, and myself, and I certainly know that WE are not in or of the FDP. People who say ~~xxxxxx~~ we were FDP controlled simply have not thought realistically about the possibilities left open to Tougaloo students after the NAACP steamroller had started. EVERY OFFICE went to a white college student, to Hodding Carter, or to members of Evers's Jackson NAACP group. NOT ONE went to Tougaloo, which had 35 votes by the time the convention ended and which is certainly the most important college, white or Negro, in the state, in terms of political action, and which was an uncommitted, middle-road, delegation. NOT ONE went to anybody in the FDP, even though Bob Oswald had said to another person privately after the Friday night meeting that "Bob Smith was the only person in the meeting who was completely honest." Bob Smith received no office. Evers and Frazier gloated in their power, Frazier yelling things like, sarcastically, "The chair has shown ~~xx~~ you Every Courtesy, and the chair's patience is about at an end!" as he cut off debate after 20 seconds or so.

I hope Tougaloo, and Millsaps, and even Ole Miss, can organize a fair YD. I no

YD notes, August 14 meeting, p. 7.

longer am sure whether any other of the "white moderates" at this meeting were or are sincere. I don't know whether they CAN ~~■~~ accurately evaluate Tougaloo students, or the FDP, or for that matter the NAACP or any other Negro group, and I am not sure that they really want to. I really am not sure whether or not it may be true that some of these people, such as Oswald, perhaps, might not be maliciously trying to mislead people. I can't believe this, and especially I don't believe it of the bulk of the whites at the meeting whom I know. But I just can't understand how they can do what they did to a meeting, how they can do it to Tougaloo students, some of whom they know and some of whom are their friends.

I just don't know whether the people who organized this attempted coup will ever again be trusted, or be worthy of being trusted, by alert and fair Negro students, or by me. I hope so.

This was written for my files alone, though I may show copies to some people. Therefore, please don't take offense at its personal tone, nor get chagrined at the typographical or spelling errors. Don't quote.

James Loewen, age 23, second-year graduate student in sociology at Harvard University. Graduate of Carleton College, Northfield, Minn. Home address, 1477 West Sunset, Decatur, Illinois. Teaching assistant, Tougaloo College, summer, 1965.