

Minutes of the Confederation of Alabama's Political Organizations
(CC-A-PO) Meeting in
Selma, Alabama on April 2, 1966

The meeting was called to order at 10:30 AM by the President of the Confederation, Rev. T. Y. Rogers of Tuscaloosa, with the following counties represented:

Autauga	Tuscaloosa	Perry
Barbour	Butler	Sumter
Bullock	Mobile	Wilcox
Choctaw	Macon	Montgomery
Crenshaw	Conecuh	Hale
Dallas	Escambia	Jefferson
Monroe	Talladega	Marengo

Rev. T. Y. Rogers, President (Tuscaloosa County)

The structure of the Confederation consists of three standing committees on the state level--the Interview Committee for the purpose of screening the candidates running in the primary, the Political Guidance Committee for the purpose of taking the findings of the Interview Committee and choosing the candidates that the Confederation will endorse and the Patronage Committee for the purpose of making sure that the candidates that were supported live up to their promises after they are elected. These three committees should also be organized on the county, state representative, state senatorial, and U. S. Congressional district levels.

The purpose of the Confederation is to solidify the Negro vote in Alabama so that we will have the power to cast a unified vote in the May 3rd primary, the runoff and cast the same kind of vote in the general election. This means that each county must be organized. You can not come to the meetings of the Confederation and no one else from your county knows about it or is involved in it but those people that attend the meetings. Instead of one small group electing the people to represent that county, the whole county must do it. Every influential organization in the county must have a voice in electing the representatives from their counties.

Are there any questions about organizing your committees and counties back home?

Rev. G. L. Godfrey (Tuscaloosa County)

There is one thing that I would like to ask a question about. On the state house of representative, the state senatorial district and the U. S. Congressional district levels will these committees form out of the counties that make up those respective districts?

Rev. T. Y. Rogers, President (Tuscaloosa County)

Yes, the counties that make up the district will elect representatives from their counties and come together with the rest of the county representatives that make up that particular district.

Let's talk about the dates that we are work toward. The people from the Interview Committee have much of the work on their shoulders at this point. The primary is only one month away. As of today the Confederation has not interviewed any candidates, and we must interview about forty-three candidates between now and the time we make our decision of which candidates we are going to endorse. The Interview Committee will meet on April 9th, 1966, in Montgomery from 8: AM until 6: P M at which time the Political Guidance Committee will join the Interview Committee and hold a joint meeting until 8:00 P M that evening. On the 15th of April, the Interview Committee again in Montgomery at 7: P M until 12:00 P M and again on April 16th from 7: P M until 6: PM at which time they will hold another joint meeting with the Political Guidance Committee from 6: P M until 8: P M. By that time we hope that we will have contacted all of the candidates. On April 23rd we will meet back here and know what that decision is. You will be informed of the place a little later. This means that you are going to have to leave home Friday and be prepared to stay there until Saturday night, which may pose a hardship for some of you. We are doing what we can to raise the funds to take care of your expenses, so don't let expenses be the problem. I don't know where the money is coming from yet, but I believe we can do it. This also means that if you represent your county on the Interview Committee you MUST be there. So that if you see now that you can not be there, let us know now or choose a substitute now.

Let's take thirty minutes now and break up into the three committees and discuss each committee separately. When we break up into the three committees, each committee must elect a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and reporter if you have not already done so.

Mr. Hosea L. Williams

I would like to say that there has been a lot going on since last Saturday's meeting. I'm here to apologize for two things. One was the statement that got out in Birmingham, that SCLC was holding a mass meeting with Richmond Flowers as the speaker, but this in no way meant that we were endorsing him. I was down in Tuscaloosa at the time and did not know anything about the release, but since it came out of my office I must assume the responsibility for it. Flowers became very concerned about it all. I told them that the whole meeting should be cancelled because of the mix up, but because of the publicity gotten out about the meeting and the shortness of time it was held.

Another thing that I must apologize for is a news story that came out that Ben Clarke told Mr. Flowers that he had the inside track and the Negro vote was in the bag for him--Elliot had been considered but then dropped. When I read the statement I hit the roof! I immediately went to Birmingham and made a thorough investigation. I talked with Rev. S. M. Davis, Rev. Edward Gardner and several staff members who had been there and they said that Ben Clarke had never gotten close to the news many, but that Mr. Nixon of the NAACP said some significant things to Flowers.

It is not going to be easy to stay together and keep what we have. It is not going to be easy for Negroes to have a vote for the first time and put it to the best use. The first thing we said was that the decision would be made by the people--not by Rev. Rogers, Mr. Brown, Albert Turner or anyone else, the people will make the decision.

One of the whole philosophies behind the Confederation is that we do not want to trade white rats for black rats. This is why I can not see any Negro with an ounce of brain in his head fighting this organization. Anyone that does, does not understand the problems of the Negro people. We are not concerned with the Democratic or the Republican Party, we are concerned with the welfare of the Negro people. It is best to fight like hell for what you believe in but when that vote is taken I don't care how it comes out you should support that vote when you leave the meeting. One of the greatest mistakes that we made was made 85 years ago. They duped us into the Republican Party by telling us that Abraham Lincoln had freed us. One Negro told me he was a member of the Democratic Council in Alabama, but first you are black. If you are a Democrat why don't you attend the meetings. They wouldn't even let you sit on the outside of the meeting. What we have to do is stick together.

A lot of the folks are fighting this thing because they have taken the white folks money. We do not need any money now when it is time to cast our vote--they didn't give us money when we were trying to register the people. If the Confederation does not have the Negro vote in Alabama, no one does. I can tell you that today the Confederation speaks for 85% of the Negro vote in Alabama. These things that Flowers has been saying are nice, but we do not owe him anything. He keeps talking about all the Negroes he is going to appoint--he has been Attorney General for four years and how many Negroes has he appointed so far? I am not campaigning against Flowers because I want the people to make the decision--maids, truck driver, preachers, school teachers, etc.--and whatever decision they make you can tell them we are going to back them.

One thing that I am worried about is how hard you are working in the counties. I am not satisfied with how hard you are working. You have not gone back home like you should and worked on organizing your counties. You must go further

than having two representatives from your county represent you at the meeting. How many precincts have been organized this week in your county, how many block workers have been signed up this week in your county, how many political education classes have been held in your county.

Some Negroes think we have it made because we have the voting bill and we have people registered. All that some of the candidates are doing is waiting for God to send the pie out of the sky. They think they will be voted for just because they are a Negro running for office. Some Negroes are running and do not even have a platform.

We are not going to commit ourselves to anybody yet. We are going to meet in Montgomery and start screening candidates. We are not selling our vote for monetary value but we will sell it to the candidate that is offering the most freedom to the Negro people.

I am begging you to meet in Montgomery at 8:00 on April 9th. I believe that what we are doing is so significant to history that no sacrifice is too great to accomplish it. I want you to understand this. Democracy has never been tried, but we are going to put democracy on trial. What happens right here in Alabama between the Edmund Pettus Bridge on "Bloody Sunday", March 7th and the November general election will largely determine the future of everyone in America. If we win in Alabama we will have no trouble in Georgia, but if we fail I say woe to the Negro people. The bad part about it is that we can not wait until November, we must win in the primaries.

We are not meeting Friday in Montgomery because of the great cost--it is going to cost us from seven to eight hundred dollars a day. It may be necessary to bust up into two groups and we may be able to do enough next Saturday that we will not have to meet the next Friday. At 6:00 PM that afternoon the Interview Committee will turn over all of its findings to the Political Guidance Committee who will endorse the candidates.

The thing that I'm worried about is that some counties are making the Confederation just like the other organizations in the county. We are going to try to get out a little newspaper with a story about the Confederation and the candidates seeking support from the Confederation and mail them to all the big churches across the nation and ask for contributions. I also think we ought to have a state-wide effort the Sunday after next in every church in Alabama to take up a collection for the Confederation. It is going to take a lot of hard work to raise the money that we need.

The meeting was brought to a close with the entire Interview Committee meeting in Montgomery on next Saturday, April 9th at 8:00 AM and the Political Guidance Committee meeting at 6:00 PM in Montgomery the same day in a joint meeting with the Interview Committee.