

MINUTES

Alabama State Coordinating Association For Registration
and Voting

April 26, 1959

The Annual Meeting of the Alabama State Coordinating Association for Registration and Voting was held at the Masonic Temple, Birmingham, Alabama Sunday, April 26, 1959 at 9:30 a. m. with the president, Mr. W. C. Patton presiding.

The devotion was enthusiastically participated in by a large group of old and new members of the association. Reverend Williams of Mobile, Alabama gave the prayer.

The minutes of October 26, 1958, having been circulated were read and approved.

Mr. Hembrick, Mr. Montgomery, and Mrs. Brown were appointed by the Chair as a committee to accept the contributions from districts and counties. Mr. Bradford served as registrar.

Following words of greeting from President Patton including a general outline of the business of the day, reports were submitted as follows:

Etowah County -- Mr. George Height reporting - stated that continued progress is being made in the county, the major problem being that of getting people out to register. He stated that there is need for additional education along these lines so that people will recognize the value of such action.

Coosa County -- Mr. Armour reporting -- stated that favorable response is being given the program in his county.

Dallas County - Mr. Doynton reporting reported that district meetings are held quarterly; that a limited number of persons are becoming registered. Even though the county is well organized, it is hard to get by the Board of Registrars.

Tri-City Area - Mr. Swoops reporting - stated that no problem exists in becoming registered, but the problem is getting people out to become registered. "A solution to this problem" he stated, "is badly needed."

Russell County -- It was reported that the voters' influence is made to be felt in this county especially in the matter of placing persons in public office.

Montgomery County - Mr. Lewis reporting. stated that there is still a great job to do in this county, which faces the same general problems which exist in other counties in this section of the state--that of apathy on the part of voters as well as those who should be voters.

Crenshaw County - Mr. Wallace who brought with him a bus-load of interested citizens, reported that approximately 200 persons became registered. The proof of their continued interest was represented by their presence.

Bullock County - People in this county are receiving constant run around. Little or no progress is being made in the matter of Negroes becoming registered to vote.

Mobile County - There is need for increased cooperation on the part of citizens in this area. It is hard to interest veterans; and others who face few barriers in becoming registered.

Talladega County - It was reported by The Reverend Holmes that there is no conflict in becoming registered in this county. He stated that the Master has a great affect on voting because Christians are believers and should not be easily discouraged.

Macon County -- Mr. Mitchell reported that Macon County does not have a Board of Registrars. Each Monday morning, however, a letter representing twelve persons, desiring the privilege of the ballot, asking the Governor to appoint a board. Others are writing to the Attorney General, asking him to intervene. The TCA is periodically writing and asking for a board to be appointed.

President Patton presented the Reverend S. S. Seay, Executive Secretary of the Montgomery Improvement Association to bring the Meditation. Even in the midst of a busy city ---heavy traffic passing by on the outside, within the walls of this room was complete quietness while Reverend Seay reminded us that this is the hour of decision and action. He stated that "people here are committed. We have passed the intellectual stages. We have come to a valley of decisions and upon these decisions the future sways. I have a prayer in my office which says, 'God give me the spirit to accept those things that cannot be changed. . . . ' We come to a point when we need to ask for courage to change those things that can be changed. Sometimes we can run out without judgment. We don't need to do any further arguing. We need to know at what point we need to change. Ask ourselves the question, 'Do I have the courage to make the changes that need to be made. These changes sometimes lead us through darkness. Sometimes it is that rugged way which is the only way we can get out. Shall we go the rugged hard way or shall we seek a high way?

One of the greatest challenges is, what can we do to banish fear? That is to rid ourselves of fear. Some will be thrown in jail. How much concern do we have about those people who have fear? You should go down to the court houses and witness the court hearings. It is hard to get our people to tell the true facts; to rid them of their fears. When you are right, you don't have to be afraid. The preacher in the community needs to get out of his fears. If fear is overcome, we must say that I have but one life to give--I wish I had 50 more to give. We are not alone in this struggle. "

At this point an appeal was made for Mr. A. Howard who is serving a period in jail because was trying to get Negroes registered to vote. The contribution amounted to \$62.89

A presentation was made by the children of the Shields Elementary School which served as an inspiration to all who witnessed it. They set up definite goals for winning first class citizenship and proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Negro teachers are including in their programs information which is not included on the printed pages of our textbooks, but which is necessary for the complete development of today's youth.

Mrs. Boynton of Selma gave the response and words of appreciation to the children as well as the teachers who trained them. She suggested that every county should organize a group of young people.

Mr. Phillip Wakeman of Chicago, Illinois was introduced to the group and included in his talk were the following statements: "The only way I got over my fears of water was to get close to it." There are some answers to questions raised here today. Eliminating fear will go to naught unless we have organized efforts. I believe that women can do more to eliminate fear than any other group. Set up a woman's organization as a part of this one. Publicized action puts dollars in your pockets and furnishes jobs for our children. When we talk about registration and voting, we are not kidding. Go from street to street, block to block and door to door. Say to the people -- 'do something for these children of ours. If you are afraid, you just as well close the books and forget it.

A labor man considers a kick on his head as a badge of honor. Don't be afraid of the jail. They don't have enough jails in Alabama to hold all the Negroes in the state. If you are a leader, you belong in the front. If you are a Negro and you are not being disturbed, something is wrong with you. Smile and march on down the road together. We all share these problems and we are not fighting this battle alone."

Mr. Earl W. Davis--AFL-CIO - Richmond, Virginia was presented and stated that he enjoyed coming to Alabama, where things are being accomplished. He praised the voters in Montgomery for getting out to vote on their recent elections. He stated, "If 186 Negroes in Montgomery had stayed at home, the unwanted candidates would have been in now. Alabama has no evils that qualified voters cannot heal."

REPORT OF THE TREASURER : Detailed report was circulated.

Total income \$6,423.79

Total disbursements 3,526.37

Balance \$2,897.42

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: All officers were unanimously reelected.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That women's auxiliaries be organized in the various areas where there are civic organizations promoting our program.

It was moved by Mrs. Johnson that we accept the recommendation made by Mr. Wakemen. The motion was seconded and carried.

2. It was recommended that we get a certificate of tax exemption for the organization. This motion was passed.

Mr. Patton urged the group to write letter to their relatives in the various sections of the country--urging them to ask their senators to vote for the pending bills. That the life of the Civil Rights Commission be extended.

Mr. W. P. Mitchell reporting on the Civil Rights hearings stated: Troubled areas should be told to make formal applications to the Civil Rights Commission.

We are concerned with the breaking down of the registration process," continued Mr. Mitchell. "We are working on this phase in Macon County and Bullock County so that we can have continuing registration. (Federal registration of applicants).

The Finance Committees reported:

Registration of Districts \$539.50

Registration of individual members 125.00

Contribution to the Howard Fund 62.95

At this point the meeting adjourned with closing remarks by the president--urging persons present to put into practice in their local communities the information which they have received at this meeting. He expressed gratitude for the large number in attendance; the timely inspiration and information received from our leaders as well as the enthusiastic response given by members who traveled such long distances in order to be present.

The meeting adjourned to reconvene at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church at 3:00 p. m. for the annual mass meeting.

J. C. Patton
J. C. Patton, President
Laura B. McCray
Laura B. McCray, Secretary