

PILLAR

America

in the

King Years

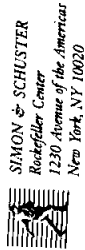
1963-65

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FOR CHRISTY

and women who feel as though they had temporarily escaped from a Mississippi prison and who think they may be jailed when they get back home." They matched Wallace in fervor, towing behind them as an exhibit of democratic devotion a burned-out replica of Mickey Schwerner's station wagon. On the long ride north, they had reviewed legalistic primers on why the regular Democrats in their state had forfeited legitimacy ("TV. B. 2. There was not a single Negro at the State Convention"), and they soon deployed in best Sunday dress as folk lobbyists among the incoming delegations. Summer volunteer Dennis Sweeney escorted MFDP representatives to search out delegates from his home state of Oregon. SNCC staff member Charles Cobb, architect of the summer Freedom Schools, wangled meetings with Massachusetts delegates who reflected the cautious sympathy of Governor Endicott Peabody, son of "Mother Peabody" from the spring crusade to St. Augustine.

With Victoria Gray of Hattiesburg, Fannie Lou Hamer had flown ahead to tell her story before a panel of historians at New York's Town Hall. She reached Atlantic City for Saturday morning breakfast with a delegate targeted as a swing vote in the Mississippi dispute. Vera Canson of Sacramento, one of two Californians and seven Negroes assigned to the Credentials Committee, absorbed a preview of Hamer's testimony in open torment. California Democrats had reviewed during the summer project to support the MFDP challenge, but Governor Pat Brown expressed second thoughts about the resolution before leaving to see President Johnson that afternoon. Canson was moved by Hamer and yet mindful of larger pressures on her role; what was just for Mississippi might not be wise for the national party.

Reports on scores of wavering Democrats bombarded MFDP counsel Joseph Rauh just before his presentation to the Credentials Committee. When an NBC correspondent rushed in to shout, "Joe, they've screwed you!" Rauh replied, "My god, already?" before learning that convention managers were preparing a room too small for television. Rauh's strategy needed cameras—not so much to win initial votes as to fix an impression of Mississippi that would last through the chaotic politics of a national convention.

His protest percolated secretly by telephone into the Oval Office. "This is a helluva thing to be taking up with you," confessed Walter Jenkins to the President, "but I'm kind of scared to be making a decision by myself." He said the prepared room was big enough only for one pool camera, and that "the television people are raising hell" for separate ones. Johnson backed the single camera to minimize attention for party disputes, saying they needed to accommodate only the rival delegations. Jenkins then explained that the site was expressly chosen to hold only the testifying witnesses, and that "Joe Rauh is raising hell" over the exclusion of his MFDP clients. Conceding the point on merit, Jenkins fretted with the President

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A Dog in the Manger:

The Atlantic City Compromise

ATLANTIC CITY, marooned by the spread of convenient air travel to warmer resorts, was suffering slow reduction from splendor to relic. Home to the Miss America Beauty Pageant, and still the storied setting for the board game Monopoly—Marvin Gardens, Reading Railroad, Boardwalk—the aging queen of seashore destinations hosted a great storm of Democrats also in transition. At a preconvention hearing on Friday, August 21, George Wallace hotly denounced national Democratic leaders as revolutionaries who "would sell the birthright of our nation" to install "an alien philosophy of government." Having arranged by recent state law to expunge President Johnson and his running mate from Alabama ballots in November, so that Wallace himself could allocate "Democratic" votes in the Electoral College (eventually to Goldwater), Wallace notified convention leaders that he cared little whether or not they unseated his Alabama delegation over this supercession of the party's nominees. "I'm not here to beg," he declared. Wallace demanded that national Democrats repeal the civil rights law, and foretold otherwise an "uprising" on par with the revolt against Reconstruction. Against an excess of "central authority, given free reign by this very party," he promised a conservative movement to "take charge of one of the parties in the next four years."

Busloads of Mississippi Freedom Democrats were arriving at the Gem Motel on Pacific Avenue, an address tarnished enough to welcome late-booking stragglers who ate from cracker boxes and slept four to a room. One national correspondent who watched them disembark for a spirited mass meeting described "a hymn-singing group of dedicated men

over the potential theatrics of white and Negro Mississippians intermingled in a larger space. "Rauh will storm the room," Johnson feared.

Jenkins had Democratic officials, including party chairman John Bailey, holding on other lines, "kind of shook up" by Rauh's arguments about the arduous journey of the MFDP challengers from Mississippi and how "it will be awful hard to get 'em to accept any compromise if you don't even let 'em see what's going on." After a half hour's anguish over several calls, the President authorized Rauh to have the ballroom and the cameras. "I don't give a damn if he puts on a little show," he said, "as long as he just don't wreck us." Setting a pattern for the week, Johnson ordered confidants to deny flatly his involvement in Atlantic City matters large or small: "I never heard of it," declared the President. "... My name's Joe Glutz, and you haven't talked down here."

ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON, the MFDP challengers filed into seats directly across from the opposing Mississippi regulars. "We have only an hour to tell you a story of tragedy and terror in Mississippi," Rauh began. He faced the Credentials Committee as a comfortable peer, owning one of its 110 votes himself as a delegate from the District of Columbia. To counter the notion that Mississippi's regular Democrats were "legal," he emphasized the free-wheeling independence of American political parties and addressed the committee as a jury of political choice. (His printed brief for the MFDP cheerfully quoted a statement by Mississippi's Democratic chairman that the convention "could seat a dozen dead dodos brought there in silver caskets and nobody could do anything about it.") Rauh summoned a hurried parade of witnesses to support his assertion that MFDP delegates were not only deserving and loyal but "willing to die" for the party's cause. Aaron Henry told of wholesale persecution over the right to vote, and accused party regulars of tending an outright white supremacy that confined Mississippi to a garrison at the bottom rank of states ("On them is the blood and responsibility..."). Rev. Edwin King followed with firsthand accounts of white Mississippians ("... over one hundred ministers and college teachers have been forced to leave the state... I have been imprisoned. I have been beaten..."), after which former governor David Lawrence of Pennsylvania asked delicately from the chair for more on party procedures and less on the state's "general life." Rauh objected that the regular party's everyday terror was "what I want the credentials committee to hear."

He called Fannie Lou Hamer, who limped forward on her polio-damaged left hip to place her purse on the witness table as attendants pinned a microphone to her cotton dress. Hamer launched her story: "It was the 31st of August in 1962 that eighteen of us traveled twenty-six miles to the county courthouse in Indianola to try to register to try to become first-class citizens. We was met in Indianola by Mississippi men,

highway patrolmen... the bus driver was charged that day with driving a bus the wrong color..." She told in four sentences how her attempt started earthquakes by nightfall.

My husband came and said the plantation owner was raising Cain because I had tried to register, and before he quit talking the plantation owner came, and said, "Fannie Lou, do you know—did Pap tell you what I said?"

I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "I mean that," he said. "If you don't go down and withdraw your registration, you will have to leave."

She stared straight at the bank of Credentials Committee delegates, flouting norms of polished authority with her unlettered grammar. Words that first seemed a masquerade of Aesop rose toward the spare cadence of a biblical text, packing abstract force into stories of household strife.

And I addressed him and told him and said, "I didn't try to register for you. I tried to register for myself." I had to leave that same night.

On the 10th of September, 1962, sixteen bullets was fired into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Tucker for me. That same night two girls were shot in Ruleville, Mississippi. Also Mr. Joe McDonald's house was shot in.

And in June, the 9th, 1963, I had attended a voter-registration workshop, was returning back to Mississippi. Ten of us was traveling by the Continental Trailway bus. When we got to Winona...

She recalled the Winona incident from the first commotion ("I stepped off the bus to see what was happening") to the steadily approaching dread in jail. "I began to hear the sounds of licks and screams," Hamer testified. "... I was carried out of that cell into another cell where they had two Negro prisoners. The State Highway Patrolman ordered the first Negro to take the blackjack." Then, near the end of her allotted eight minutes, Hamer vanished from television screens. "We will return to this scene in Atlantic City," said correspondent Edwin Newman from a control desk, "but now we switch to the White House and NBC's Robert Goralski."

President Johnson was hosting thirty Democratic governors. Four strays—McKeithen of Louisiana, Orval Faubus of Arkansas, Johnson of Mississippi, and Wallace of Alabama—boycotted the sendoff to Atlantic City, and McKeithen, who had just resigned as head of the Louisiana delegation, was calling for a general walkout if the convention unseated regulars from sister states. On this issue, the nationally televised Missis-

issippi hearing sounded a fire bell beneath the Washington conference, which Governor John Connally of Texas described to reporters as "a very enjoyable and very delightful meeting." President Johnson mounted a diversion with the cooperation of news outlets massed on alert for revelation of his vice presidential choice. He stepped before White House correspondents, with several governors in tow, and stretched the moment with small news and a sympathetic reference to Connally—still suffering from rifle wounds inflicted in the Dallas motorcade—noting that "on this day nine months ago at very nearly this same hour in the afternoon, the duties of this office were thrust upon me by a terrible moment in our national history." The President ducked questions and withdrew to the governors' conclaves in the East Room, leaving reporters with material for unrequited headlines: "Johnson Still Silent About Running Mate."

Knocked off camera, the Atlantic City hearing concluded with four more MFDP witnesses. After Rita Schwerner, for whom a section of spectators stood in silent tribute, Rauh called the national leaders James Farmer of CORE and Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, then King for a summary exhortation. "I say to you that any party in the world should be proud to have a delegation such as this seated in their midst," said King. "For it is in these saints in ordinary walks of life that the true spirit of democracy finds its most profound and abiding expression." With a glance to the Mississippi regulars at the opposite table, he bemoaned a state party that since the last Democratic convention had forced the dispatch of twenty thousand troops before it yielded "a single Negro into a state university," and was "already pledged to defy the candidate and platform of this great national body." King testified that Mississippi was "no mean issue" in world affairs—not "for all the disfranchised millions of this earth, whether they be in Mississippi or Alabama, behind the Iron Curtain, floundering in the mire of South African apartheid, or freedom-seeking persons in Cuba who have now gone three years without election. Recognition of the Freedom Democratic Party would say to them that somewhere in this world there is a nation that cares about justice . . ."

Then came the regular Mississippi Democrats for their hour, with mountains of evidence on standard election practice and their cries to be spared "a political cross." If the convention seated ragtag "rump" challengers in place of the "lawful delegation," declared State Senator E. K. Collins, "the party in Mississippi certainly will die." Soon after, Chairman Lawrence finished all pending cases except Alabama and Mississippi, which he deferred because the politicking yielded no settlement strong enough to prevent an unseemly floor fight.

AT 6:15 P.M., when Martin Luther King limped out of the hearing on a recently sprained ankle, surveillance agents radioed an SOS that vanked

FBI technicians out of Room 1923 at the Claridge Hotel on Indiana Avenue, after they had wiretapped the two telephones but before they could install microphone bugs in the walls reserved for King. In the room directly below, SAC Leo Clark of the Bureau's Atlantic City office had arranged a satellite branch of the hideaway command center in the old Post Office, where, with J. Edgar Hoover's reluctant approval ("Lyndon is way out of line"), Assistant Director Deke DeLoach had thrown together a "special squad" of twenty-seven agents, a radio operator, two stenographers, and assorted informants. Secretly, apart from FBI security liaison with the Secret Service or local law enforcement, DeLoach pushed his squad on a mission to insure that nothing could occur in Atlantic City "to embarrass the President," reporting personally to Walter Jenkins and Bill Moyers at the Pageant Motel.

One agent with a mobile radio was permanently assigned to Jenkins. Several undercover agents posed as reporters on credentials supplied by NBC News, while others monitored wiretaps on the Atlantic Avenue storefront rented for the MFDP. Agents already knew that Bayard Rustin was telling King his sprained ankle was "the most fortunate thing to ever happen to you," because it gave King an excuse to hobble out of town on crutches before President Johnson exerted his power. When he did, Rustin was predicting, many delegates professing support for the Mississippi challenge would "fall by the wayside."

Euphoria reigned for the moment among MFDP supporters. *The* reporter Larry Still described a tumultuous moving swarm around Fannie Lou Hamer, who "wiped the tears from her round, streaked face and sighed, 'I felt just like I was telling it from the mountain. That's why I like that song *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. I feel like I'm talking to the world.'" Indignant to learn that President Johnson had cut into her airtime, she was denouncing a plot when voices at the Gem Motel called out that television was showing film clips from the end of her testimony.

After the first Negro had beat until he was exhausted, the State Highway Patrolman ordered the second Negro to take the blackjack. The second Negro began to beat and I began to work my feet, and the State Highway Patrolman ordered the first Negro who had beat to set on my feet to keep me from working my feet. I began to scream and one white man got up and began to beat me in my head and tell me to hush. One white man—my dress had worked up high, he walked over and pulled my dress down—and he pulled my dress back, back up.

I was in jail when Medgar Evers was murdered.

All of this is on account we want to register, to become first-class citizens, and if the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America. . . .

Evening news broadcasts delivered Hamer to larger audiences than Johnson had preempted in the afternoon. Atlantic City's Western Union office reported 416 night telegrams supporting the MFDP, against only one for the regulars, and Rauh claimed that his "knockout" witnesses "won the Boardwalk." Observing that President Johnson knew above all else how to count votes, he relished the bargaining ahead. "We won't take any of those second-rate compromises," Rauh told reporters Saturday night.

Rauh did not disguise the compromise he preferred. Fully half the twenty-six major credentials contests cited in his written brief—dating back to 1836—had been settled by the simple formula of splitting the prize. His most treasured example was the Texas case of 1944, when New Deal loyalists, including young Congressman Lyndon Johnson, challenged the dominant Texas regulars over their refusal to endorse Franklin Roosevelt's wartime reelection. Johnson had denounced the regular delegation as "Republicans who posed as Democrats" in an effort to "sabotage democracy," and the convention had seated the rival Texans with half votes apiece.

None of the precedent cases turned on racial imagery, however, which made the face of Fannie Lou Hamer doubly sensitive to Democrats on both sides. She gave the MFDP cause a moral urgency far above the esoteric record of warring local factions, but she also presented a daunting new symbol for the majority party of any state. "The thing is out of hand now!" Senator James Eastland squawked to President Johnson Saturday night. From his home in Mississippi, where he watched proceedings on television, Eastland despaired of selling the President's offer to seat the all-white delegation in exchange for some veneer of party loyalty. (A mild statement of *intention* to support the Democratic nominees would do, said the President, even if they knew they would back Goldwater.) Eastland told Johnson that "to be perfectly frank," the Mississippi party had nearly endorsed Goldwater already and that most delegates had not wanted to go to Atlantic City in the first place. The President objected that "poor ol' Mississippi" was making it impossible for him to help his friends. "People oughtn't to want to come and stay all night with you if they're gonna bomb your house while they're there," he said, and joked with an edge about shutting off the cotton subsidy program. Even so, the best Eastland could secure was a vague promise from Governor Paul Johnson not to bring official "reprisals" against any Mississippi delegates who accepted the convention's terms.

On Sunday afternoon, Walter Jenkins notified the President that Chairman Lawrence of the Credentials Committee was about to entertain votes on a motion offensive to both sides: strong enough to make the South walk out, weak enough for Rauh to take a minority report to the convention floor. "I thought he was gonna procrastinate," objected the President, after which Lawrence postponed the issue again. He appointed Minnesota

attorney general Walter Mondale to head a five-delegate Mississippi subcommittee charged to resolve matters before Monday night's opening gavel, and from seclusion, communicating with dozens of roving caucuses, Mondale's group bickered to exhausted recess toward dawn.

At midnight Sunday, a hundred supporters of the Mississippi movement set up a circular picket line outside Convention Hall, pledged to keep a perpetual vigil until the MFDP was seated. James Forman, Stokely Carmichael, and others huddled in the center with their walkie-talkies to orchestrate messages of song and silence among numbers that grew above three hundred the next day, when dignitaries began to drop by with speeches of encouragement. Among pickets still adjusting from the summer project to the neon lights of Atlantic City, many were further disoriented by Monday's influx of 5,260 delegates and alternates who arrived for the main event festooned in political buttons and patriotic colors, often topped with LBJ souvenir cowboy hats. Bound for receptions, caucuses, lobster feasts around open beach fires, and parties given to eight hundred guests at a time in the Ventnor villa rented by hostess Perle Mesta, the delegates and observers swallowed up the Mississippi vigil among other spectacles along the jammed boardwalk pier, such as Dixie Blandy, the flagpole siter, and a daredevil lady who plunged on horseback from a high tower into a vat of water.

ON MONDAY MORNING, Democratic leaders had no better strategy than permanent delay—hoping the Mississippi question would "get lost in the business of the convention" behind a proposed statement from the Mondale subcommittee that the issues were "complex." Walter Reuther praised the notion to Johnson as "your original idea," but Johnson foresaw an impatient walkout spreading to eight or ten states. Into this White House quandary arrived a fresh telegram from Martin Luther King. "In the last few days," King wired from Atlantic City, "the charged atmosphere of the convention has left the impression that only you are in a position to make clear the Democratic Party's position. . . . Members of the Credentials Committee have made clear their wishes to follow you. . . ."

The President sought the advice of Richard Russell, who, like most prominent Southern Democrats, was staying home from the convention. Johnson complained that King had been pushing him to take a public position—"trying to get me in it every way he can"—and feared a plot. If King could force him to defend the white delegation, then the civil rights forces would have "an excuse to say I turned on the Negro," and Robert Kennedy could swoop in to say Johnson was unfit for the Democratic nomination because he coddled Mississippi segregationists. "I think this is Bobby's trap," the President confided.

Russell tried to calm his friend. He thought King at worst might "increase the backlash a little bit" and cut a million votes or so off John-

son's victory margin. While he recommended that the President not dignify King's wire with an answer, Russell said Johnson was not the first politician to be rattled by King's political moves. "For example, in Atlanta, he can scare the hell out of [Mayor] Ivan Allen any time he wants to," said Russell, "and rightly so . . . from a political standpoint."

No words could cure Johnson's fears of racial emotion in combination with the Kennedy myth. He had already arranged to postpone until safely past the close of convention business two much anticipated events—a film tribute to the slain president, and Jacqueline Kennedy's appearance at a marathon reception to shake the hand of each Democratic delegate. To guard against schemes to set loose floods of mourning that might sweep away normal arrangements, including his nomination, Johnson tasked DeLoach and his undercover FBI squad to mount surveillance of Kennedy, their nominal boss, in tandem with King and the Negro challengers.

On Monday, FBI agents circulated reports on a press interview in which Kennedy promised an unspecified statement on Tuesday, noting suspiciously that he "refused to elaborate" on its nature. Kennedy turned out merely to be teasing a Senate endorsement from Mayor Wagner of New York, but agents hinted that his Senate plans could disguise a presidential coup by spontaneous "draft" in Atlantic City. When Kennedy paid a courtesy visit to the delegation from West Virginia, a pivotal state for his brother's nomination in 1960, observers sensed political electricity that made "applause hit like thunder." Meanwhile, on Hoover's orders, analysts dissected Sunday's *Washington Post* story on Kennedy's tenure as attorney general, which, because of a passage saying Kennedy had reformed some entrenched attitudes at the FBI, headquarters scornfully dismissed as "obviously another attempt by the Department to claim credit for FBI achievements in organized crime and civil rights, at the same time making a snide attack on Mr. Hoover and the Bureau—for political purposes."

The President's worries were no secret to those who saw him regularly. On learning of Robert Kennedy's discreet withdrawal that Monday as a Massachusetts delegate—the better to qualify as a candidate in New York—a secretary handed Johnson a note that borrowed Kennedy tactics for the Mississippi dilemma: suppose one or more of the loyal white regulars "got a virus," and then chose Freedom Democrats as ad hoc substitutes (the way Kennedy had designated his sister-in-law Joan to substitute for him in the Massachusetts delegation)? By this scenario, Negro delegates would break the Mississippi color line by personal invitation rather than by the imposed dictum of the convention. President Johnson thought enough of the idea to make several calls to Atlantic City, but Walter Jenkins found no support in Southern delegations for Negro company. Besides, the few Mississippi regulars who might volunteer to withdraw were precisely the ones Johnson wanted to showcase for future conventions. He threw the crumpled note into his trash can.

In Atlantic City, reporters noticed Martin Luther King and Senator Hubert Humphrey push separately through mid-Monday crowds into the Pageant Motel, known as the "convention White House." Safely removed to a quiet suite with Bob Moses and some dozen MFDP negotiators, Humphrey passionately advocated the convention's three-part settlement offer. First, as a condition of being seated, each Mississippi regular delegate must pledge support for the Democratic candidate and the party's pro-civil rights platform, which most were expected to refuse. (The Credentials Committee had just voted to require a similar pledge from the Alabama delegation.) Second, the formal call to future conventions would give notice of disqualification for segregationist creed or practice, and third, the freedom delegation would be welcome in Atlantic City as nonvoting guests. To objections that MFDP delegates should have at least those seats vacated by disloyal regulars, Humphrey swerved uncomfortably from alleged deficiencies in the MFDP's selection process to direct personal appeal. He said the President was testing them all in the battle against Goldwater. Without revealing his direct and indirect orders from the White House,* Humphrey said he was given to understand that his own chance to be nominated for vice president depended on his ability to prevent floor fights over Mississippi, which in turn demanded superhuman forbearance from the Freedom Democrats. He pleaded with them to stop pushing for seats.

Fannie Lou Hamer confessed awe of Humphrey before shaming him like a disappointed mother. "Senator Humphrey, I been praying about you, and I been thinking about you, and you're a good man," she said. "The trouble is, you're afraid to do what you know is right." In tears, Humphrey protested that his commitment to civil rights was long-standing. Hamer cried, too, saying she was going to pray further over him. Rauh and others, including Allard Lowenstein among the MFDP legal advisers, made peacemaking suggestions until Humphrey objected to the presence of Rep. Edith Green of Oregon, who was fighting White House direction on the Credentials Committee. She took offense, which allowed the stalemate to break up on procedural jealousies.

Humphrey sneaked away with Walter Jenkins to report his frustration. "I walked into the lion's den," he told the President. "I listened patiently. I argued fervently. I used up all the heartstrings that I had." Johnson put Clark Clifford on an extension phone to listen. Walter Jenkins said Edith Green claimed a surplus of ten votes to force a floor fight on her plan to split the Mississippi votes. He said some members of the committee were

* Johnson had put Humphrey's challenge succinctly to Walter Reuther on August 17: "You better talk to Hubert Humphrey, because I'm telling you that he's got no future in this party at all if this big war comes off here, and the South walks out, and we all get in a hell of a mess."

go with the Negroes." Bailey confirmed that his native New England delegations would likely vote three to one for the MFDP minority report ("they don't like Mississippi"). Johnson said the victorious Negro coalition was digging its own grave. "I think they're bigger than the President this morning," he told Bailey, "and I think it's just water on Goldwater's paddle."

He disclosed a new plan that morning to his Texas rancher friend, Judge A. W. Moursund. When George Reedy called for instructions before the midday press briefing, Johnson read to him from a statement in progress—the first one drafted by his own hand in twenty years—announcing his intention not to run.* He told Reedy the convention could nominate "a new and fresh fellow." His voice trailed off.

Reedy let the silence hang. "This would throw the nation in quite an uproar, sir," he said quietly.

The President called Walter Jenkins in Atlantic City. "If anybody's entitled to know, you are," he said. He repeated his suspicion that the MFDP was "born in the Justice Department" as a creature of Robert Kennedy. "I don't believe there'll be many attacks on the orders I issued on Tonkin Gulf if I'm not a candidate," said Johnson. He tearfully described fears of a breakdown. "I don't want to be in this place like Wilson," he said, "and I do not believe I can physically and mentally carry the responsibilities of the bomb and the world and the nigras and the South and so forth." † When Jenkins gently doubted he would go through with it, the President insisted that he would—sometime after his foreign policy lunch with McNamara and Rusk.

Lady Bird Johnson endured all through Tuesday the depressed side of her husband's distemper—wide-eyed silence under the covers for naps, shades drawn from the daylight. "I do not remember hours I ever found harder," she would write in her memoirs, and at the time she wrote out for him her anguished appeal: "Beloved—You are as brave a man as Harry Truman—or FDR—or Lincoln. You can go on to find some peace, some achievement amidst all the pain. . . . To step out now would be wrong for your country, and I see nothing but a lonely wasteland for your future. Your friends would be frozen in embarrassed silence and your enemies jeering. . . . I know it's only *your* choice. . . . I love you always, Bird."

EVERYONE ELSE prepared blindly for the decisive crunch in Atlantic City. DeLoach delivered Tuesday morning intelligence on Martin Luther King's last-minute lobbying schedule. The FBI wiretaps picked up frantic consul-

* . . . The times require leadership about which there is no doubt and a voice that men of all parties, sections, and color can follow. I have learned after trying very hard that I am not that voice or that leader. Therefore. . . .

† Johnson referred to President Woodrow Wilson, who suffered a debilitating stroke in 1920, toward the end of his second term.

tations with MFDP workers who wanted King to call the governors of New Hampshire, Alaska, and Hawaii, among others, plus Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago, and who arranged for King to address the full New York and California caucuses. DeLoach also reported signs that White House counterpressure against the MFDP was effective: wiretaps overheard a delegate from Washington state apologize to King, saying "people who were previously friendly are getting harder to find."

At a midday mass meeting, exhausted MFDP partisans rallied for a last push before the evening session. Above snappish arguments rose general agreement to hold out for their fallback position of shared seats with the regulars. Joseph Rauh, charged to bargain for nothing less, was intercepted outside the Credentials Committee with a peremptory message to call Walter Reuther. "The convention has decided," Reuther told him sharply. He disclosed two new concessions: Aaron Henry and Edwin King of the MFDP would be seated as voting delegates at large, and the party would establish a special commission to enforce nondiscrimination standards for the 1968 convention. Reuther emphasized that Johnson was holding out for a basic party loyalty oath for Mississippi as well as Alabama; no delegate could vote without signing one. "This is a tremendous victory," he said. "I want you to go in there and accept it." If he refused, Reuther promised to terminate Rauh's employment as Washington counsel for the United Auto Workers.

To reporters who clamored around his Convention Hall pay phone, Rauh lied that the caller had been "a pretty girl." He entered the committee room, verified that Reuther's new compromise was on the table, then began to agitate for a recess so that he could consult his MFDP clients. Their leaders were rucked away in the bedroom of Hubert Humphrey's suite at the Pageant Motel, where Reuther concentrated his argument on Martin Luther King. "Your funding is on the line," he said sharply. "The kind of money you got from us in Birmingham is there again for Mississippi, but you've got to help us and we've got to help Johnson."

King deferred to Moses, Aaron Henry, and Edwin King, who huddled across the bed from Humphrey and Bayard Rustin. Their skeptical questions about the overall fairness of the compromise raised resentments on its fine points. The two proposed at-large delegates, for instance, would raise the official number of convention seats from 2,316 to 2,318. Humphrey defended this as an extraordinary concession to the Freedom Democrats, on par with expanding the size of Congress, but it also guaranteed that MFDP delegates would sit outside the Mississippi section and, technically, represent no one in Mississippi. Moses bridled when Reuther complained that Negroes who got the vote often misused it to elect irresponsible people.

Edwin King suggested that if there must be only two at-large delegates, he would withdraw in favor of one of the many farmworkers and

nonprofessionals. Bayard Rustin guessed that the administration would accept substitutions, but Senator Humphrey cut short an exploration of ways to rotate or subdivide the two votes by ruling out Fannie Lou Hamer. "The President will not allow that illiterate woman to speak from the floor of the convention," he said. Moses objected to her exclusion as racist and autocratic, whereupon Humphrey jumped in to mollify him, saying the standard was not his but Johnson's, and he was sure the President only meant that Hamer spoke too emotionally to help the party.

While the Humphrey negotiations dragged on at the motel, Rauh flustered inside the closed meeting of the Credentials Committee. His supporters stammered under insistent questioning about whether the proposed compromise wiped out the need for a minority report. Rauh himself hedged, praising the concessions while pleading for a fair chance to ask his MFDP clients whether they would accept. He finally persuaded subcommittee chairman Walter Mondale to arrange a brief recess, but aides near the chair vetoed the delay. A chant of "Vote! Vote!" gathered speed like a downhill train until Governor Lawrence moved the LBJ compromise to approval by the Credentials Committee. Thunderous acclamation drowned out requests for a rally along with scattered shouts of "no" from MFDP holdouts. Celebrations bolted to the corridors on adjournment.

Across Boardwalk at the Paganet Motel, frantic knocks and cries of "it's over!" pulled the negotiators from the Humphrey bedroom to behold the commotion around the suite's television set, on which Mondale was presenting the Mississippi compromise to reporters as a finished deal. "You cheated!" shrieked Moses, whirling to accuse Humphrey and Reuther of sham talks as a diversionary trick. The MFDP leaders stalked out with King to their meeting place in the basement of Union Temple Baptist, and the remnant that converged there from the Credentials Committee walked into pandemonium. Questions flew about a "fix," whose most treacherous and paralyzing effect seemed to be a cascading rumor that the MFDP had accepted the compromise already. There was talk of set-ups, especially against negotiating brokers such as Rauh, who recalled that Moses flinched from the trapdoor settlement as from "a white man hitting him with a whip."

Rauh protested that he and the core delegates had *not* agreed to surrender and the vote was *not* unanimous—even Governor Lawrence admitted hearing "no" votes he declined to count—but he conceded that Johnson may have annihilated their prospects for a better deal. Rauh's anguish moved several MFDP members to say they should give in to the compromise, whereupon Moses, according to one surprised summer volunteer, "actually raised his voice and interrupted their speeches." He said they should snap out of defeatist postmortem talk. At his urging, the MFDP delegates voted to reject the committee's offer while they still had

an hour or two to scrounge up votes for a minority report to the full convention.

Rauh reluctantly agreed to fight on. Eight of the required eleven Credentials Committee delegates were present in the church and still willing to hold against the pressure. They included Rauh's stalwart Washington colleague Gladys Duncan, wife of baritone Todd Duncan (Gershwin's original Porgy on Broadway). Still, signatures had vanished from the large states of New York, California, and Michigan, and MFDP leverage vaporized from a power base reduced to delegates from Guam and the Panama Canal Zone.

THE UNEXPECTED BREAKTHROUGH revived President Johnson until he heard from the two leading moderates who had been rallying Southerners for him at the convention. Together, governors Carl Sanders of Georgia and John Connally of Texas called Tuesday afternoon to warn of "a wholesale walkout from the South." Sanders himself threatened to leave, and take the Georgia delegation with him. Johnson, having despaired for a month that Humphrey and Reuther could prevent a roll call for the MFDP, recoiled from sudden ambush on the other flank. Exasperated, he demanded to know how the MFDP's two "symbolic" at-large delegates could hurt anybody when they did not reduce the vote of the all-white delegation. "Mississippi's got every vote they ever had," said the President. "Georgia's got every vote they ever had. And we're not gonna *have* any votes to begin with!"

"I'm telling you because you want me to tell you the truth," Sanders declared. "It looks like we're turning the Democratic party over to the nigras...." Martin Luther King was deciding who could be a delegate, he said. "It's gonna cut our throats from ear to ear."

Johnson argued that the MFDP really deserved representation in Mississippi itself. "Pistols kept 'em out," he said heatedly. "These people went in and begged to go into the conventions. They've got half the population, and they won't let 'em. They lock 'em out."

"They're not registered," Sanders insisted.

Johnson's temper fell into quiet pronouncement. "You and I just can't survive our political modern life," he said, "with these goddamn fellas down there that are eatin' 'em for breakfast every morning. They have got to quit that. And they got to let 'em vote, and let 'em shave, and let 'em eat, and things like that. And they don't do it."

Connally took up for Sanders with less passion, given the President's agitation. Johnson pleaded with him not to let the South walk out—not to say, "I'm gonna be a dog in the manger." He said that meant to have everything—all their votes—and then also "bark if somebody across the hall gets a couple."

The President urged Walter Jenkins in Atlantic City to resist the "dog in the manger attitude," which became his rallying cry. By early evening, convention aides told him the South was now the threat. Mississippi's state chairman praised his regular delegates for walking out on the compromise, and Governor Paul Johnson went on television to proclaim liberation from the bond that had kept his state purely Democratic since Lincoln and Reconstruction: "Mississippi's debt to the national party is now paid in full!"

On the convention podium, Governor Lawrence and Senator Pastore banged the credentials report to adoption, and finally released energy from all sides of the conflict. Joe Rauh shed tears as he marched dutifully to the podium to return unused the at-large delegate credentials issued for Aaron Henry and Edwin King. As much as he wished his clients would accept them as a victory, he longed more for the lost trust of Bob Moses. Most MFDP supporters recaptured the fervor of Freedom Summer from a rejection all too reminiscent of Mississippi. Their Boardwalk vigil escalated swiftly to a protest more like the Hattiesburg picket line, and lobbying gave way to daring demonstrations.

Prominent Democrats such as Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon and ex-governor Mennen Williams of Michigan boasted of helping to smuggle MFDP members onto the convention floor to claim Mississippi seats as rightfully theirs. "I made about four or five trips in and out—it was really exciting," observed one summer volunteer who relayed entry badges illicitly with a fake press pass and a Young Citizens for Johnson disguise. "I felt like Mata Hari and the French Resistance and the Underground Railroad all rolled into one." Nearly two dozen MFDP delegates made it past security into the Mississippi section, which prompted the precious few oath-signing regulars there to flee.

There were only three of them, trying to incubate a loyal presence with the encouragement of President Johnson,* and their evacuation sorely distressed Johnson's floor commanders. Walter Jenkins called the President to report that delegates could not get into Convention Hall because of riots and demonstrations outside. White House aide Marvin Watson angrily ordered the MFDP sit-ins dragged from the Mississippi section; Jenkins countermanded him for fear that a televised eviction would be worse than the sit-in. Demonstrators, asked why they were making such a scene, asked in reply why network interviewers made no corresponding uproar over banned whites who had crashed the Alabama section again.

* Johnson reached one of the three before the commotion on the convention floor that night. "You're a patriot," he told Doug Wynn of Greenville, a family friend. "... This is history and you'll always be proud of this." Within days, the President would be asking the Justice Department to protect the nonwalkouts from Klan death threats on their return to Mississippi.

Moses waved off the suggestion that he spurned a fair compromise. "We are here for the people and the people want to represent themselves," he told NBC's John Chancellor. "They don't want symbolic token votes."

Press Secretary George Reedy hesitantly answered a summons to the presidential quarters when the convention broadcasts signed off about midnight Tuesday. From considerable experience, he hoped the morning's resignation vow was forgotten, but he found Johnson in renewed despair over the threat of demonstrations and Southern walkouts. "By God, I'm gonna go up there and quit," said Johnson. "Fuck 'em all."

Reedy slathered on reassurances, lumbering after Johnson on one of his hyperkinetic walks around the White House South Lawn. He said the President did not need to go to Atlantic City until Thursday, once he was nominated and the convention safely in his pocket. He pleaded with Johnson not to hand the country to Goldwater. Johnson merely said that he was having trouble with his withdrawal statement and ordered Reedy to draft it. When Reedy refused, the President flayed him as an incompetent, disloyal tormentor. Reedy ended the ordeal only by promising to write something, but the predawn resignation he typed out was his own.

ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, the MFDP delegation regathered amidst second thoughts about the compromise and rumors that the administration might relax some of the insulting details. Rauh told his friend Senator Humphrey that "the dumb bastards on your side—and I'm sure it wasn't you, Hubert—chose our two people instead of letting them choose their own two people." Humphrey dragged himself back to work, saving he was so battered that "I honestly don't care too much anymore" about Johnson's test for vice president, and Rauh joined a phalanx of speakers at Union Temple Baptist. He urged the delegates to reconsider the compromise, as did Senator Morse and Aaron Henry. Bayard Rustin argued that they must broaden their outlook from moral protest to political alliance, during which Mendy Samstein of SNCC jumped up to shout, "You're a traitor, Bayard!" In an atmosphere charged with rebellion, James Forman eyed Al Lowenstein to make sure he did not dare speak for the pragmatism of experts. Church lawyer Jack Pratt did endorse the compromise, saying rejectionists were failing to disclose its many side promises—federal hearings, training programs, interventions long sought—but a cold reception made him wander off to get drunk in a bar.

Martin Luther King delivered a speech of formal neutrality. "I am not going to counsel you to accept or reject," he said. "That is your decision." He balanced a denunciation of Johnson's remote-control mistreatment against the leavening hope for political progress, airing his conflicted private advice: "So, being a Negro leader, I want you to take this, but if I were a Mississippi Negro, I would vote against it." The delegates

gave King generous applause on both sides. Some were still pinching themselves that all the big shots were worked up over their decision, and some shared the distaste of the student movement for King's straddling.

Bob Moses swayed nearly all of them against the compromise. "We're not here to bring politics to our morality," he said, "but to bring morality to our politics." One admirer said, "Moses could have been Socrates or Aristotle. . . . I mean he tore King up." When the outsiders departed after the speeches, a few MFDP delegates ventured praise of the compromise as "getting somewhere," but the larger voices—especially Victoria Gray, Annie Devine, and Fannie Lou Hamer—scorned it as a paltry temptation. Gray said people back home were counting on them to bring back gains deep enough and fair enough to hold against conditions in Mississippi. "When they got through talking and hoopin' and hollerin' and tellin' me what a shame it was for me to do that," recalled an old man from Issaquena County, "I hushed right then." The delegates voted again to reject the Democratic offer. "We didn't come all this way for no two seats," said Hamer.

Meanwhile, Walter Reuther left for Washington to deliver a report in the West Hallway outside President Johnson's bedroom. No record survives of their eighty minutes alone, nor of Johnson's initial state of mind after serial crises, but Reuther's bracing news included an agreement by Martin Luther King to carry on a specialized LBJ campaign tour among Negroes. His morning reports accented the positive. There was no residual chance for a roll call on Mississippi. The *Washington Post* predicted that the "vast bulk" of Southern delegates would stay on, and praised Johnson as the invisible wizard who helped the Democratic party "finally rid itself of the divisive civil rights issue which has plagued every national convention beginning with 1948."

The President buzzed for his press secretary after Reuther departed, but Reedy, cringing with his own undelivered resignation, ducked three calls before learning that Johnson was racing forward again. The President summoned Humphrey and Senator Thomas Dodd of Connecticut by private jet from Atlantic City, then took off for a spontaneous midday walk with his beagles, Him and Her, and sixty trailing reporters. He sent the exhausted dogs to their kennel after four breakneck laps around the White House driveway—about a mile—then herded the reporters through eleven more laps without dispensing a vice presidential announcement. Other reporters followed the two senators around the Washington Monument and other tourist sites in a Johnson-mandated holding pattern.

"One of them must now at last be chosen to stand within a heartbeat of the presidency," campaign historian Theodore White recorded of contenders' late afternoon arrival in a single limousine. Johnson privately consoled Dodd as his decoy, extracted pledges of loyalty from Humphrey, and called Humphrey's wife, Muriel, under bond of secrecy. "We're going

to nominate your boy," he said. His abrupt order scrambled the entire presidential entourage for Atlantic City a day ahead of schedule. Reedy, who had released White House reporters to evening cocktails, relieved that Johnson had abandoned his mad fits about quitting that night, recalled them to sudden departure. He replaced for safety reasons an inebriated member of the press pool who nearly walked into a helicopter blade.

Johnson announced Humphrey within hours, in person, to a pleasantly astonished convention that swept them jointly to nomination. The nominees returned to give acceptance speeches at the closing session Thursday night, when Robert Kennedy's speech in Convention Hall indeed broke the dam, as Johnson had feared. An unbroken wave of applause lasted fully twenty-two minutes when Kennedy introduced the film about his brother with Shakespeare's tribute to Romeo: "When he shall die/Take him and cut him out in little stars/And he will make the face of heaven so fine/That all the world will be in love with night/And pay no worship to the garish sun." Johnson by then could welcome, even absorb, some of the outpouring as the secure successor to President Kennedy. "Party and nation both now gaze in wonder at the huge man," wrote Theodore White for the CBS election special. "Yet no man but he knows all the measure of the huge distance he has come."

Private dramas continued in the background. George Reedy endured embarrassing bureaucratic torment after a colleague retrieved the unused letter of resignation from his White House desk and leaked it to reporters. Reedy strongly suspected aides to his agile rival Bill Moyers, but he could only say he was "puzzled" by news stories painting him as an idiot who "quit because Mr. Johnson had ignored his advice not to go to Atlantic City." Any hint of the truth would have scandalized voters over a manic, unstable President. "I don't want to louse things up," he told Johnson morosely.

Deke DeLoach applied successfully for Director Hoover to bestow secret letters of commendation upon the agents of his Special Squad, highlighting their undercover work to "make major changes in controlling admissions into the Convention Hall and thereby preclude infiltration of the illegal Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) delegates in large numbers into the space reserved for the regular Mississippi delegates." Agents posing as reporters had broadcast warnings to agents posing as security guards, who helped strip the chairs from the Mississippi section and block entrances to the empty rows.

Bob Moses and six others stood vigil in an aisle through the Kennedy tribute Thursday night, wearing black neck placards embossed with JFK's silhouette and his exhortation, "Ask not what your country. . . ." Moses was among many who already felt Atlantic City a bitter turning point for the Mississippi movement, if not for all of American politics. Outside, Fannie Lou Hamer led farewell choruses of "We Shall Overcome," and fireworks

from President Johnson's gigantic fifty-sixth birthday celebration illuminated the whole Boardwalk, including portraits of Mississippi martyrs held aloft.

President Johnson left the convention giddy with energy, having conquered political and mortal anxieties on a birthday never reached by most Johnson men. Racing from a helicopter to *Air Force One*, with the Humphreys as guests, he veered across the airfield toward a crowded security fence to lift *Washington Post* publisher Katharine Graham happily off the ground. "We're going to Texas and we want you with us," Johnson announced as he swept her aboard without regard for the luggage and corporate jet she left behind. All the trappings of government flew from Atlantic City to the LBJ Ranch, where on Friday the President whirled among the vistas, gadgets, and livestock of his domain. He dressed Senator Humphrey in an LBJ-sized ranch outfit—"I looked ridiculous and I felt ridiculous as I smiled wanly from under a cowboy hat," Humphrey recalled—and abruptly commandeered six other guests, including Katharine Graham, to visit two venerable kinfolk in a ramshackle house down the road. "Cousin Oriole, wake up!" shouted Johnson, banging on the screened porch where he sank into a nap as soon as he got homecoming hugs. To his party, seated near the sleeping President, Aunt Jessie Hatcher recalled that even as a small boy young Lyndon sat in the front and held the reins on donkey rides. "He still does," quipped Humphrey.

Cousin Oriole Bailey told them that in order to get her chores done back in the old days she had staked toddler Lyndon outside in the dusty yard, where he played to the end of the tether rope and pulled on it to go farther.

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"We see the giants . . ."

A HANDFUL OF NATIONAL CORRESPONDENTS proceeded directly from the crush of Atlantic City to the hot Snopesian stillness of Danielville, Georgia (pop. 362), for the Lemuel Penn murder trial. Reporter Paul Good counted twenty-three Coca-Cola signs hanging from buildings around the courthouse lawn, where a historical marker noted the first use of surgical ether by local-born physician Crawford Long in 1842. An uncovered staircase rose along the exterior wall into an unlit courtroom balcony strictly segregated for Negroes, but the judge otherwise ran an informal trial to the point of praising from the bench the lunch dishes that the women's club had thrown together for the week's occasion.

When prosecutors presented a string of FBI witnesses on the conspicuous vigilante rampage by Klavern 244, a defense lawyer casually scoffed, "There's no crime in Georgia against intimidating colored people." Garage owner Herbert Guest, whom the state grand jury had declined to indict, testified that he had lost all memory of his sworn statement. Loretta Lackey sat mute on the stand, refusing instruction to speak, but she could not endure testimony by a defense psychiatrist that impeached her husband's confession as the delusion of a subnormal "paranoid personality" who had turned against his friends, possibly out of anxiety over a misshapen head. In the hallway she cried out, "Doctor, does that mean my husband is crazy?"

The defense case, which consumed less than two hours on Friday, September 4, portrayed not only the defendants but the entire region as victims of big shots such as the bushwhacked Lieutenant Colonel Penn