

History 228

Re: Notes w/ Sitkoff

Selma Campaign

Passage of the 1964 civil Rights Act did very little to help w/ COFO workers in Mississippi, whose voter registration program produced as many acts of violence by local whites as it did black voters. After two years of intense work by SNCC the black registration went from 5 to 7%. . . .

In Alabama, it was better, but not by much. One out of five black adults were registered to vote. The fact was that the Justice Department had failed to make any significance advances in seeing that blacks enjoyed the right to vote for blacks in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana.

In Dallas County, the location of Selma, whites comprised 99% of the electorate although they made up less than 50% of the population.

In Dallas County registration requirements required that answer four questions on the Constitution, four on government, a reading test, and a dictation. Registration took place on only two days out of the month, and the application form contained more than 50 questions.

In Dallas County seven out of every 8 blacks failed this test; 75% of the white applicants passed. These were the figures for 1962/64.

Conclusionary material:

It is far from clear whether LBJ intended to proceed with a voting rights law in 1965. But it is beyond question that the public reaction to "Bloody Sunday" in Selma did persuade him to revise his legislative schedule and expedite the legislation.

Secondly, without Selma it is unlikely that a measure as strong as the Voting Rights Act of '65 could have become law.

Reaction to
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Jimie Lee
Jackson
and Ken
James J. Reeb