



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20530

Address Reply to the
Division Indicated
and Refer to Initials and Number

JD:RP:1ds #23-000-2
DJ 166-0-2

SEP 20 1966

Mrs. Victoria J. Gray
Co-ordinator of the Washington
Office
Mississippi Freedom Democratic
Party
802 G Street S. E.
Washington, D. C. 20003

Dear Mrs. Gray:

This refers to your letter of May 27, 1966, to the Attorney General, concerning the June 7 Mississippi Primary election. I regret the delay in responding.

The power of the federal government to undertake the policing functions to which your letter refers is limited. The necessary conditions for such a use of federal personnel did not exist as of the June 7, 1966, primary election.

The Department of Justice did take action regarding the June 7 election consistent with its jurisdiction under the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

As your letter notes, Section 8 of the Act authorized the Attorney General to send federal observers to voting places in Mississippi counties where federal examiners were serving. In preparation for the election, attorneys from the Civil Rights Division interviewed officials having election responsibilities in each of the twenty-four Mississippi counties in which federal examiners were serving, concerning their plans for the election. Illiterate

assistance, the completeness of the lists of eligible voters, and the manner in which any increases in the number of eligible voters would be dealt with -- were among the matters considered. In addition, Negro leaders were interviewed, with particular emphasis on possible trouble voting places in their counties. Every effort was made to resolve any problem uncovered.

On the basis of the information secured, federal observers were sent to some voting places in Mississippi. Further, on election day and the two days thereafter, the examiners' offices in each of the twenty-four counties were open to receive complaints.

Investigation of the alleged beating of Mr. Robert Miles of Batesville in Canton, Mississippi, on May 27, 1966, began as soon as the incident became known to us, within a few hours after it happened. Should our investigation establish a violation of federal law, appropriate action will be taken. In addition, I understand that Mr. Miles is represented by competent private counsel, and that charges have been brought in local courts.

According to our information, some leaflets were found on Main Street in Marks, Mississippi, approximately a week before the June 7 primary election. These leaflets dealt with the alleged consequences of demonstrations by Mississippi Negroes, and not with the primary election. Identical leaflets were found near a church in neighboring Panola County on May 14, 1966. Our investigation failed to identify the distributor of those leaflets.

As of yet, we have not received sufficient information regarding the May 26, 1966, shooting to which you refer, to permit us to initiate investigation. Should you have additional information regarding the incident, we would appreciate your communicating it to the Department.

Sincerely,

JOHN DOAR
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division

By:

ROBERT PRESSMAN
Attorney

Robert Pressman LBS
Southwestern Section