

March 31, 1966

ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT CIVIL RIGHTS? YOU ARE NEEDED RIGHT NOW while you're still at Bennington. A lot has been said about Bennington's isolation from the world of reality. I would like to inform you of a situation in which we share and can even determine at least part of ^{that} that reality.

Most of us are familiar with the problem of voter registration in the South, but few people are aware of the fact that in the North there is a city where NO ONE can vote, where NO ONE has any representation in his local government. In this city the lives of nearly a million people are controlled by a small group of self-interested outsiders who often abuse their power and govern the city to the benefit of a few wealthy businessmen. It is understandable how such a system encourages exploitation of many kinds.

Because the people have no political voice whatsoever, they are helpless to protest or even begin to change the miserable conditions forced on them. This Northern city has a worse problem than any in the South because the law doesn't allow its inhabitants to even register. The population in this city is largely Negro. The group that governs the city is influenced and run mainly by unsympathetic Southerners. They cite many reasons for not giving this city self-government; but what circumstances can ever justify such a denial of basic human rights? What is more unjust than this kind of lawful tyranny?

The city I've described is Washington, D.C., the capital of America. The group that runs the city is influenced by Sen. Byrd of West Virginia and Rep. McMillan of South Carolina.

The President proposed a bill that would give D.C. self-government. The Senate ratified this bill. It is now up to the House to pass it. However, congressmen are being influenced by the lies of a few wealthy merchants benefitting from the present system.

The people of the District have started a campaign called FREE DC to counteract these merchants and have courageously stood up for their right to self-government. But because they have no political power, they need national support.

THEY NEED YOUR SUPPORT AND THE SUPPORT OF YOUR CONGRESSMAN. Justice in this city will depend on how many congressmen vote for the bill.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE RIGHT TO VOTE - THE RIGHT TO REPRESENTATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

Representation through your congressman is your POWER to help forward civil rights for nearly a million people. You may not be able to, or want to go down South to help in voter registration. But you have in your possession, right here at Bennington, a strong power that can give immediate results.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

A letter to your congressman will tell him that at least one person wants him to vote for the HOME RULE BILL when it comes up in the House. If your friends and relatives knew about it, they too would want every American to have the Right to Vote. The more people your congressman hears from, the more convinced he will be to vote for the HOME RULE BILL. (Your residence in his District will be influence enough.)

Employment, education and housing conditions, to mention but a few, are deplorable for many District residents.

The Right to Vote means the Right to a Better Life. It is almost sacred. Those who haven't got it know this well.

Please sign the petition in Commons' Lounge to be presented to Representative Robert Stafford of Vermont. Any effort of yours will help the people of D.C. towards a much brighter reality - a part of which is yours even now.

A list of representatives and their Districts can be found on pages 94-96 in this year's Almanac. For further information, contact Cia de Leon, Box 153. / CdL