

After a swing through Hayneville, where Jonathan Daniels was ~~XXXXXX~~ gunned down, we picked up a friend at the Montgomery airport and headed ~~X~~ toward Selma. We drove along the stretch of highway where Mrs. Viola Luizze was assassinated. Continuing along the route of the historic Selma-to-Montgomery march, we crossed over the Pettus bridge where Negro marchers were put to flight ~~XXXXX~~ before a horrified national television audience. Inside Selma, we saw the spot where the Rev. James Reeb was ~~XXXX~~ beaten to death. And driving westward in the Black Belt to ~~XXXXX~~ Marion, we passed the place where Jimmy Lee Jackson was ~~XXX~~ buried.

It was Election Day ~~X~~ in Alabama. A lot of blood--- Negro and white---had been shed for the rights Negroes were exercising on a cloudless and pleasant day in late May. And Alabama's brutality had been largely responsible for the legislation which had made it possible for thousands of Negroes ~~to~~ to vote ~~xxxx~~ for the first time.

When the Voting Rights Act went into effect last August, ~~X~~ only 113,493 of Alabama's 481,320 voting-age Negroes were registered. ~~XXXXXXX~~ By the time ~~XX~~ of the first primary on May 3, ~~XXXXXX~~ Negro registration in Alabama had more than doubled, rising ~~XXXXXXX~~ above 235,000.

To be sure, white registration also increased. In fact, it ~~XXXX~~ came within ~~XXXX~~ 11,000 of matching Negro registration for the same nine-month period. But with 87 per cent of the white voting-age population registered (against less than 50 per cent of the Negroes) the day of dramatic upswings in white registration has pretty much passed.



So the question in the first primary on May 3 was this: Will the newly ~~REGISTERED~~ registered Negroes, those who had never before seen a ballot or a voting machine, actually ~~X~~ go to the polls and vote?

A young college graduate we encountered on the eve of the first primary was sure the answer would be ~~NO~~, no. He was wearing a straw hat bearing the campaign colors of gubernatorial candidate Carl Elliott.

"They'll go register," he said, ~~XXXX~~ "but they won't go vote."

The next morning, at a large ~~NEGRO~~ Negro ~~PRECINCT~~ precinct, we saw for ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ ourselves. Lines of voters ~~X~~ twisted around the corner and down the block. There ~~WERE~~ weren't nearly enough voting machines. All the same, nobody--- so far as we could tell---was giving up to go home.

We asked a Negro poll official if he thought the ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ massive ~~X~~ lines would prove discouraging. His answer was quick ~~AND~~ and simple:

"They've been ~~XXXX~~ waiting 100 years for this day. They'll vote."

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ As the hours ~~XXXXXXXX~~ went by, they proved the poll official right. The young Elliott supporter was wrong.

The way we figured it at the Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council, close to 175,000 Negroes cast ballots in Alabama on May 3. That was nearly three-fourths of ~~XX~~ the Negro registration ~~---a remarkable figure in view of the fact that most of these, as the Elliott supporter had noted, had never before voted.~~



But the white vote also was heavy. The total turnout was a record-breaking 888,000, or 64 per cent of the registration. ~~715,000~~ ~~61~~

With Gov. Wallace running his wife as a stand-in candidate, it was the sort of election that would draw everybody who could walk, drive or be carried to the polls. And despite Mrs. Wallace's lopsided victory, the Negro turnout made a lasting impression. In a less polarized election, 175,000 or so votes could very easily tip the balance.

In a Birmingham press conference the day after the first primary, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. said the Negro turnout, along with a large number of Negro candidates for county and legislative offices, indicated "a new day in Alabama." He described the Wallace landslide (she, or he or they, got 54 per cent of the vote) as a "pretest vote against the tide of inevitable progress."

Some say it was a pretest vote against Dr. King and his vigorous pre-election activities in Alabama. "Backlash" is a favorite argument of the segregationists. It shifts the blame for a segregationist vote from the segregationist who casts it.

But the white voters of Alabama had---or thought they had---plenty to pretest besides Dr. King. First there was the Voting Rights Act itself, and all the other civil rights legislation that Alabama has helped inspire. Then there were the federal examiners sent to register voters in 11 Alabama counties, and the federal observers sent in to watch the election. On top of all this came the school guidelines which have touched off



new explosions of ~~XXXXXX~~ white outrage, like a string of firecrackers, across the Deep South. ~~THE~~

The whole legal and moral weight of the nation was pressing in on white Alabama. The only thing to do was to "stand up" for Alabama ~~W~~ and vote for Wallace. Mrs. Wallace polled 480,841 votes.

The Negro vote went almost solidly for Atty. Gen. Richmond Flowers, who ran second to Mrs. Wallace with 172,386 votes. A handful of Negro votes went to Carl Elliott, who ran third with 71,972 votes.

There were more than 50 Negro candidates for county and ~~X~~ legislative offices, most of them in the Black Belt counties. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ For the most part, they fared ~~X~~ poorly.

While Negroes were united in their support of Flowers, they broke ranks at the local ~~X~~ level. There were many reasons. One was old interracial ~~XXXXXX~~ friendships and loyalties and paternalisms. Another was ~~gum~~ genuine reservations about the qualifications of ~~X~~ a few of the Negro candidates. Still another ~~XX~~ reason, and an important one, was fear---fear of offending white poll officials and the white power structure by voting for Negro candidates.

On top of all this, Negroes and civil rights leaders were far ~~xxx~~ from convinced that all the elections involving Negroes had been conducted fairly. Dr. King and his aides spoke of complaints from a half-dozen or so counties. In three ~~XXXXXX~~ counties, federal observers weren't allowed ~~xxx~~ to watch the marking of ballots for illiterates.

In the May 31 runoffs, attention was focused on the



Black Belt. Twenty-six Negro candidates made it to the runoffs, and most of them were running in the Black Belt.

Of these, only four won. Three of these were in Macon County, home of Tuskegee, where Negroes already held 47 different elected and appointed offices. Nevertheless, one of these is a sheriff, and that is quite a departure for the white management and ownership of Alabama. The fourth victor was a candidate for the school board in Greene County, at the western end of the Alabama Black Belt.

This time, the federal observers did a better job but the Negro turnout was smaller. The big push had been made on May 3 and it failed to get anybody elected. There was fear but there was also disappointment. There was talk of Negro tenant farmers being threatened with eviction. At one Black Belt courthouse, I heard that some Negroes, being afraid to tell white poll officials how they really wanted to vote, stayed home rather than cast a ballot contrary to their wishes. Negroes spoke of being "mistreated in the last election" and of an election that "was taken away from us."

The results might indicate that the best course for Alabama Negroes is to quit running themselves---especially in the white-managed primaries---and throw their weight behind a white "moderate." This was done in Dallas County. And with the help of the federal courts, it resulted in the ouster of Sheriff Jim Clark.

But it would be erroneous to conclude, as some have, that the Negro candidate will have to get off the center of the



playing field and ~~SPERKXEXXEXXEXXEXX~~ return to ~~EXXEXXEXXEXXEXX~~  
in his traditional "place" on the sidelines. Again, the key  
figures are 87 per cent and 50 per cent. Much depends upon  
the rate at which Negroes continue to register. In the X months  
and years ahead, it is likely that there will be more new Negro  
voters than new white voters.

What the May primaries ~~EXXEX~~ proved is that the new  
Negroes voters knew their way to the polls. And they are learning  
that they have as much right ~~EXX~~ there as the white voters.

MARVIN WALL.