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*By Miller*

# Voter purge is charged by blacks

By JAMES BORDERS

Several black civil rights leaders in New Orleans have told an investigator from the U.S. Department of Justice that the Orleans Parish registrar of voters is deliberately purging blacks from the city's voting rolls.

John MacCoon, a lawyer in the Civil Rights Division of the department, met with the blacks here yesterday to hear their allegations.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS leaders alleged the office of Registrar of Voters Antonio E. Papale has been unfairly discriminating against blacks in its annual purge of voters who have not cast ballots in the last two years, or who have moved without notifying the registrar's office of their change of address.

They also charged that Papale's office has discriminated against blacks in its choice of locations for branch registration offices, and that blacks are discriminated against in employment by voter registrars' offices statewide.

Papale could not be reached for comment.

Meeting with MacCoon at the local office of the American Civil Liberties Union were representatives of the Urban League of Greater New Orleans, the youth branch of the NAACP, the Louisiana Voter Education Project (VEP), the Carrollton Coalition Inc. and the A. Philip Randolph Institute.

Carl Galmon, a member of the advisory board of the state VEP, said that Orleans Parish registration rolls showed 89,326 blacks were registered to vote in December, 1972, but that figure had declined to 81,226 by last month.

"This decrease has come about," he said, "despite the fact that black population in Orleans Parish has increased in that period, and in spite of the massive voter registration drives that have been conducted by groups like the NAACP, the Nation of Islam, GROW, SCLC and the Tremé Community Improvement Association."

"The only explanation there can possibly be," Galmon said, "is that the registration office is purging blacks as fast as we are getting them registered."

Despite the drop in black registration, however, the percentage of registered voters who are black has increased over the past three years. In May, 1973, blacks made up 35.5 per cent of the city's 242,416 registered voters. As of July 1, they formed 40.3 per cent of the total registration of 200,440. The figures show a loss of more than 39,000 registered white voters.

A spokesman for the registrar of voters' office said approximately 21,000 names have been removed from the registration rolls since Jan. 1, 1976, but the spokesman could not provide a racial breakdown of the figure.

Persons are normally purged from the rolls if they have not voted during the preceding two years, or have moved from the residence from which they were registered without notifying the registrar.

MACCOON SAID the federal government would get involved only if the purges were being conducted illegally or if they were shown to be having an adverse effect on blacks only.

"We can do something about purges," he told the blacks, "if they are found to be racially discriminating."

Robert McFarland, of the Carrollton Coalition Inc., claimed to have information of illegal purges in Ward 17, Pct. 6, and promised to forward it to Washington.

McFarland also charged the parish registrar's office has refused to send mobile registration units into public housing projects to register potential black voters. He called it "indicative of the overall bias being shown by the registrar of voters in the placement of permanent branch offices."

Orleans Parish has three permanent branch registration offices, located at 2529 Gen. Meyer Ave., 6900 Downman Rd. and 4300 St. Claude Ave.

The black spokesmen said these are all in predominantly white neighborhoods. They said they have asked to have permanent branches established at 3940 Paris Ave., 3330 Florida Ave. and 2312 Louisiana Ave., in predominantly black areas.