

**Claude Ramsay : A Visionary and Catalyst for Social and
Political Change in Mississippi, 1960 - 1986¹**

Charles M. Dollar

Hoschton, GA

Claude Ramsay was born in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, on December 18, 1916, but the family moved to a farm near Fort Bayou when he was three. There he learned to milk cows, do manual farm labor, and hunt and fish, which became a lifelong passion. After graduating from Van Cleave Consolidated School in 1934, he was too poor to go to college fulltime, so he got a job milking cows at a farm operated by Perkiston Junior College (now Gulf Coast Community College) which allowed him to attend classes. His education ended in the summer of 1936 when he quit this job after a disagreement with the farm manager. A few months later he joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and spent several years in northern Louisiana working on soil erosion projects.²

International Paper Company and WW II (1939 – 1946)

After leaving the CCC in early 1939, he went to work at the International Paper Company in Pascagoula. He joined the American Federation of Labor Union, which was just being organized there, but did little more than pay union dues and attend meetings. Inducted into the Army in mid-1942, he trained as a military policeman, and in December 1944, was assigned to the 75th Infantry Battalion, which was eventually based outside of Reims, Germany. After his discharge in 1946 he returned to Pascagoula and his job at the international Paper Company.

Ramsay's military experience transformed his views on race. In 1946 he and his father, an unyielding segregationist, had a conversation about race relations in Mississippi, and Ramsay told his father:

Well, the day is coming in this country when the black people of this nation are going to raise up and demand their equal rights with the rest of us. I don't blame them. I think they are equal-- they are entitled to the same rights as anybody else . . . you can't put the uniform of this nation on the back of a black soldier and send him off to fight a war for you and bring him back here and treat him like a second class citizen. It just ain't going to work.³

What he did not envision at the time was the role he would play in promoting and securing equality for black Mississippians in the 1960s and 1970s.

Emergence of a Labor Leader and a Democrat (1946 – 1959)

After the war when Ramsay returned to Pascagoula and his job at International Paper Company, he began to take on union responsibilities. He first became shift steward and then was elected president in 1951. A year later he was elected president of the Jackson County AFL Central Labor Council.⁴

Many white Mississippians, including many trade union members, opposed the reelection of President Harry Truman in 1948, largely because he had accepted many of the recommendations of the President's Committee on Civil Rights for more adequate and effective protection of civil rights. Ramsay publicly supported President Truman because he considered him a "friend of organized labor," but was also influenced by the commitment of CIO leadership to Truman. Ramsay's support demonstrated his willingness to forge a role and identity that differed substantially from that of many white Mississippians. The merger of American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1955 created the national AFL-CIO. Voluntary mergers would have to occur at the state level, and Ramsay helped to negotiate the agreement between the Mississippi AFL and CIO groups in 1957.

After a year under a president who was showing little initiative or leadership, Ramsay agreed to run for president in 1959. With the strong support of his own local in Jackson County and the Electronics and Communications Workers of America (ECWA), he was elected president of the Mississippi AFL-CIO. At first he continued to work full-time for International Paper while functioning as president in his spare time, but it was no longer possible for the president's job to be part-time so he became president on a full-time basis.⁵

Emergence of a Civil Rights Leader (1960 – 1963)

Ramsay's first exposure to the forces of segregation came in April 1960 during the annual meeting of the state AFL-CIO. He believed a strong educational system was essential for good

citizenship and prosperity, so he introduced a resolution supporting public education, which the convention adopted, although with some dissenting votes. When he returned to Pascagoula afterward "all hell broke loose" because members of his own local thought he was supporting integration.⁶

The resulting uproar converged with a controversy over a referendum on amendments to the Mississippi State Constitution. The legislature had approved a referendum to incorporate into the state constitution a right-to-work law, which had been enacted in 1954. It was a foregone conclusion the constitutional amendment would be approved, but Ramsay believed organized labor should not give up. He persuaded the Mississippi Labor Council (an umbrella organization for a number of unions) to vote no on the constitutional amendment, arguing the 1954 right-to-work law ". . . had not lifted Mississippi from last place as the state with the lowest per capita income, the lowest average hourly wage rate, and the lowest average weekly earnings in the nation."⁷ As expected, the amendment was approved by a vote of 87,000 to 47,000. The number of votes against the amendment was about 20,000 greater than expected, and Ramsay viewed this as a victory because it alerted Mississippi political leaders there was a substantial number of voters who could be mobilized against anti-labor candidates or issues.⁸

Three other constitutional amendments designed to maintain white supremacy were on the ballot. One would allow the state legislature to close public schools in Mississippi for any reason. The second would add "good and sufficient character" as a requirement for voter eligibility and authorized county voting registrars to employ this test, which was clearly designed to limit the number of black voters. A third amendment would allow the legislature to establish qualifications for jurors which would limit the number of blacks as potential jurors. Under Ramsay's leadership the Mississippi AFL-CIO opposed all of these amendments not on racial grounds but rather because they violated democratic principles.

The Democratic Party's selection of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson as its presidential and vice-presidential candidates along with approval of a strong civil rights platform angered the Mississippi delegation. Back in Mississippi, Governor Barnett, convened the state Democratic Party leadership and successfully changed the status of electors pledged to the Democratic Party to unpledged. In contrast, Ramsay and his assistant Thomas Knight worked tirelessly on behalf of the Kennedy-Johnson ticket.

Richard Nixon won the Mississippi popular vote, and all of the state's electoral votes were cast for him. This was a major loss for the Mississippi AFL-CIO and Ramsay himself, especially as local unions that disapproved his activities began withholding payment of dues. The Mississippi AFL-CIO remained viable only because the National AFL-CIO subsidized it. But an even more pressing problem was the National AFL-CIO's contribution of \$5,000 to CORE to underwrite expenses of Freedom Riders in the spring of 1961. Heads of several local unions wrote to Ramsay asking him to explain why he had not opposed this contribution as he had opposed Sovereignty Commissioning funding of Citizens Council initiatives.⁹ Ramsay deflected these charges, saying the National AFL-CIO contributions troubled him while noting he had never publicly questioned the Sovereignty Commission funds made available to the Citizens Council.

The next big challenge for Ramsay was the legislature's response to the Census of 1960 that required Mississippi lose one congressional seat. The legislature combined two districts into one, pitting two incumbent Democratic congressmen – Frank Smith and Jamie Whitten - for the same seat. Smith, who had first been elected in 1950, was a friend of President Kennedy, had supported the Kennedy-Johnson ticket, and had the reputation of being moderate on racial matters. Jamie Whitten, a Dixiecrat in the 1948 presidential election, had the support of the Citizens Council. Ramsay persuaded the state AFL-CO Council to endorse Smith's candidacy and through the AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education

supported a contribution to his campaign. All of this was in vain because, as Ramsay put it, “we just didn’t have the horses.”¹⁰ Whitten out-pollled Smith by a margin of 11,000 votes in the primary.¹¹

Even though the office of the state AFL-CIO was in Jackson, Ramsay commuted from Pascagoula. In fact, he did not relocate to Jackson until 1965. Consequently, he was in Pascagoula several days a week during the events leading up to the riot at Ole Miss. He had gotten to know Ira Harkey, the fiery editor and publisher of The Pascagoula *Chronicle*, which he considered the only state newspaper to be friendly toward the trade union movement.¹² In September Harkey had published editorials declaring Governor Barnett’s actions to block the enrollment of James Meredith were leading Mississippi into chaos. With these and subsequent editorials Harkey had become very unpopular in Jackson County. When Ramsay was in Pascagoula he would visit Harkey and try to cheer him up because “He didn’t have very many friends with all of this going on.”¹³ In November 1962, Ramsay became a highly visible target of the Citizens Council and “every right wing organization in the state” after publicly supporting Harkey’s editorials denouncing as a “terrorist organization” Sheriff James Grimsley’s Jackson County Emergency Unit organized in the aftermath of the Oxford riot.¹⁴ Harkey also charged Grimsley and the “goons” of the Unit were trying to drive him out of business through threats and intimidation of subscribers and advertisers and poisoning the entire community.

Ramsay became involved in this controversy because Ingalls Shipyards was the largest employer in Pascagoula and had a number of contracts with the U.S. Navy which Ramsay feared could be jeopardized by the intimidation and escalating violence. Ramsay arranged to speak at the Metal Trades Council Meeting, the bargaining group for the unions at the shipyard. He later recounted, “I just laid it on the line to them. I just used common horse sense, economics, dollars, and cents about what it meant.” He began his remarks by declaring organized labor in Jackson has a “daily newspaper friendly to our cause” that has been targeted by organized labor’s enemy in Mississippi. The enemy, he said, was

the Jackson County Emergency Unit, and its efforts to destroy *The Pascagoula Chronicle* must opposed. He drove home the point as a dollars and cents issue for organized labor by noting most of the ships built at Ingalls Shipyard were subsidized by federal funds, which could be terminated if there were a racial disturbance in Pascagoula.¹⁵

Harkey obtained a copy of Ramsay's speech and with his permission printed it as a one-page editorial. He prefaced the speech with, "To the everlasting credit of the Jackson County working man, it remained for a labor leader to make the first public statement in condemnation of the hate group recently organized in your Courthouse." In an editorial a week later Harkey wrote it was not until Claude Ramsay of Jackson County, head of the state labor federation, issued his statement of last week, that anyone but *The Chronicle* joined the battle against hate."¹⁶

A Black-White Coalition of Voters

Ramsay believed the labor situation in Mississippi would never be resolved until the race issue was.¹⁷ He believed enfranchisement of black voters would drive conservatives and upper-class whites from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. This realignment of the electorate would break the strangle-hold of one-party politics in the state and an emerging bi-racial coalition of voters would support liberal Democrats, which the Mississippi AFL-CIO and the national AFL-CIO could also back. He argued this bi-racial coalition was a matter of simple arithmetic:

Twenty-six counties in Mississippi have a Negro popular majority. Many of labor's worst enemies in the state legislature live in these counties; if these people are to be removed from office it will have to be with the Negro vote. To a large degree our legislative program is dependent on our ability to form alliances with these people and this is what we are trying to do.¹⁸

In 1965 he told a political science class at Tougaloo College that the 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights Acts would usher in a decade of tremendous change. The degree and speed of change would depend

“largely upon a successful Negro voter registration drive and the putting together of a coalition of labor and other liberal forces in the state.”¹⁹

NAACP

In 1959 Ray Smithhart, Secretary-Treasurer of the Mississippi AFL-CIO, introduced Ramsay to Medgar Evers, the Mississippi NAACP field representative. Smithhart knew Evers because of his work in getting out the black vote for a candidate for the city commission in Jackson labor had endorsed. After Ramsay became President in 1960, he continued the relationship Smithhart had initiated.²⁰

After some discussion Ramsay and Evers decided to cooperate wherever possible to promote equal opportunities and equal rights for black Mississippians. This cooperation evolved into an alliance with Evers and the NAACP to register black voters and get out the black vote to support candidates and issues that the AFL-CIO had endorsed. Ramsay considered Evers a good friend who could be trusted.²¹

Ramsay was in Washington, DC, attending a White House Conference on Labor when Medgar Evers was assassinated on June 12, 1963. He was asked if he would say a few words about Evers' assassination while President Kennedy was at the conference:

Well, Mr. President I'm deeply grieved today because I have lost a good friend and Mississippi has lost a great citizen of the state. It's a little bit difficult to find the appropriate words for this occasion; but let me say this to you, that I think Medgar Evers' assassination will do several things.

I think that it is going to shock the decent people in Mississippi to the point that they are going to realize the importance and begin doing something about solving these race-related problems. I sincerely believe that Medgar Evers is going to be able to accomplish more in death, perhaps, than he would have been able to accomplish in life.²²

Medgar Evers' assassination temporarily sidetracked the initiative to register black voters. However, in the spring of 1964 a COPE meeting was being organized in Little Rock, Arkansas, and Ramsay was asked to suggest some black leaders outside the labor movement who might be interested

in participating in COPE initiatives. Ramsay knew Aaron Henry was the president of the Mississippi NAACP, a resident of Clarksdale, and a registered pharmacist who owned his own drug store, but he had never met him. Nonetheless, he recommended Henry, and this marked the beginning of a close friendship and a working relationship in the registration of black voters and efforts to get out the vote. Ramsey described Henry as “. . .such a decent kind of person. Even the racist whites, he deals with them in a dignified fashion. I’m always amazed at his composure and how he can deal with these kinds of things.”²³ Ramsay told people he seldom undertook any civil rights initiative without consulting with Henry. But there were limits on how far Ramsay could or would go. He recognized that any public connection between the Mississippi AFL-CIO and the NAACP or Conference of Federated Organizations (COFA) would evoke highly vocal and public opposition from union members who opposed any connection of the AFL-CIO with these organizations. As he put it later, sometimes he had to back off, regroup, and plan to renew the fight later.²⁴

WLBT (1964)

Frank Beard, station manager and part owner of WLBT²⁵ (Channel 3, the NBC Affiliate in Jackson) was active in the Citizens Council and under his management the station actively promoted segregation and censored national TV programs featuring blacks or addressing civil rights by routinely pre-empting these programs, claiming network difficulties to account for blank TV screens. In addition, the station Director of Public Programing, Dallas Wales, was the Jackson area coordinator for the John Birch Society, and Ramsay claimed this placed “the programming of WLBT under direct control of a paid employee of the John Birch Society.”²⁶

Ramsay objected to the anti-black and extreme right-wing stance of WLBT. He went public with his opposition in the spring of 1962 after the station broadcast an editorial urging workers at the Skyline Corporation in Jackson to vote "no" in a union representation vote. Organized labor lost this election

but appealed to the National Labor Relations Board, which declared that the station had created an environment that was not free "of coercion and intimidation" and called for a new election.²⁷

Two years later Ramsay and many other Mississippians believed WLBT's coverage of James Meredith's efforts to enroll in the University of Mississippi, its support for Governor Barnett's anti-integration stance, and its promotion of retired General Edwin Walker, an extreme right-winger, contributed to an environment that gave rise to the Ole Miss riot. In addition, the station broadcast "The Great Debate," which in fact was a "deliberate attempt to convince the public that our nation's churches are dominated by communist influence."²⁸

In the spring of 1964, James Parker, Director of Communications for the United Church of Christ, decided to challenge the license renewal of WLBT because of its failure to present opposing points of view under the Fairness Doctrine.²⁹ In the meantime, Ramsay had concluded as long as WLBT continued its anti-black and anti-labor policies while promoting extreme right wing views, civil public discussions of race relations and organized labor could not occur. He shared this concern with both the Mississippi AFL-CIO Executive Board and national leaders of the AFL-CIO, who agreed to fund a challenge to the license renewal.³⁰ Upon learning of the action of the United Church of Christ and believing he had received informal approval to move forward on this license denial initiative, he immediately sent a telegram to the FCC adding the Mississippi AFL-CIO to the petition. He did not inquire about the basis of the United Church of Christ petition, which he subsequently learned was largely based on racial issues and included the endorsement of the Mississippi NAACP. Upon learning of Mississippi AFL-CIO's connection with the NAACP in the petition, a number of labor councils and individual unions protested disavowed this action.³¹

Ramsay decided to withdraw the Mississippi AFL-CIO's endorsement of the United Church of Christ license denial petition and to initiate a separate petition focused exclusively on the concerns of

organized labor in Mississippi.³² He asked Pascagoula attorney Karl Wiesenburg to prepare this petition. Realizing there might be a public perception this initiative did not reflect the views of local unions, he requested an open vote on the initiative at the biennial convention in late May 1964. The vote was 198 “yeas” and 12 “nays.”³³ Five years later after numerous appeals, the United States Appeals Court ordered withdrawal of the license of WLBT because of “racial discrimination in broadcasting.”³⁴

Delta Farm Strike and the Mississippi Freedom Labor Union (MFLU), 1965

Most blacks working on cotton plantations in the Delta in the 1960s were likely to be tractor drivers or temporary seasonal laborers. During the growing season about 3,000 drivers earned \$6.00 for a day that typically went from sunup to sundown. About 25,000 temporary seasonal laborers--the elderly, men and women, and children--- chopped and picked cotton over a two and a half month period and earned \$3.00 per day from sunup to sundown. The Mississippi Freedom Labor Union had its roots in discussions in late 1964 at a CFO Freedom School on how to improve the poor pay and working conditions of black agricultural workers in the Delta.³⁵ Delta Ministry staff member Larry Walker helped facilitate this discussion and a subsequent decision to create a labor union for agricultural workers.³⁶

Emboldened by the success of a threatened picket against Mohasco Industries (a carpet company) in Greenville in the spring of 1965,³⁷ agricultural workers in Shaw, Mississippi, organized a labor union in January 1965 to strike if their demands were not met. In April after canvassing farm workers in several counties they had recruited several hundred members and given a name to the union, Mississippi Freedom Labor Union. Fannie Lou Hamer became a major supporter, believing MFLU could produce “economic liberation” for agricultural workers.³⁸ Their demands were for a minimum hourly rate of \$1.50 for all farm workers, an eight hour work day, sick pay, and health-accident insurance. Virtually all of the striking union members that had a free house on a plantation were fired and evicted, so MFLU began a national fund-raising drive to provide housing and food. Ramsay received

numerous requests for assistance from the strikers and northern unions but could not provide it. As a result, the MFDP was critical of the Mississippi AFL-CIO and Ramsay himself for failure to support the strike and the strikers.

By the summer of 1965 it was clear the strike had failed, and Ramsay and the Mississippi AFL-CIO came under increasing attacks for its failure to support MFLU. On August 16, 1965, Ramsay released "A Report on the Delta Farm Strike"³⁹ in which he stated wages and working conditions of farm workers in the Mississippi Delta "are among the worst in anywhere in the Nation."⁴⁰ The report noted in the summer of 1964 he had met with two representatives of the Delta Ministry to discuss the possibility of organizing farm workers in the Delta. Based on the AFL-CIO's unsuccessful effort to organize sugar cane laborers in Louisiana and vegetable growers in California, Ramsay advised the representatives that it "was impossible to deal with from a trade union point of view."⁴¹ He explained the peculiar circumstances of cotton plantations in the Delta created insurmountable challenges: A surplus work force resulting from the loss of jobs through mechanization of manual tasks; decentralization of about 3,000 tractor driver jobs across hundreds of plantations; and the short time period (2 – 3 months) when 25,000 farm workers were needed.

Given these circumstances, Ramsay offered several suggestions. First, given the circumstances of agricultural workers in the Delta, he believed the logical answer to the poor pay and declining work opportunities was to extend the Minimum Wage Law⁴² to cover farm labor and develop a job training program funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity. Second, the Organization Department of the national AFL-CIO could send an organizer to help set up a local robust organization. Third, with regard to solicitation of funds from other national unions, he could not in good conscience support an independent union unaffiliated with the AFL-CIO. He added he would advise other unions to send funds

to the Delta Ministry or the Mississippi AFL-CIO for distribution because they were in a better position to address the needs of all the people in the Delta.

The MFLU representatives categorically rejected his suggestions. Strikers were not going to quit, and the union did not “want anyone coming in to tell them what to do.”⁴³ The MFLU would control all the funding and it must come directly to the union; there was no room for compromise. The insistence of the MFLU for total local control and fierce opposition to outsiders, even NAACP state leaders, telling the union what to do reflects the outlook and perspective of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) on having total local control. Although Ramsay was genuinely concerned about the working conditions and welfare of farm laborers in the Delta, he must have had some sense of relief at this outcome because the MFLU had a very strong connection with the MFDP, and Fannie Lou Hamer, and Ramsay knew this would cause him a great deal of difficulty with local unions. Nonetheless, this portended the future for Ramsay as a newer generation of black leadership emerged less inclined to cooperate with white moderates and liberals like Ramsay.

Systematic Training and Redevelopment (STAR, 1965 - 1971)

The U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity wanted to promote a racially integrated program to systematically address problems and causes of poverty in Mississippi but knew a formal relationship with the State was not possible because of concerns about integrated facilities and the level of involvement of local blacks in setting program priorities. However, OEO found a back door through Bishop Joseph Brunini and the Catholic Diocese of Natchez-Jackson, which agreed to submit a grant proposal based on contracting with a third party to organize and manage a job training program coordinated with state agencies but independent of state government. This third party was the non-profit Systematic Training and Redevelopment, INC. In 1965, the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Office of Manpower, Automation and Training funded the \$7,000,000 Systematic Training and

Redevelop (STAR) project to “attack systematically the conditions, causes of poverty in Mississippi.”⁴⁴

The goal of the two-year program was to provide training for 25,000 adults at eighteen job corps centers. One of the centers would be located at the St. Francis Center (Black Catholic church program) in Greenwood, the heart of the Delta. The contract between the Catholic Diocese of Natchez-Jackson and OEO required compliance with Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act for non-discrimination in employment, job training participants, and education and training programs.

For several years Ramsay had promoted the vision of an education and training program for the illiterate black and white labor force that would improve their political, social, and economic well-being. He also thought such programs had the potential to create opportunities for blacks and whites to talk, get to know each other, and recognize their self-interest required them to work together, not against one another. However, this vision lay dormant because funds were not available, segregation statutes prevented public buildings being used for integrated programs, and the strong resistance to any initiative that could be perceived as undermining white supremacy.

When Ramsay learned about STAR, he immediately contacted F. Lewis Watts and F. Nathaniel Machesky, Catholic priests with operational responsibilities for STAR, to tell them of his interest in the project. He, along with Robert Ezelle and Owen Young, were appointed to the Board of Directors to oversee the project.⁴⁵ The three of them also were members of the STAR Executive Committee. Ramsay maintained an active interest in the STAR program, faithfully attending monthly board meetings and participating in decisions. Years later he observed one of the strengths of STAR was its close connection with the Natchez-Jackson Catholic Diocese, which had facilities scattered across the state where integrated workshops and training could take place.⁴⁶

Ramsay was a strong supporter of STAR because it offered a potential path out of illiteracy and its associated perpetual poverty to both blacks and whites by teaching them hygiene skills, language and

mathematic skills, and an employable skill. The white power structure ostensibly objected to STAR because of its alleged financial improprieties and mismanagement.⁴⁷ Senators John Stennis and James Eastland pressured Sargent Shriver, Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, to defund the initiatives and develop alternative ways to address poverty in Mississippi. In his testimony on April 10, 1967, before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower and Poverty in Jackson, Ramsay suggested some mismanagement was inevitable in a totally new program that was only two years old and that the passage of time would correct this.⁴⁸

Far more important, he told the subcommittee, was the fact STAR had made a major contribution to the social and economic well-being of black and white illiterates.⁴⁹ He advised the Senate Subcommittee to concentrate on the bigger issue of the contributions STAR was making to reduce poverty. In a letter to Sargent Shriver on June 21, 1967 Ramsay expressed concern over OEO's delay in refunding STAR, which was "one of the more successful programs in adult education and training funded by your office."⁵⁰ He called for immediate refunding, which was approved but support for STAR in OEO was tenuous. By 1971 the pressure from the Mississippi Congressional delegation and the Nixon Administration's opposition to the original intent of OEO led to an administrative hearing in Atlanta to show cause as to why the program should not be terminated.⁵¹

Mississippi Voter Registration and Education (1966 – 1967)

Ramsay believed registration of black voters, most of whom he thought would support the Loyal Mississippi Democratic Party, was key to the development of a genuine two-party system. He used funds from COPE and United Auto Workers to support voter registration in counties where federal registration examiners were working.⁵² A more systematic approach was required, so Ramsay and Tom Knight, the AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer, met with Aaron Henry, Charles Evers, and Jessie Epps from the NAACP, Horace Sheffield of the United Auto Workers and International Union of Electrical Workers, and

Vernon Jordan, Director of the Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council to organize the Mississippi Voter Registration and Education League (MVREL).⁵³ The goal of MVREL was to increase significantly the number of registered Negro voters (estimated to be less than 25% of 460,000 eligible voters). With funding of \$100,000 over the next year, MVREL's goal was a massive voter registration initiative. MVREL organized eight registration workshops, and Ramsay spoke at several. In addition, he participated with the NAACP and Loyal Democrats in conducting twenty-five voter workshops.⁵⁴ Not surprisingly, the voter workshops emphasized how to participate in local Democratic precinct meetings.

Initially, Ramsay's participation in MVREL had very low public visibility, but all of this changed when the *Delta Democrat Times* published a letter from Aaron Henry that acknowledged the full support and assistance of Ramsay and Knight in setting up the organization. Several local unions repudiated their involvement and withdrew from the state AFL-CIO, further weakening its financial stability. Ramsey declined to have a formal role with MVREL and this, along with national AFL-CIO financial support, helped him ride out the storm.⁵⁵ Several Klan rallies denounced Ramsay, and there were rumors he was on the Klan hit list. In a letter to Philip Weightman, Deputy Director of the AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education, Ramsay wrote with regard to Klan threats, "You have my assurance that I am taking every precaution and I stay armed at all times."⁵⁶

Electing a Black Legislator (1967)

In 1967 the NAACP and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic formed the Holmes County Independent Campaign Committee to elect Robert Clark, a widely known and respected Holmes County educator and football coach, to the Mississippi House of Representatives. Holmes County was 72 percent black and many black residents believed it was time for a black state legislator to represent them.⁵⁷ COPE passed funds through Claude Ramsay and the Mississippi AFL-CIO to support the campaign. In addition, Ramsay publicly supported Clark and even gave speeches on his behalf in Holmes County.⁵⁸ Clark was elected as

the first black state legislator in the Mississippi House of Representatives since Reconstruction. Initially, many of Clark's House colleagues tried to ignore him, but his persistence eventually gained their support. He became Chair of the House Education Committee and played a major role in securing passage of Governor Winter's Education Reform Bill in 1981.

Ku Klux Klan Bombings (1964 -1967)

In the 1960s in Mississippi the KKK⁵⁹ was responsible for numerous threats, cross burnings, beatings, bombings of black churches and synagogues, and murders to block any efforts that undermined white supremacy. In 1962 the Klan responded to Ramsay's support for Ira Harkey's opposition to Governor Ross Barnett's "Never, Never, Never" campaign against James Meredith's admission to Ole Miss with threatening letters and phone calls. By 1964 the Klan had escalated its attacks against him because of his support of a petition to the FCC to deny WBLT's license renewal and his increasing public support for black Mississippians enjoying the same rights and opportunities white Mississippians enjoyed. The FBI told him that he was on the KKK's hit list. He learned from others that Edward L. McDaniel, the Grand Dragon of the Mississippi Klan of the United Klans of America described him in Klan rallies as "Charles Ever's white nigger"⁶⁰ and suggested he should be eliminated. Ramsay began carrying a loaded double barrel shotgun in the front seat of his car everywhere he went. He let others know that he was prepared to repulse any attack. Several years later he was attending a political reception when a man told him that the Klan had employed him as a "hit man" to take him out. He told his would-be assassin:

I am real happy, though, that you weren't able to accomplish your mission. . . , I'm sure that you were aware of the fact that when you came after me I was going to take you with me, weren't you? He said, well, I'd heard that. He turned around and left. That was the end of the conversation.⁶¹

After the Klan's unsuccessful assassination of Rev. Donald Thompson, Minister at the Jackson Universalist-Unitarian congregation and Secretary to the Mississippi Council on Human Relations in the

spring of 1965 and the Klan bombings in Jackson, Laurel, and Meridian in November 1967, Ramsay wrote to the victims, expressing his outrage at such acts of violence.⁶² On April 12, 1968, just four days after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., he wrote in his weekly legislative report to the AFL-CIO that "Hate, unadulterated hate has brought all of these things to bear." He added that Martin Luther King, the most recent victim of this blind hatred, died because of his love for his fellow man and because of this blind hate that is wrecking the Nation. He concluded the report:

Now a word for the bombers who were arrested this week. These are the real victims of the sick society. They have listened to the demagogic politicians and have read the hate peddled by the press of this state all their lives. And, as a result, here they have a license to bomb and murder. They are the Frankensteins created by blind hate. Yes, it is very easy to blame it on the politicians and the press. The truth is, we all failed; we failed because those of us in positions of leadership have allowed the haters to take over. Speaking for one individual, the writer of this bulletin has had enough. He is ready to join others of goodwill in putting an end to this campaign of hate. How about you?⁶³

American Civil Liberties Union (1968)

For several years the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) had a presence in Mississippi through its subsidiary, the Lawyers Constitutional Defense Committee, but a Mississippi Chapter did not exist. However, this changed when Ramsay joined a group of Mississippians in making plans to organize a chapter. In a letter to prospective members he noted for such a meeting and plan were overdue because "the constitutional rights of citizens have been completely ignored."⁶⁴ On February 1, 1969, the Mississippi Chapter of ACLU was formally organized at a meeting held at Tougaloo College. Ramsey was elected to the Executive Board and appointed as Chairman of the Development Committee, which would work to build membership. His appeal to new members stated the ACLU "fights for Due Process, Equality, Freedom of Religion, Free Speech, Freedom of the Press, Fair Trial, Freedom of Assembly, Academic Rights and all other rights of a Free Society." He added, "While you and I may disagree with some of the actions of some people who have been harassed, your constitutional rights are also in jeopardy. If the authorities get by with persecuting these people you may be next."⁶⁵

Ramsay believed in protecting rights of all Mississippians, but he also believed the Mississippi AFL-CIO could benefit from the ACLU's working to overturn college and university speaker bans. He explained that his duties as President of the Mississippi AFL-CIO required him to make public appearances before many groups, including public schools and colleges. The only college where he was not allowed to speak was Mississippi Southern University (now the University of Southern Mississippi) where President McCain had refused his speaking on four different occasions. He asserted, "It is a foregone conclusion that academic freedom does not exist on this campus."⁶⁶

Ramsay was elated that one of the first priorities of the Mississippi Chapter of the ACLU was to initiate a legal challenge to the constitutionality of a "Speakers Policy" the Board of Trustees of Higher Education had approved. The policy required each college president to submit proposed speakers to each member of the Board of Education prior to extending a speaker invitation. The obvious intent was to allow individual members of the Board of Trustees to pressure college presidents to reject a proposed speaker as personally undesirable.⁶⁷ Ramsay believed, as did many others, "these rules would simply legalize the actions of Mr. McCain and others who do not believe in academic freedom."⁶⁸ The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals agreed by rejecting the Speaker Policy on the grounds it infringed on First Amendment rights of students. The Board prepared another policy a three-judge panel also rejected. The panel then offered the Board two options: adoption of a court-prepared Speaker Policy or no rules at all. The Board surrendered, adopting the court-prepared policy.⁶⁹

A Dedicated but Pragmatic Leader (1960 – 1974)

Claude Ramsay was frequently perceived as a dedicated but gruff, bellicose cigar-chewing lobbyist who cornered legislators in hallways when the legislature was in session and talked tough to them about issues of concern to the Mississippi AFL-CIO. Doubtless, there is some truth to this, especially in the early 1960s when Walter Sillers, Speaker of the House, refused to meet with Ramsay

and discuss legislation of interest to organized labor. Behind that gruffness was a clever mind that understood both the strengths and weakness of organized labor in Mississippi and could adapt to changing circumstances without sacrificing fundamental principles. With the passage of time and the growth of organized labor, he became especially adept at working with the state legislature in support of issues of interest to labor. Legislative leaders were now more open to meet with him and discuss legislation. He also displayed considerable political skill in persuading legislative committee chairman to hold public hearings on proposals and then arranging for several people from the legislator's electoral district who supported the legislation to attend. Invariably, the legislator would note the presence of constituents, which allowed Ramsay to note this in his face-to-face discussions with the committee chairman. Of equal importance was his sense of when to push hard and when not to. He also was careful not to burn any bridges. Years later, he explained:

You don't get mad and start cussing someone out because he doesn't vote with you today because you might need him tomorrow and you might get to him if you don't upset him over that one vote. . . . you never see me doing that.⁷⁰

Of course, this did not always work but it worked enough.

Claude Ramsay's Opponents (1960 – 1974)

As noted earlier, the Citizens Council and later the Ku Klux Klan used economic pressure and violence to thwart efforts to support social change and promote civil rights for all Mississippians. Consequently, Ramsay came under the "cross hairs" of these two organizations. But Ramsay's opponents extended far beyond the Klan and the Council. In July 1966 he was a speaker at a National Defense Education Act Institute in History at the University of Mississippi that focused on industrialization and social change in the United States since 1877. He spoke about "The History and Development of Organized Labor in Mississippi" and highlighted the anti-labor bias of news media as a major impediment to the growth of organized labor in the state. He called attention to the *Tupelo Journal* anti-labor bias, noting over the past ten years more than fifty percent of the editorial content of

the newspaper was anti-labor.⁷¹ He then turned his attention to the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*, the Jackson *Daily News*, the two largest daily newspapers in Mississippi. They were owned by the Hedderman family, very conservative Southern Baptists and members of the First Baptist Church in Jackson, where Governor Barnette also was a member. Tom Ethridge was Editor of the *Clarion-Ledger* and wrote most of the editorials while Jimmie Ward was Editor of the *Daily News* and also wrote editorials. Both Ethridge and Ward hammered Ramsay and the AFL-CIO at every opportunity, smearing him with allegations he was a communist and was an enemy of Mississippi because he spoke out against violence and racism but Ramsay considered Ward and the *Daily News* as the worse. He declared:

The press in Mississippi has to be rated as the worst in the Nation. This is especially true as far as the Hederman papers in Jackson are concerned. The Jackson *Daily News* and the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* probably have done more to retard this state than any other single institution. These papers have for years kept the "Race Issue" alive and have added more fuel to the fires of racial hatred. Several of their columnists should be in mental institutions for they would have to be mentally unbalanced to write some of the rot they do.⁷²

Another key opponent was the membership of the local unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO. Ramsay recognized that many of the members of these unions had no interest in his promotion of the civil rights of Mississippi blacks, even including those blacks who belonged to unions. In fact, he had good reason to believe many union members either belonged to Citizen Councils or the Ku Klux Klan. They manifested their opposition either by disaffiliating from the Mississippi AFL-CIO or by opposing his reelection as president. For example, in 1964 eleven locals in the Pascagoula Metal Trades Council withdrew in protest of his stand on racial issues.⁷³ This happened numerous times and caused enormous financial challenges to the Mississippi AFL-CIO, which collected a fee from affiliated local unions that funded the state program. At one point it was running a \$900 deficit each month and it was not possible to pay some salaries. However, Ramsay's successful appeal to George Meany, President of the AFL-CIO, for financial assistance covered this deficit. Perhaps the most conspicuous aspect of internal opposition to Ramsay's leadership was a challenge to his reelection during the 1964 AFL-CIO

Convention. The challenger, who had close connections with the Barnett Administration, was “running almost exclusively on the race issue.”⁷⁴ Ramsay won convention reelection by a margin of 12,870 to 3,004.⁷⁵

After 1974

Claude Ramsay probably lost more battles than he won over the course of twenty-five years of leadership of the Mississippi AFL-CIO. But his courage and tenacity in fighting in the 1960s and 1970s to realize a Mississippi where race no longer dominates politics, where violence of the Ku Klux Klan is no longer tolerated, and where voices of justice and equality for all Mississippians are not suppressed suggests that ultimately he won the battles that counted. By the mid-1970s his stature as a civil rights leader and advocate for the powerless and the influence of organized labor in the deliberations of government were unquestioned. But he remained visible and productive in the remaining fifteen years of his life.

Property Tax Equalization

For several decades many Mississippi counties had ignored a provision of the Mississippi State Constitution that property taxes, axes, including the ratio of assessment to the value be uniform throughout the state. From the beginning of Ramsay’s tenure as president of the Mississippi AFL-CIO he had targeted tax property tax equalization as a high priority because the wide range in county real estate taxes created inadequate funding of some school systems and the legislature’s authorization of supplemental funding of local schools so the state was in effect subsidizing school systems that had not updated property appraisals and assessment ratios. The State Tax Commission had the constitutional authority to disapprove county tax assessment rolls for the failure to equalize property taxes but it lacked the political will to do so, knowing it would evoke fierce opposition of a tax increase.

For more than a decade Ramsay had tried with no success to persuade state legislators to correct this inequity, so he and his supporters decided a court mandated solution had the best chance of success.⁷⁶ The Mississippi AFL-CIO agreed to provide \$5,000 as seed money for the litigation. With the assistance of J. C. Redd, owner of Redd Pest Control and former Chairman of the Mississippi Economic Council (1973 – 1974), Ramsay organized Mississippians Associated for Tax Equity (MATE), a non-profit organization. In 1977 MATE sued the State Tax Commission to prevent it from approving the assessment rolls of any county until it equalized the assessment rolls among the counties.⁷⁷ After hearing testimony from county tax assessors about inequities in tax assessments, the presiding judge ruled in favor of MATE. After a series of appeals that upheld key components of the decision the State Tax Commission was directed to implement equalization of assessments beginning in 1978.

Reform of Public Education (1977 – 1982)

Claude Ramsay was a strong advocate of quality public education, believing that it offered a pathway to an informed citizenry and ultimately to the demise of “one-party politics” that dominated Mississippi. He believed the action of the State Legislature in 1956 to repeal compulsory school attendance as a way to block integration was wrong headed and ultimately harmful to the economic interests of Mississippi citizens. In his testimony before a Senate Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower and Poverty in 1967 he declared “It is a foregone conclusion that our problems with illiteracy will continue to grow until such a law is placed on the statute books. You have my assurance that we in the AFL-CIO are doing everything possible toward this end.”⁷⁸ Ten years later he was a leader in persuading the Legislature to reinstate the compulsory school attendance law. His public visibility as an advocate for quality public education led Governor William L. Winter to appoint him to a Blue Ribbon Committee on Education the Legislature had authorized in 1980. Ramsay served on this Blue Ribbon Committee Education that developed twenty-three proposals for upgrading Mississippi public education.⁷⁹

Mississippi Politics, A Failed Vision

By the mid-1970s it appeared Ramsay's vision, shared by many white liberals in Mississippi and outside the state, that registration of blacks to vote under a Democratic Party label would drive conservative white Democrats to the Republican Party and give rise to a viable two party system in Mississippi. The number of black legislators in the State Legislature was growing and the number of elected black local officials also was impressive, suggesting t a competitive two-party system was emerging. In retrospect, this was a temporary phenomenon because many white Mississippians are conservative and in the ensuing years this conservative mindset has returned the state to a one party political system under the control of the Republican Party.

Death of Claude Ramsay

After more than twenty-five years as President of the Mississippi AFL-CIO, Ramsay retired January 1, 1986. His retirement was short; he died in his sleep in his home on January 17, 1986. The Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* editorial on January 19, 1986, praised Ramsay, declaring he was a "prophet, catalyst for change."

He was among the earliest of white Mississippi leaders to fully espouse and fight for civil rights. This frequently put him at odds not only with management, but with many inside the labor movement . . . Claude Ramsay left his mark on the state of his birth. Mississippi is a better state because of his life, his dreams and his uphill fight.⁸⁰

Doubtless, it would have greatly pleased Ramsay to know

the *Clarion-Ledger*, his opponent for so many years, finally had seen the light

After Ramsay had announced in April 1985 that he would retire by the end of 1985, columnist Bill Minor noted, "For several years, some have felt that organized labor has needed a more polished and articulate spokesman in Mississippi to compete with industry and business organizations in vying for influence in the Legislature."⁸¹ That desire may in fact have been true, but the reality is that almost

thirty years after his death no leader of organized labor in Mississippi has had comparable public visibility and clout in public and private discussions and outcomes affecting so many Mississippians, white and black. Not bad for a boy born in the small town of Ocean Springs, Mississippi in 1916.

¹ This is one of a series of biographical sketches of white Mississippians whose public support for justice and equality for all Mississippians helped crack the wall of the “Closed Society” between 1954 and 1974.

² Orley B. Caudill, “An Oral History with Mr. Claude Ramsay (1981),” 12 – 16, The Mississippi Oral History Program, University of Southern Mississippi, Meridian, Mississippi...

³ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴ Alan Draper, *Conflict of Interests: Organized Labor and the Civil Rights Movement in the South, 1954 – 1968* (Ithaca: Industrial and Labor Relations Press, 1994), 124

⁵ Caudill, “An Oral History with Claude Ramsay,” 28 – 29.

⁶ Robert S. McElvaine, “Claude Ramsay, Organized Labor, and the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi, 1959 – 1966,” (eds.) Merl E. Reed, Leslie S. Hough, and Gary M. Fink, *Southern Workers and their Unions, 1880-1975: Selected Papers, the Second Southern Labor History Conference, 1978* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 111.

⁷ Draper, *Conflicts of Interest*, 127.

⁸ Draper, *Conflicts of Interest*, 128.

⁹ Ramsay to J. W. Franklin, Jr., June 9, 1961, Box 2184 Folder 8, Freedom Riders 1961, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records, L 1986-26, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia..

¹⁰ Caudill, “An Oral History with Mr. Claude Ramsay,” 63.

¹¹ Dennis J. Mitchell, *Mississippi Liberal: A Biography of Frank E. Smith* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 166.

¹² Caudill, “An Oral History with Mr. Claude Ramsay,” 43.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Ira Harkey, *The Smell of Burning Crosses* (Jacksonville, Ill: Harris-Wolfe, 1967), 175.

¹⁷ Caudill, “An Oral History with Mr. Claude Ramsay,” 54.

¹⁸ AFL-CIO News, September 10, 1966. Quoted in Draper, *Conflicts of Interest*, 147.

¹⁹ Correspondence, May - 1964, Box 1231, Folder 4, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.

²⁰ Draper, *Conflict of Interests*, 147.

²¹ Caudill, “An Oral History with Mr. Claude Ramsay,” 53.

²² *Ibid.*, 50.

²³ *Ibid.*, 160.

-
- ²⁴ Claude Ramsay, "Synopsis of Remarks," Merl E. Reed, et al, *Selected Papers*, 138. Draper, 137. Robert S. McElvaine described this as Ramsay's "sixth sense, which told him just how far he could go on the race issue without totally losing control of the state's labor movement." McElvaine, "Claude Ramsay, Organized Labor, and the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi, 1959 – 1966," 118.
- ²⁵ "WLBT manager accused of intimidation," *Broadcasting, the Business Weekly of Television and Radio* July, 1964, 34.
- ²⁶ "Now AFL-CIO is after WLB TV's license," *Broadcasting, the Business Weekly of Television and Radio* 8 June 1964, 6.
- ²⁷ "WLBT manager accused of intimidation," *Broadcasting, the Business Weekly of Television and Radio* July, 1964, 34.
- ²⁸ "Statement by Claude Ramsay, President Mississippi AFL-CIO, April 24, 1964," Box 2138, Folder 8, Misc. Statement and Interviews 1964, 1982 – 1983, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.
- ²⁹ Kay Mills, *Changing Channels: The Civil Rights Case That Transformed Television* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi), 64.
- ³⁰ "Executive Committee Minutes, April 29, 1964," Box 2235 Folder 8, WLBT Television Station April 1964, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records
- ³¹ Caudill, "An Oral History with Mr. Claude Ramsay," 76 – 77. Also see Box 2235 Folder 8, WLBT Television Station, April 1964. Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.
- ³² "Executive Committee Minutes, April 29, 1964," Box 2235 Folder 8, WLBT Television Station April 1964, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.
- ³³ Mississippi AFL-CIO Report, June 16, 1964. Box 2235, Folder 10, WBLT Television Station, June – September 1964, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.
- ³⁴ Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, June 24, 1969, Newspaper clipping. Box 2236 Folder 2, WLBT Television Station, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.
- ³⁵ "Mississippi Freedom Labor Union," 1965 available at <http://crmnet.org/docs.sncc50.flu.pdf>.
- ³⁶ Mark Newman, *Divine Agitators: The Delta Ministry and Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 95
- ³⁷ *Ibid.* This success was not based on a picket of the company but rather on the fact the company had just received a contract from the U.S. General Services Administration that called for a non-discrimination employment policy. The company chose to implement this policy rather than lose the contract to supply carpet to the federal government.
- ³⁸ "Mississippi Freedom Labor Union," available at <http://socialjustice.cmmmtl.columbia.edu/index>.
- ³⁹ Claude Ramsay, "A Report on the Delta Farm Strike," Farm Workers, Strike Mississippi Delta, 1965," Box 2186, Folder 7, 1-4, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² This minimum wage aspect was not realistic. John Dittmer notes that after passage of statute that increased the minimum wage to \$1.00 per hour the estimated cost of using herbicides to control weeds would be about twelve times less than manual weed chopping. *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Champaign: The University of Illinois Press, 1995), 385.
- ⁴³ Ramsay, "A Report on the Delta Farm Strike," 4.
- ⁴⁴ This section draws upon a description of "Project STAR," (1966). Copy in possession of the author provided by the St. Francis Center, Greenwood, Mississippi.
- ⁴⁵ Jackson *Daily News*, August 3, 1965, Box 2224 Folder 8, STAR, Inc., June – August 1965, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.
- ⁴⁶ Caudill, "An Oral History with Claude Ramsay," 68.
- ⁴⁷ The publicly stated grounds were financial improprieties and mismanagement but in fact the white power structure, especially at the local level, wanted STAR and other OEO poverty initiatives under its control. Joseph Crespino has described this phenomenon as it relates to the Child Development Group of Mississippi (Kindergarten) *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 135 – 136.

-
- ⁴⁸ Statement Delivered by Claude Ramsay, President of the Mississippi AFL-CIO Before the U. S. Senate Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower and Poverty, Pt. 2, Examination of the War on Poverty, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty, April 10, 1967, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, United States Senate (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1967 Box 2225, Folder 3, STAR. INC April 1967, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ Claude Ramsay to Sargent Shriver, June 21, 1967, Box 2225, Folder 5, STAR, Inc, June 1967, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.
- ⁵¹ Transcript of Non-Refunding Hearing, August 31, 1971, Atlanta, Georgia. Box 2228, Folder 8, Star, INC., Office of Economic Hearing, August 1971, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.
- ⁵² This discussion draws upon Draper, 152 – 157.
- ⁵³ Claude Ramsay to Phil Wrightman, March 22, 1966, Project File Box 1 Folder 33, Voter Education Project Organizational Records, Southern Regional Council, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center.
- ⁵⁴ Caudill, “An Oral History with Mr. Claude Ramsay,” 198. Charles Bolton, “An Oral History with Mr. Thomas Knight, Sr.,” (1994) 24, The Mississippi Oral History Program, University of Southern Mississippi.
- ⁵⁵ Draper, *Conflict of Interests*, 154.
- ⁵⁶ Claude Ramsay to Philip Wrightman, May 12, 1966, Box 2234, Folder 2, “Voter Registration, Organization File, 1966 – May 1967,” Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.⁵⁷ Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights* (Urbana: of Illinois Press, 1994), 416.
- ⁵⁸ Caudill, “An Oral History with Mr. Claude Ramsay,” 120-121.
- ⁵⁹ According to Stuart Wexler there were two separate branches of the KKK, the White Knights of the KKK (WKKKK) headed by Sam Bowers and the United Klans of American (UKA) headed by Edward L. McDaniel.” Mississippi Burning Killings: Religious Terrorism?” Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*, July 9, 2014.
- ⁶⁰ Caudill, “An Oral History with Mr. Claude Ramsay,” 65.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 84.
- ⁶² “Bombings, Laurel and Jackson, 1967 – 168,” Box 2178, Folder 9, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 122.
- ⁶⁴ American Civil Liberties Union 1968 - 1969, Box 2177 Folder 12, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ “Statement by Claude Ramsay, March 21, 1969,” American Civil Liberties Union, 1968-1969, Box 2177, Folder 12 Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.
- ⁶⁷ David Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly: The Troubled History of Higher Education in Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), 204 – 205.
- ⁶⁸ “Statement by Claude Ramsay, March 21, 1969,” American Civil Liberties Union, 1968-1969, Box 2177, Folder 12 Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records.
- ⁶⁹ Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly*, 205.
- ⁷⁰ Caudill, “An Oral History Interview with Claude Ramsay,” 173.
- ⁷¹ Claude Ramsay, “An Address by Claude Ramsay, President of the Mississippi AFL-CIO to the NDEA Institute in History, University of Mississippi,” Speeches, 1964 – 1967, Box 2138 Folder 12, Mississippi AFL-CIO Records.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*
- ⁷³ McElvaine, 117. He also noted the Pascagoula Metal Trades Council was the same group he had “talked sense to in 1962.
- ⁷⁴ McElvaine, 118.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁶ Caudill, “An Oral History with Mr. Claude Ramsay,” 184.
- ⁷⁷ Bill of Complaint in Hinds County Chancery Court, November 1977: J. C. Redd, Claude Ramsay, et al v. State Tax Commission of the State of Mississippi. Cited in Caudill, “An Oral History with Mr. Claude Ramsay,” 195.
- ⁷⁸ Statement Delivered by Claude Ramsay, President of the Mississippi AFL-CIO Before the U. S. Senate Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower and Poverty, Pt. 2, 603. Examination of the War on Poverty, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty, April 10, 1967.

⁷⁹ Charles C. Bolton, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi: A Biography* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 215.

⁸⁰ Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*, January 19, 1986. Newspaper clipping in Box 2138 Folder 13, Mis Obituary News, Articles, 1986, Mississippi AFL-CIO Records.

⁸¹ Bill Minor, "Ramsay to step down," Biographical News Items, 1965, 1983-1986, Box 2138 Folder11, Mississippi AFL-CIO Records.