

Immediate News Release

From: Fred Davis and Rufus Jones

Due to (1) numerous inquiries, both personal and by telephone, from many people in the City and across the State, concerning the circumstances surrounding our dismissal from the State Department of Revenue and (2) in order to comment of the reasons given by Commissioner Donald King for our dismissal, we think it is in the public interest to make this release.

We feel that our dismissal is a definite abuse of authority and power entrusted to the present State Administration by the citizens of the State. We were dismissed from our jobs with thirty (30) minutes notice with no explanation from Commissioner Donald King other than "for the good of the service" without recourse or appeal.

When we accepted employment as auditors in the Sales and Use Tax Division, the Commissioner outlined three things that he demanded of all of his employees: honesty, an eight hour work day, and loyalty to the administration. Our honesty has never been questioned, even by the Commissioner. As to eight hours work a day, our records as compiled by the Sales and Tax Division will indicate that we were on the job. As for loyalty, neither, at the time we were employed by the State, nor during the past election campaign did we fee that the State Administration demanded us as part of its loyalty active and enthusiastic political support of the Administrations's candidates for all public offices. We took no active part, whatever, in the August 6 election even though most of our friends and the organizations, of which we are members, supported Congressman Ross Bass. Apparently, we are being penalized because of our inaction and failure of the Negro voters to support the Governor.

Originally there was no reason given for our dismissal; however, according to the news media, Commissioner King, after further prevailing, attributed our dismissal to: (1) inability to do the job; (2) failure to take instruction from supervisors; and (3) absence from duty without permission.

The cumulative record compiled by the Sales Tax Division for the fiscal year ending, June 30, 1964, fails to substantiate the charge of our inability to do the job or our failure to follow instructions. During this fiscal year, eighteen auditors worked out of the Memphis office. The comparative records show Rufus Jones ranked third, considering all categories. Fred Davis was second out of three in all categories when compared with men who started working at the same time he did. Incidentally, neither of these men was dismissed. Davis' record was better than many of the men who worked the entire year.

The records in the Department also failed to support the charge of "absence from duty without permission". At the time of dismissal Rufus Jones had accumulated thirteen (13) days of annual leave and thirteen (13) days of sick leave. In fact, he has only taken five (5) days of his annual leave, and one (1) day of sick leave. Fred Davis had accumulated seven (7) days annual leave and seven (7) days sick leave. Supervisors had prior knowledge in each and every case when annual leave was taken.

During our tenure of service, our immediate supervisors, Mr. Hubert Tate, and the Field Audit Chief, Mr. Edward Payne, assured us that our work was complimentary. We take personal pride in our work as auditors for the State.