

SUMMARY OF STAFF RETREAT MINUTES

Friday- Nov. 6th 1964

Ivanhoe explained the reason for the retreat - need for the entire staff to meet, sit down, and deeply analyze the essence of the organization and its relationship to the communities in which we work.

Jim called for unity and internal cohesion and a consensus of the group that all gathered here to be considered the coordinating committee. The coordinating comm. to elect representatives to the executive comm. and a call comm. to be elected to decide when the coordinating comm. should meet and who should meet with it.

Workshops met, and the steering committee drew up an agenda on what people wanted to discuss. It was decided to break the retreat into discussions on goals, programs, and structure.

Saturday- Nov. 7th

Who are we working for and how do we work in the field?

These following points were made:

- a) Should encourage local groups to build local organizations.
 - b) We weren't teaching local people, but learning along with them.
 - c) We should stimulate, teach, and then move. Point was made that we must recognize that developing and teaching sometimes takes years and this must be accepted.
 - d) Along with being organizers, we must be teachers too.
- Frank Smith felt that the basic problem was "how do we think about people". When we constantly lose the distinction between staff and local people, we isolate ourselves and cannot speak to the level of local people.

Most of the workshops agreed that:

- a) There is a prime concern for educating ourselves and other people. It is recognized that SNCC has failed to transmit its beliefs to people with whom we work.
- b) We should work to develop local leadership.
- c) We do not and should not work within the "system".
- d) There is a need for coordination between Atlanta and the field, for Atlanta exists for the field.
- e) One workshop felt the need to seriously discuss the role and problem of women, and thus of men, within SNCC, for the problem is deeply rooted as is the problem of race.

It was suggested by workshop XI:

Areas of training should be: functional skills; programs; principles of organization in different areas; ideological probing - need for materials and a research library; and training by staff in specialized areas.

It was felt that there was a need for a mobile teaching crew and that education was the most important program for us to undertake. Mendy Samstein was appointed as chairman of the educational program.

Sunday- Nov. 8th

What does it mean to be a revolutionary?

We do not want to build black machines - thus, we need to know what we are doing. We need to realize that we are ignorant of much. Need to seriously assess what has happened as the result of the Convention Challenge and the Summer Project. People are very confused on FDP - Johnson means Freedom. Concern was felt about what are our long range-goals - work within the two party system or build a third party? Other people expressed feeling that we must realize there are steps and we can't know everything. We must work with what we have at the present time and build from there, but at the same time to be aware of what we want to do.

Sunday (Continued)

Program workshops directly related to organizing in field to be held: voter registration, public accommodations, community centers, freedom schools, political programs, adult education. Support programs: communications, research, campus, FOS, and education.

It was felt workshops should make specific proposals, but not mandate, and to say what knowledge was needed to carry on programs.

Monday

Discussion of work area workshops:

Freedom School proposals and discussion:

There is a need for adequate orientation of f.s. teachers. Local people, especially those involved in last summer's program, must become an integral part of the f.s. program. The idea for residential schools is important. There should be more than one. Perhaps, one f.s. can be held in the North to involve Southern kids with students from Northern ghetto areas. The f.s. program should be expanded all over the South. The staff should consider f.s. orientation to take place this winter, and outside the South. There should be a close working relationship between the f.s. staffs and the rest of project staff. Emphasis should be on citizenship curriculum; should encourage self-expression as well as training young people to be organizers.

Points made in discussion:

Emphasis during orientation sessions, should be on teaching methods. If a class is silent, fault lies with teacher, not students. Idea of education should be revolutionary; kids should be center of educational process, kids should plan curriculum themselves; what is needed is materials for them, not a SNCC planned curriculum. Should have curriculum for guidelines, for teachers to use flexibly and creatively. Can use curriculum for combination of freedom and information. Should prepare all kinds of materials for teachers for necessary information and give them freedom to discard what they don't wish to use. In Chicago f.s., have already begun to develop materials. We should think in terms of what the children want to learn. The only way to teach kids and to learn from them, is to find out what they want to know. Teachers must be flexible and willing to try many different approaches that take time. Staff people should be able to function in the f.s. program, they have much to offer the young people. It is hoped that the f.s. coordinator will travel around. Both Cobb and Featherstone should coordinate the program together.

Federal Programs:

It is a technical area, and staff should be educated about different aspects of the federal programs. Workshop wants research staff to investigate federal programs and motives behind programs, and then explain them to whole staff to see what we expect to get out of them. The educational committee should rewrite government publications

Federal programs (continued)

to make them plain for both local and staff people.

People "who know" are not only those who have the technical knowledge about federal programs, but also those working out in the field trying to make use of the bills Congress has passed.

We should examine our attitude toward the federal government before we examine details of various programs.

Labor and Employment:

There is a need for more technical knowledge in this field.

Can form "freedom locals" to give workers practice in organizing. Do labor problems mean unions?

As with the r.s. should find out what people want themselves, talk to people, find out how they feel about their jobs.

Are we really capable of taking on another program?

We are not ready, we lack experience and knowledge.

We are ready to tackle labor problems, as we did voter registration 3 years ago on empty stomachs.

Problem of organizing farm workers is related to problem of land reform. Labor unions are organized to get the dollar, not to deal with total problems. Should organize the unemployed around building roads, hospitals, etc. And to pressure federal government to alleviate immediate needs of people.

It is not our job to organize unions for big international unions; we need more than labor unions. We should develop approach of organizing people to challenge unions.

If we organize people, all should decide where to focus attention.

We must remember this is a new program.

A man's job is central to his life, we must deal with his work, for economic and political problems are related.

Those interested in this area should begin to work and research on programs.

Community Centers:

The people working on c.c. workshop didn't have enough knowledge or experience, and so didn't discuss programs in c.c. The workshop asked for support of Johnson's 20-page proposal for training program for local people and staff. Was to be a 6-week training period.

It would be on-the-job training program. A site to consider is Batesville.

What is the purpose of the c.c. and how does it relate to our whole programs? Before we can accept training program, we need to discuss what they are and why.

Should change the name to "freedom centers", wherein the freedom schools could function and give more cohesion to our overall program.

C.C. should have varied programs and should be entirely run by local people. The c.c. can do what no present institution can -- allow us to speak and relate to people on all age levels and around many issues.

Discussion cut off for lunch.

Later that Monday:

Forman's working paper on structure was handed out. A concern

for pressing time element people felt brought about halt of program discussions.

Proposals for working papers were briefly explained by Forman, Casey, and Mary Varela.

Some conflict arose on question of northern staff. It was pointed out that Friends of SNCC offices are staffed by volunteers, but northern staff should be considered just as rest of staff is.

People expressed concern for geographical representation: different areas have different problems, thus brings a need for balance. Others felt that there was no need for geographical representation and feared that it bred a loss of feeling that we are all one, doing the same things.

Tuesday

Much concern with lots of people leaving the retreat. It was mentioned that we must realize we are not a band of brothers -- we all come from different backgrounds and people are leaving as we talk of structure and some people don't know what government is.

Suggestion was made to break into workshops along seniority lines. This was opposed because it was felt that older members of the organization operated in entirely different spheres than most of us do now.

Need for structure to carry out programs, but what happened to programs?

Expressed concern for people to express their needs.

Concern with demoralization on some projects because of lack of needed materials and information. Question are to whom do you go when things are needed? If you are new to organization and you don't know people individually, or don't know Jim, what then? Now, only Jim can decide or get you what you may need.

There was basic disagreement on need and function of executive committee; One point of view -- no need for executive comm. if decisions are made by people on local projects and those on program committees.

Another point of view -- Executive comm. should be mainly administrative - should deal with fund raising, WATS line installation, make interim political decisions.

Still another view -- Executive comm. should function to coordinate various parts; that is, program coordinators to be responsible to executive comm.

There was some concern that we were imposing a structure without regard to people's needs. Some felt that a small group should deal with problem of structure.

Wednesday

Workshops on structure held all day.

Thursday

People discussed motivation behind development of proposals: Structure B--- started from needs - personnel/finance committee Also, from how to deal with desires of local people. Underlying B is acceptance that each person can be responsible for

Motivation for structure B (continued)

his job and each can have power to make decisions.

Opposition to B:

People can't make meaningful decisions because they lack the knowledge; Doesn't deal realistically with outside world; No check on personnel/finance committee; We can't exist from coordinating comm. meeting to coord. comm. meeting without an interim body; local people should not make decisions in SNCC, but in their local organizations. It was agreed that coordinating comm. should meet 3 times a year.

It was said that B could service a movement whereas A and C were built to become institutions. Most felt that power must be delegated to somebody responsible between coordinating comm. meetings.

Idea of executive secretariat:

3 people to rotate - 2 in field, 1 in office-to handle small problems of finance and resources.

The interim committee in A is like program hang-up man in B. Others expressed need to have someone pull things together, to see that others do the job.

It was said that we have hard time thinking each person can be responsible and thus, need to have someone in an over-all position.

There is a need to have staff write about what they can do and a need to inform people on how things got done before.

What kind of structure we are to have was left hanging.

It was said that we weren't really ready for not having someone to watch over us, but we should recognize the need to start making it possible for people, everyone, to make decisions, and to be responsible for themselves, and thus for others.

Decided to continue until next staff meeting with Courtland Cox, Ivanhoe Donaldson, and Jim Forman in their respective positions, program director, administrative assistant, and executive secretary. And to work on educational program, hold mobile workshops, and get educational materials out to people. A planning committee of volunteers is to meet to plan the general format and place for the next staff meeting.