

May 16, 1964

Report to SCEF and SNCC

by Sam Shirah

In Re: White Southern Student Project (School Year 1963-64)

This school year I have visited some 48 colleges in the South as well as several in the North, covering some nine Southern states. Thirty-two of these were predominantly white schools and 16 were predominantly Negro.

Ed Hamlett, who joined the project in February, 1964, has visited at least another dozen colleges. This makes a total of at least 60 colleges in the South covered this school year.

At the beginning of the year, I projected the following 10 aims: (1) Contact Southern white students; (2) Interpret the student movement to them; (3) Inspire and interest them; (4) Interest them in some sort of constructive action; (5) Aid them in meeting the community leaders in their area; (6) Aid them in contacting Negro students in the area; (7) Acquaint them with organizations active in the movement and with their literature; (8) Acquaint them with some of the leaders in the movement; (9) Help them relate to the activity in their area; and (10) Indicate some areas of technique for action.

We have made at least 1,000 contacts with students, faculty, and other concerned persons. This was done through student conferences, visiting the campuses, and obtaining names from other organizations and individuals. I have catalogued the names of 467 that I personally contacted last fall. We have distributed thousands of pieces of material throughout the South, including SNCC literature and The Southern Patriot.

We have been instrumental in organizing many local protest groups such as the Student Nonviolent Action Group (SNAG) in Tallahassee, Fla., and Students for Social Action (SSA) at the University of Louisville. Organizing local protest groups was one of the main objectives of the project last fall. By the beginning of the calendar year 1964, however, I saw the need for ~~for~~ a southwide organization of southern white students, so that in January I began working on this. One of the results was the Georgia Students for Human Rights, which has members on most of the college campuses in Georgia. Ed Hamlett was added to the staff in January when it became necessary to have more than one person visiting the campuses.

We began working with the group in Nashville to organize the Southern Students Organizing Committee (SSOC), which is now a going organization closely associated with SNCC. I also became concerned about the need to organize a movement in the white community to be allied with the Negro community in the fight on poverty, racism, and autocracy. The natural place for this was in Appalachia. Due to some misunderstandings and false reports, we have decided not to do this in Hazard, Ky., or Appalachia, Va., as originally planned, but to set up such a project in East Tennessee with the aid of SCEF and the possible cooperation of Highlander Center and NAACP leaders in that section.

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