

PROSPECTUS FOR THE WHITE SOUTHERN STUDENT PROJECT

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The need for movement in the white communities.

Bayard Rustin referred specifically to this need in relation to the current crisis in the civil rights movement. He suggested that the concerned white students, instead of donning overalls and going into the Negro communities, should organize their own communities around action projects. There is an increasing awareness of the existence of "the invisible poor" due to the publicity gained by President Johnson's war on poverty. Slum conditions have been brought to the foreground by Washington and New York rent strikes. Civil rights groups have been creating movement in the Negro communities, but where is the movement for the forgotten whites--the jobless, the poverty-stricken, the sharecroppers? There are not only large numbers of unemployed and underemployed, but also large numbers who are unemployable. There are areas in which job retraining programs following the coming of automation cannot answer the problem because there are no jobs available. The fact is that there simply are no jobs to be found.

The system that oppresses the Negro oppresses the poor white also--and not only the poor white. The college student, the professor, the minister suffer from a denial of the freedom of thought, of speech, of press, of association. When these people speak out, they lose their jobs: they are expelled from school; they are called Communists: crosses are burned in their yards; they suffer other harrassment by the community.

There is a need for movement in the white community that would be complementary to the movement in the Negro community. Potentially radical students on the verge of rebellion need some type of stimulus. None of the present civil rights organizations have moved into this area to bring about a people's movement.

Action has begun in certain areas.

1. Hazard, Ky.--Berman Gibson, The Committee for Miners, etc.
2. Clairfield, Tenn.--Poverty-stricken parents organized boycott of a school.
3. Atlanta--Georgia Students for Human Rights organized. They have participated in direct action and have taken steps to speak out.
4. Florida--students have begun to move.
5. Texas--the Democratic Coalition
6. Chapel Hill--college students involved in the integration movement.
7. University of Southern Mississippi--student starting off-campus newspaper to bring out the issues that have been censored by the University.

8. Millsaps--several students contacted are action-oriented. One plans to publish an off-campus literary magazine with orientation towards social criticism.
9. Berea College--students interested in action in the Appalachian area and are presently working on the coming March on Frankfort for public accommodations.
10. Nashville--students have organized direct action and are planning a Southern Students Organizing Fund.

Programs to be considered.

1. Community centers--work with juvenile delinquency, health problems, school dropouts, birth control, pre- and post-natal care, literacy and political education projects combined with voter registration.
2. Cultural projects (similar to the proposed Jackson, Mississippi Theatre) to be introduced into culturally deprived areas such as the Appalachians.
3. Rent strikes and sit-ins at graineries.
4. Slumclearance and area improvement.
5. Newsletter--setting up communication of ideas and programs for active students on campuses separated by distance.
6. Organization of migrant workers.
7. Working with children--relationship on level of person to person. Could give valuable insight into the problems and attitudes of the adult community.
8. Organization of the unemployed--mass marches--coordinate with the unemployed Negroes.
9. Possibility of organizing industrial workers through grants from unions.
10. Summer project in Mississippi in white community--complementary to SNCC summer project.
11. Organization of poor whites in large industrial cities such as Birmingham.
12. Programs in areas where large numbers of students congregate--Daytona Beach during spring vacation, etc.
13. Help by Highlander Center with organizational training.
14. Women's strike for freedom--Contact people experienced in this area--Lillian Smith, Mrs. Matt Herron, Virginia Durr. Efforts to dispel the whole "we must maintain segregation to protect our women", the "would you want your daughter to marry a Negro argument." Also organized around a variety of issues--peace, bad schools, poverty, women's rights.

Possibilities for work at the student level.

1. off-campus newspapers, leaflets, mass meetings
2. Find potential activists at religious foundations, on newspaper staff, in the drama, literature and art crowd, etc.
3. Interest could be stimulated by bringing in such people as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, the Freedom Singers.

4. Civil liberties and academic freedom issues--freedom of thought speech press, and association. "In loco parentis" and "conduct unbecoming to a student" clauses.
5. There could be test cases on censorship of speakers--Gus Hall Rockwell, John Lewis, etc. could be invited to campus.
6. Intimidation or expulsion of students can be issues around which to rally the rest of the campus.

Things to avoid.

1. Surface changes that do not get to the heart of the problem.
2. Doing things for people--then pulling out without establishing local leaders and local movement.
3. Rigid, bureaucratic dehumanizing organization.

Efforts should be made to understand the relationship between issues--segregation, poverty, unemployment, the permanent war economy.

There is a need for constant reevaluation--the program should be continuously checked to see if it is moving towards the goals.