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Confidential Memorandum

To: SNCC Exec

September 6, 1963

From: Eleanor Holmes

Re: SNCC and the Big 10 of the March on Washington

## I. Current Situation

The event of the actual March on Washington did not end the phenomenon of the March on Washington. The crowd of nearly a quarter of a million pledged to return to their communities and continue demonstrating and otherwise to press for the 10 demands of the March.

The most immediate of these demands is, of course, the breaking of the filibuster and the passage of civil rights legislation. On Thursday, September 5, 1963, representatives of the leaders of the 6 major civil rights organizations and of American Labor, Protestants, Catholics and Jews voted to recommend to their organizational heads (collectively the Big 10) that they continue operating within the context of the March on Washington. The continuation of the March on Washington as an action structure seemed necessary if the March is to keep its premise of seeing the legislation through and pressing for other March demands such as the reduction of Congressional representation of states where citizens are disfranchised and the enactment of a \$2 minimum wage.

## II. Importance of Continued SNCC Involvement in the Big 10

Besides the prestige that may accrue to SNCC by its continued inclusion in the Big 10 as a major civil rights organization, there are very real advantages SNCC derives from its involvement. And, on the other hand, as the most militant of the civil rights organizations, SNCC has an obligation to keep its point of view alive in the Committee and to seek to move it in a more militant direction.

### A. Obligations of SNCC to the Civil Rights Struggle as the Most Militant of the Big 10

The first meeting after the March indicates something of the importance of SNCC influence, even on a group which is far more conservative than we are. In the discussion on whether or not the March apparatus was to continue and what form it should take, a very revealing division emerged. Those with connections or illusions about the "power structure" (especially the Kennedys) were initially either doubtful about continuing the March apparatus at all or were for narrowing its focus to the weak Kennedy legislation. Proponents of this point of view included the American Jewish Congress and the United Auto Workers. Getting a million signatures to Congress was their conception of direct action. SNCC, CORE, NALC, and Bayard Rustin, director of the March argued for the continuation of the March apparatus at least for the immediate period following the March and for a continued focus on all the demands of the March. The other members of the Committee came around to this view. A special recommendation to the Big 10 that the March continue was voted.

SNCC is the chief spokesman in the Committee for the broad view of the March. SNCC, most likely in alliance with CORE, must be responsible for keeping the total spectrum of demands before the Committee: not just Kennedy's legislation but good legislation which will include protection for Negroes registering to vote and an F.E.P.C.; not just lobbying but demonstrating; not just a grand show of strength in one mammoth demonstration but a diligent follow-up that will show that the civil rights movement means business.

It is true that SNCC's influence on the far too conservative Big 10 cannot be sufficient. Even the Big 6 includes the far richer, far more influential, and far more conservative NAACP and Urban League. But SNCC can and has found allies on the Committee to keep sell-outs from happening. SNCC should not abandon its radicalizing role at this juncture.

#### B. Advantages to SNCC's own Program Coming out of Involvement in the Big 10

While the plan for action in the next few weeks has not been worked out yet, your chairman has a super secret document in the nature of a prospectus prepared by Bayard Rustin. It calls for local activity to dramatize the need for strong civil rights legislation and national activity focused in Washington to achieve the same effect. In both of these areas SNCC would have a key role.

On the local level, SNCC demonstrations in conjunction with March demands would have some protection from the Big 10. Such demonstrations, geared of course, to SNCC's activity and interests, would gain in publicity, prestige, and hopefully in impact and effect by their connection to the March demands.

On the national level, field workers and staff would be called to Washington from the South for the People's Congress. They would testify about police brutality, the need for protection of Negroes trying to register and the countless hardships encountered in the South, hardships of which America is still largely unaware. In response to our testimony, the People's Congress would pass an "ideal" civil rights bill and thereby divert attention from the expected filibuster, which should be in progress at the time.

These hearings would almost certainly be dominated by SNCC, perhaps with some CORE and SCLC people, because only SNCC is really concentrating on the tough protest areas. Thus SNCC would get national publicity on its trouble areas and perhaps shock the country (the Congress?) into taking more profound action in our aid.

#### III. Conclusions

SNCC has a unique role to play in the Big 10 at this time. Failure to continue to be active after the enormous success of the March would be harmful to SNCC's prestige and, more importantly, would cut SNCC off from exerting any influence nationally on the direction of the civil rights struggle.

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Continued participation has the advantage of giving us an audience for atrocities and hardships too long obscured and withheld from the public.

It is therefore recommended:

- 1) That SNCC continue to operate in the March on Washington
- 2) That SNCC press for:
  - a) Connecting up local demonstrations with the Big 10 and the March in order to afford us added protection
  - b) A people's congress where SNCC workers would testify about conditions in the South and the need for legislation far stronger than that President Kennedy has offered.