

[Nov 1963]

SNCC Conference on Jobs and Food

Dear Friend:

The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee's Annual Leadership Conference will be held in Washington, D. C. The conference will concern itself with some of the basic problems encountered by our workers in the field, providing jobs and food for the people of depressed rural areas. It is our hope to examine, with the assistance of people who have knowledge of, and experience with these problems, their causes and possible solutions.

In our efforts to help the Southern Negro secure his voting rights, even in the few areas where economic reprisals are not immediately mounted, the normal level of unemployment and poverty is frequently so entrenched and extreme that it becomes necessary to develop programs to feed, house, and clothe our nation's dispossessed, while utilizing the governmental and social machinery that exists to alleviate this situation.

In the South, machinery is replacing the Negro sharecropper and industrial worker. In some communities up to 50% of the Negro work force is either unemployed or underemployed, and thus forced onto relief rolls which are frequently administered by racist controlled local agencies. The masses of the jobless are unable to obtain the training that would make it possible for them to move up to the white collar jobs which are opening up, even if these jobs were to be made available to Negroes.

Therefore, the primary goal of the conference is to acquaint our field workers with the existing programs in the areas of man-power re-training, job relocation, economic relief to rural communities, and the details of how to set about getting them into a given community. We shall also give consideration to whatever possibilities there are of getting Federal medical programs into communities which have no or inadequate facilities for medical care for Negroes. Speakers at the program will discuss the specific problems of the small farmer, the unemployed and underemployed laborer and the out-of-school and unprepared youth. Emphasis will be placed on the plight of the Negro in Mississippi.

It is shocking that although the country is not supposed to be currently caught up in an economic slump, there are people both Negro and white who subsist at a starvation level, and who do in fact die from starvation. It is clear that the entire social and economic face of the South must be lifted, and that new programs must be developed and utilized to do this. However, what we expect to do at this conference is to explore the possibilities that do exist under the present machinery, and which are, for a number of reasons are not being effectively utilized.

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