

STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
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COMMITTEE

HISTORY

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was born out of the history-making sit-in movement that erupted across the South in the spring of 1960. At Easter of that year, the first Southwide meeting of sit-in leaders was held in Raleigh, North Carolina. Here a temporary committee to promote communication and coordination of activities among protest groups was set up. This group met monthly during the summer, opened an office in Atlanta, and at a second conference held in Atlanta, October, 1960, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was formally organized. One representative from each Southern state and the District of Columbia made up the Coordinating Committee.

Participation in the Freedom Rides in 1961 and a growing sense of the depth of fear that shackled most Negroes of the South convinced SNCC leaders that someone would have to take the freedom movement to the millions of exploited, disfranchised and degraded Negroes of the Black Belt section of the South. Thus SNCC in 1961 began to do just that:

In August, 1961, SNCC launched its first voter-registration project, choosing Walthall, Pike, and Amite Counties of Mississippi. This sparked nonviolent direct action by hundreds of high school students in McComb, Mississippi, and led to the development of a statewide voter registration program, recently dramatized by the use of snarling police dogs to stop Negroes from registering in Greenwood, Mississippi.

October, 1961: SNCC workers went to Albany, Georgia, and became the catalytic fuse for the massive protests of the Albany Movement.

By November, 1961, some sixteen students had volunteered to take a year or more from school to work in the hard-core areas for subsistence only.

PROGRAM

SNCC'S grass-roots approach is designed to build indigenous, trained leadership on college and high school campuses and in local communities.

In recruiting potential student leaders from college campuses and sending them to work in rural counties, SNCC hopes to bridge the gap between centers of learning and the work-a-day communities.

SNCC workers have organized and guided local protest movements that are never identified as SNCC projects. This is part of the program of developing and building and strengthening indigenous leadership.

This program has captured the imagination of students all over the country, and today more than 150 SNCC field secretaries are symbols of courage and dedication as they undertake the often tedious and tiring, and always dangerous work in the most difficult areas of the South: Mississippi, Central Alabama, Southwest Georgia, Eastern Arkansas, Southern Virginia.

These students work for subsistence salaries, when funds are available. But at times they have chopped cotton and picked squash to secure food. They live in the community, often in the homes of local residents, for the weeks and months that are required to break through generations of fear and intimidation. The students' courage helps emerging leaders achieve a new self-image and the strength to act. Slow, steady personal contact, discussion, persuasion give the people confidence in the SNCC worker and the program he advocates. Then the people begin to gain enough confidence in themselves to seek and assert their rights.

In the community SNCC workers organize for voter registration and direct action. SNCC voter registration efforts give disfranchised Negroes the right to vote in areas where they have been denied this right since Reconstruction. And, fully as important, the program deepens an awareness of the meaning of first class citizenship, develops a community of action, and creates mutual trust and support among people who too often have been suspicious and divided by fear.

As of summer, 1963, SNCC had initiated and participated in direct action campaigns in 54 cities in the 13 Southern states.

STRUCTURE

SNCC is not a membership organization, but rather an agency attempting to stimulate and foster the growth of local protest movements. The Coordinating Committee itself consists of representatives of protest groups who meet regularly to formulate strategy, to review the general program, and to give direction to the staff.

FUTURE

The future means redoubled efforts to continue introducing educated and determined young workers into the hard core areas while maintaining a college contact program which leads to militant action in cities and provides new recruits for full time work later.

SNCC hopes in the future to expand pilot projects from one town to surrounding counties, find funds to support students who wish to join the staff, provide more and better workshops and conferences on the meaning and techniques of nonviolent community action and political involvement.

SNCC hopes in the future to make the South into a just and free land. We intend that the future will not be distant.