

TO: SNCC STAFF & OTHERS
FROM: COURTLAND COX
RE: STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHALLENGE

There have been many ideas presented concerning the need to bring to bear student pressure around the issues of the MFDP challenge and the right to vote.

This proposal hopes to present some of these ideas.

In order to put this proposal in some context, I would like to raise with you some of the questions that have been presented.

First, thousands of students from the North desire to come South this summer. Of those students that wish to come, only about 5 or 10% could be used this summer. Keep in mind that unlike last summer, many people in the local areas feel they should assume responsibility that the Northern students and SNCC/COFO workers held last summer.

Second, the need for us to show the volunteers from the North the need to begin working in their own backyards.

Finally, the need to build a base around the country of people who can exert pressures toward the issues we are trying to raise - eg, the FDP challenge and the voting bills.

These are some of the "whys" involved in this proposal.

I would like to talk about how we might begin to do some of these things.

We could have four regional conferences of college students who are interested in the South and the FDP challenge. These conferences would be held in the West, Midwest, Northeast and the South.

Sometime in March a planning meeting of 60 or 70 students concerned about the FDP challenge would be held to discuss the forms and actions the regional conferences would take. The planning meeting would be attended by campus student representatives from all parts of the country.

We hope to have this meeting somewhere in the state of Mississippi, so that many members of the FDP can attend as possible.

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Hopefully, out of these conferences will come stress on local action both in the college community and involving their parents and friends in their home towns.

Frank Smith has written a proposal to have the people who cannot vote in this country write their own voting bill. As I understand his ideas, this is necessary for certain reasons. First, the people who cannot read or write because they didn't have a chance to go to school will really not be able to vote in large numbers. Second, we believe that any government affects all the people subjected to it, and therefore they ought to have some say about what that government is to be.

Third, the experience of writing and fighting for a voting bill would be one of the best ways to gain some political insights in the way this country functions.

The FDP intends to write its own voting bill. Arkansas, Alabama and Southwest Georgia and other places where people are voteless intend to write their own voting bills.

As stated, the voting bills would probably require that an applicant be at least 18 years old and a resident of his state for a certain period of time (age and residence). These would be the only requirements for voting in the United States.

The country feels that people who are 18 years old are too young to vote and that people who cannot read and write are too dumb to vote.

I would like to propose that after the MFDP voting bill and perhaps bills from one or two states are produced, that we take two steps:

First, hold hearings in Jackson, Mississippi around the right to vote. Those who cannot vote by reason of age or education would appear before a panel of "distinguished" people to discuss the issues (This is Frank Smith's idea).

Second, bring as many people as possible to Washington, D. C. These people should be drawn from two main areas, the college campuses and the rural areas of the South. We should also try to include the residents of Washington, D. C. who don't at this time possess the vote.

As suggested by the paper on SNCC programs, we will ask people to engage in non-violent direct action. This action would be taken to dramatize the need for legislation based on the "One Man - One Vote" concept, requiring one to give only residence and age as a voting requirement.

Further, the objective of such a demonstration, as advanced by the SNCC paper, would be:

to lobby and engage in direct action on behalf of a voting bill based on One Man - One Vote.

to lobby and engage in action for home rule in Washington.

I would like to hear some comment and criticism from each and every one of you.

Courtland Cox