

TO ATLANTA OFFICE STAFF

If the materials which now go out from Communications in Atlanta are appraised, it is clear that they are half-baked when compared to professional standards. We should want the finest.

What concerns me is an increasing gap which may develop between what is written and published, and what is written and published about. If the Atlanta office has service to the field as its primary goal, it is not certain that this can best be accomplished by stepping up publications. When SNCC first began sending out press releases they served to establish SNCC as a bona fide organization with a separate identity. Press releases today seem to serve a mainly documentary purpose - as an archives. SNCC is listened to today, as it once was not. SNCC's program forced the press and the nation to listen. Greater sophistication and better methods for dealing with the press nationally have been developed. We are listened to more attentively. This relationship is of course enhanced by authoritative mailings, but especially pre-publicity and the network of our own contacts that has grown up. One dozen well-placed calls on the WATS line can serve to get more news out than four press releases.

I am wondering if discussion of expanding and systematizing the Atlanta office may not becloud a more fundamental issue of the total direction of SNCC.

It seems that articles about SNCC and news coverage come not so much because of the caliber of the releases - which of necessity cannot be used by the daily newspapers - but because pressure is mobilized through members of the press, Congressmen, and Friends groups. Burrelle's Press Clipping Service has shown this. Our greatest coverage seems to come because of 1.) pre-publicity or 2.) methods of getting news on the wires. Both of these rely heavily on phone calls, which in turn generate more pressure.

I agree that we need more people full-time for specified tasks in Communications; that none of the varied jobs are done with the degree of completeness and professionalism that might be desired. But it would seem that strengthening program - so there is dynamic and on-going activity in SNCC Southwide - is more important.

Presumably this coming summer will be high-pitched. Communications must be organized to meet the increasing needs of press and publicity. But more important it seems, is that we have the organizational and administrative structure to adequately handle this summer's program. For one thing, this would mean immediate provisions for sound recruitment and the appointment of a full-time administrator for summer program and personnel. Mississippi has some concrete plans, and wants to balance any white workers with Negroes. Of highest priority now might be the setting up of administrative machinery to ferret out competent workers, prepare for bail needs, work out scholarship needs, etc. Campus recruitment and summer programs might well be Atlanta's primary organizational concern now.

This is an oversimplification, but I have a fantasy. I can see a photography core headed up by a crackerjack photographer, with a darkroom, a printer and scattered field photographers all over the South. A propaganda core headed up by a highly creative photographer with several good design and layout people under him. A communications and news department with several people doing various types of writing. A print shop running 24 hours a day. A large output of first class material. Increased quality of news reporting. But the rest of SNCC operating on much the same level.

All of the Gadsden tapes and Danville pamphlets will not activate those two projects which are now quiescent. Gadsden and Danville don't need propaganda, they need skilled workers. For example, we have no way of knowing what might eventuate in the way of a viable movement in Southside Virginia by saturating the area with trained personnel - trained in economics among other things.

In other words, I think consideration of reorganization of Atlanta should be contingent on, and in rhythm with, our field projects.

Strengthening distribution of current materials, and our being able to fulfill project leaflet needs will help, it is true.

Part of propaganda is personal contact. Emphasis might be placed, as part of Communications, in making stronger ties with the nation's press, liberals in nooks and crannies of Capital Hill, liaisons with diplomats, etc., personally.

I am very much in favor of funnelling all pamphleteering, etc. through Danny Lyon. Hopefully, some writing can be farmed out for some pices to people who do not have full-time jobs in the office otherwise. I am in complete endorsement of structuring Communications.

I am also in favor of not losing sight that we do indeed exist here in Atlanta to service the field, and that our thinking must first be in tune with new developments there - before we develop a systematized shell which has glory of itself, but does not reflect new vitality "out there."

Mary King 2/3/64