

The following statement was adopted by a group of Southern students from predominantly white colleges and communities in a majority of the Southern states--Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia--meeting in Nashville, April 3-5, 1964.

WE'LL TAKE OUR STAND -- NASHVILLE, APRIL 4, 1964

It has been 35 years since a group of young intellectuals calling themselves the Southern "Fugitive Group" met here in Nashville and declared their hopes of stopping the clock and preventing social, spiritual and economic forces which are today still coming of age in the South. They wrote a statement called "I'll Take My Stand" in which they endorsed the old feudal agrarian aristocratic order of the South and opposed what they saw coming in the new order--widespread industrialization and urbanization with democracy and equality for all the people.

We do hereby declare, as Southern students from most of the Southern states, representing different economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds, growing from birthdays in the Depression years and the War years, that we will here take our stand in determination to build together a New South which brings democracy and justice for all its people.

Just a few years after the Fugitives took their stand, Franklin D. Roosevelt assumed the presidency of the U. S. and called our Southland "America's number one domestic problem." He talked about the needs of those Americans who were ill-housed, ill-fed, and ill-clothed. Today, in 1964, when a majority of our nation is living in an affluence which makes the spectres of poverty and racism tenfold more inexcusable, a Southerner is in the White House. Yet the struggle for equal opportunity for all men--white and non-white, young and old, man and woman, is by no means completed. Our Southland is still the leading sufferer and battleground of the war against racism, poverty, injustice and autocracy. It is our intention to win that struggle in our Southland in our lifetime--tomorrow is not soon enough.

Our Southland is coming of age, they say. But we both hope and fear for her new industries and her new cities, for we also are aware of new slums, newly unemployed, new injustices, new political guile--and the Old as well. Is our dream of democracy to be dashed just as were Jefferson's dreams and the Populist struggles lost in the blend of feudal power, racial fear and industrial oligarchic opportunism? Only as we dare to create new movements, new politics, and new institutions can our hopes prevail.

We hereby take our stand to start with our college communities and to confront them and their surrounding communities and to move from here out through all the states of the South--and to tell the the Truth that must ultimately make us free. The Freedom movement for an end to segregation inspires us all to make our voices heard for a beginning of a true democracy in the South for all people. We pledge together to work in all communities across the South to create non-violent political and direct action movements dedicated to the sort of social change throughout the South and nation which is necessary

to achieve our stated goals.

Our region must be an exemplar of the national goals we all believe in, rather than a deterrent to them:

- (1) Not only an end to segregation and racism but the rise of full and equal opportunity for all;
- (2) And end to personal poverty and deprivation;
- (3) An end to the "public poverty" which leaves us without decent schools, parks, medical care, housing, and communities;
- (4) A democratic society where politics poses meaningful dialogue and choices about issues that affect men's lives, not manipulation by vested elites;
- (5) A place where industries and large cities can blend into farms and natural rural splendor to provide meaningful work and leisure opportunities for all--the sort of society we can all live in and believe in.

We, as young Southerners hereby pledge to take our stand now together here to work for a new order, a new South, a place which embodies our ideals for all the world to emulate, not ridicule. We find our destiny as individuals in the South and in our hopes and our work together as brothers.

PROPOSAL OF ORGANIZATION

On the weekend of April 3-5, 1964, forty-five students from approximately fifteen predominantly white Southern campuses in ten states gathered in Nashville at the invitation of students from Vanderbilt University and Peabody and Scarritt Colleges. The goals of the conference were several: to assess the extent of involvement in civil rights by students at Southern campuses; to ascertain the amount of interest in action along other political, social, and economic lines, and to assess their student needs and set up a structure through which felt needs in these areas could be met.

Briefly these goals were achieved. It was determined that there is a great deal of activity on these campuses, ranging from moderate to radical. Furthermore, it was confirmed that students are interested in not only civil rights but in other areas beyond civil rights, e.g. peace, academic freedom, civil liberties, capital punishment and unemployment. Finally, a structure was set up. The group has called itself the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC). A Continuations Committee was directed to formulate specific proposals and programs designed to implement the goals of SSOC as set forth in the statement "We Take Our Stand." A preliminary set of proposals, six in number, was submitted for consideration of the Continuations Committee in its work toward the formulation of the program of action.

SIX POINT PROGRAM

A number of concerns were expressed by the students which they felt were not being pursued with sufficient emphasis by any existing organization in the South.

1. Campus service and educational programs. The Southern campus, is generally insulated from an awareness of the civil rights movement and students lack a critical perspective on any issues, including the usual social and political sterility of their own college environs. This would include:

- a) Educational programs and action projects are needed on desegregation. Negro deprivation, on the thrust of the Freedom Movement, and also on civil liberties, poverty, unemployment, economic issues, and political change, university reform and academic freedom, disarmament, capital punishment, etc. This should include a program to coordinate speakers and entertainers for fund raising purposes.
- b) Broad-based (moderate to radical) student groups working on other issues close to the campus as well as militant civil rights should be encouraged by campus travelers.

- c) A special newsletter, special educational materials, such as those provided by SDS, AFSC, and NSA and including films and other mailings aimed at this campus based audience would be helpful.
- d) Leadership training programs are needed to prepare students for work in communities on civil rights and other issues.

2. Opportunities for democratic participation in the Movement for more Southern students. Southern students need to meet to formulate policy for the most militant civil rights movement and to exchange general ideas, goals, and strategies in special conferences and workshops all across the South.

3. Education and promotion of a range of roles students can play in helping the Movement. Students need to be shown that, they may perform service for the Movement in ways supplementary to militant direct action of fulltime staff work. Educational and publicity programs (bringing SNCC speakers to the campus, leafleting, etc.) fund-raising, political support, and sympathy pickets, letters and telegrams, research, and other roles need to be promoted vigorously. It is our experience that many students need to start with more moderate supportive activity and work their own way into the direct action thrust of the Movement.

4. Resources for initiating, organizing, and sustaining community organizing projects at the coalition level not only in the Negro community but in disinherited predominantly white communities as well--around the issues of unemployment, low wages, union organization, poverty, lack of community facilities, and the use of urban renewal as a racist or neighborhood destructive device.

5. Education and promotion of employment opportunities for summer and full-time work in community organizing are needed. This could include civil rights action and organizing projects among the unemployed, internships with good unions, "political" work, voter registration projects, and potentially progressive anti-poverty programs (independent community centers, American Friends Service Committee, etc.)

6. Information and support for new kinds of liberal-left political coalitions and integrated-issue political campaigns in addition to Negro politics and civil rights campaigns, e.g. Louisville Congressional race and Texas Democratic coalition. It was the feeling of those students attending the Nashville meeting that the support and encouragement of SNCC is necessary to bring more Southern students into the movement.

Thus, those students from predominantly white campuses, meeting at the first meeting of the Southern Student Organizing Committee, have expressed a loyalty to SNCC, and wish to find ways to work with SNCC, through SNCC, and for SNCC. Some ways in which SNCC could be expanded to meet the needs expressed in the preceding six point program are as follows:

1. Development of publicity and educational materials aimed at the moderate or isolated student--both regarding what SNCC is doing and what they can do where they are to help SNCC. This means tailoring the Southern white student project to working with campus groups to meet these needs. This means allocating definite supportive roles--fund-raising, research, publicity, etc., to meet these people.

2. Co-sponsoring and participating in workshops and conferences with other groups (SDS, NSA, AFSC) to promote interest in total social change for the South building on the defeat of segregation.

3. Urging the National Council of Churches to expand the Berea summer training program in late June to provide for "tracks" on community organizing in non-deep South communities and in the poor white communities.

4. Civil rights action and community organizing action--building around the campus based situation. Urging the expansion of the SNCC educational program (with the cooperation of Myles Horton) to encompass campus action and community organization.

The assumption of the April 3-5 meeting was that the Continuations Committee would meet with the SNCC Executive Committee on April 19 to work out mutually satisfactory "division of labor." This could range from the complete absorption of SSOC's proposals immediately into SNCC to the complete independence of SSOC from the SNCC program.