

My only qualifications for considering this question of training organizers are some very definite ideas on education (or training) in addition to a deep commitment to our (spoken at least) theory of social change. That is; I believe very much that local people should be involved in deciding the changes that they need. As organizers our job is to assist local people by providing the tools for them to decide how they will lift their own burden of oppression.

Here is an example of what this means: In County X an organizer set up a meeting for farmers, where they could come and get information about the ASC committee elections. The hope of the organizer was to get the farmers to get together and win a couple of the ASC community elections. The tools in this situation is the information. The first tool is the information passed on to the farmer when the organizer canvasses and the farmer becomes aware of the fact that other farmers will be coming together to get some information. The second tool is the meeting itself and the speaker. The farmer is made aware of what he can do about his situation. If we are to be consistent with our theory of social change--then the next thing to be done after the meeting is to ask the farmers what they intend to do with the information they just heard. In this way the farmers themselves decide first whether or not they want to do anything about their situation and secondly what they want to do. From that first meeting on--the program belongs to the farmers with whatever informational assistance they might ask for from COFO. But the program is theirs.

However, what happened instead is that the organizer, after the meeting, made the announcement that the next meeting would have a speaker about "X" topic. The meeting and the speaker became just another part of the organizer's own program. The farmers were not asked what they wanted to do--they were not even asked if they wanted another meeting and what speaker they wanted if they did want another meeting. They were told that there would be another meeting.

This organizer has yet to learn that his method of organizing

is contradictory with his spoken theory of organizing. His actions say to the farmer--this is my program--and the farmer lets it be his program. And if anything is finally done about the ASC elections--it will be a COFO victory--and not a victory of the local people. And thus the people have become the tool instead of the program being the tool for the people.

How is SNCC to train organizers to work in a way that is consistent about our theory of social change.

It is obvious that our staff can talk and atalk and talk about this wonderful theory that local people should be responsible for the decisions made about local programs. I think we are very happy and emotionally attached to this theory because at the New York meeting we could say to a couple of bad cats-- "you can't hold us responsible for the atlantic city FDP decision--IT WAS THE LOCAL PEOPLE." So now we're all happy that we happened to have this theory about local people and we'd like to do it some more so we can hang up some of the bad cats who want to work in Miss. The truth is--that although the FDP is in fact local people who make decisions (and need to make more)--at our project level--our every program does not reflect this theory that local people should make programmatic decisions.

Even though SNCC staff can talk about this theory it's obvious that talking does not really change an organizer enough to make him ACT about the theory. So how shall we train our organizers to act and not just talk.

The seminar type training--where there are numerous speakers and people sit around and talk about organizing--can do nothing but reinforce the talk--and rarely influences the actions. Workshops--such as the kind Miles Horton runs--are a little different. Role-playing is involved where people can act--and not just talk. And people can come face to face with their own inadequacies and inconsistencies and can figure out ways to overcome them. But this is not enough. New habits must be learned. One can leave the workshop and still hang on to

in three different ways and Mobilization for Youth has organized

on the lower East side in still another way. All of these ways have something of value for the organizer in SNCC.

After the workshop new organizers should be sent immediately to the project they will be assigned to. Preferably there should be an experienced person in that project who has been trained to work along with the new person. What this means is that the experienced person has to know how to keep the new person from depending on him while at the same time being able to assist the new person to grow into new habits of working with people. This is a very difficult and subtle task. One of the most important things in training organizers is to train them to work on their own without the need of depending on another person to tell them how work day by day. If there can be no experienced person on the new person's project--then an experienced person in a nearby project should be asked to look in on the new organizer and discuss with him his work.

The new organizer should preferably be given a brand new area to help local people in organizing themselves. Before he would have left the first workshop--the new organizers should have formulated for himself some week by week goals for the next four weeks. He will then work in the new areas and at the end of four weeks will return to a second and probably final workshop--this one being an evaluative one. Before this second workshop new organizers themselves should be--what topics do they want considered--what are the needs they have--what do they foresee will be their problems during the year and what kind of information would aid them in these problems. The second workshop should be almost entirely decided by the new organizers.

Returning with him to the second workshop should be the experienced organizer who at various points during the 4 week period, discussed the organizer's work with both the organizer and other people who know him. The experienced organizer should come back with enough information to assist the new organizer in evaluating his own work.

Some other suggestions for this second workshop might be:

the old habits of dominating people who are a little different

from us--perhaps a little less 'school' educated, (and a lot more 'world' educated) than we are. We still have the habits that come from a system of values almost all of us have had--that is that educated, better-off people naturally dominate under-educated, less well off people. In order to lose these habits, and in order to train organizers in the ways of providing tools for local people to organize themselves, a training program involving both workshops and on the job training should be set up for both new people and any SNCC staff responsible for carrying out programs involving local people.

Experienced field people in SNCC--who have an interest in training organizers and a few ideas on how a community should be organized--should plan the first workshop. The first workshop might deal with people's attitudes. Role playing situations would be set up where people could see themselves and how they act in certain situations. For instance: "Here is a problem. Farmers are being cheated out of cotton allotments every year. ASC committees are all white. Elections can be won easily. How would you go about organizing this county?" Step by step--talking to people, setting up meetings, acting out the meetings--would be role-played. Experienced staff who know how to work with local people should be at these workshops to evaluate the new organizers as they do their role-playing. In this way, the experience and wisdom of old organizers is handed down somewhat systematically to the new organizers--and all that SNCC has learned in the past few years will not be wasted as it has been.

Also during these workshops, new organizers (and old) should be systematically introduced to the many methods of organizing a community. In SNCC we sort of assume that people can go into a community and by talking to people, organize it. The fact is that there are several different ways a community can be organized--and we have no way presently to teach these to our organizers. Hosea Williams organizes Savanna Georgia in one way and Dr. Gomillion (?) organizes Tuskegee, Alabama in another way just as Saul Alinsky has organized in Chicago in one way and SDS has organized Newark and Chicago and Cleveland

where can one go to know more about programs the community can use.

what resources can be utilized to put at the service of the community,.

how does one research for a new program. At these workshops there should most certainly be long serious discussions about SNCC and its theory of social change and where this will take the movement in the south.

This is very sketchy and I think there are more experienced field people who would have a lot of things to say about what new (and old) organizers need to learn. It is these people that I would like to place the responsibility for doing a training program for SNCC.

We must be aware of the day to day waste of people and resources--both our own and the communities we work in-- which is caused by not really training our organizers to be able to act out SNCC's belief in local people. Until we face this problem and make provisions for training of our staff, we will continue to fail to really build a movement of local people.

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