

SNCC West Coast Regional Conference.....Saturday Workshop

Report of Workshop on Forming New SNCC Groups on Campus

There are four main functions of campus Friends of SNCC groups: 1) education - to make known the program of SNCC, to keep the campus informed of the current situation in the South, 2) fund and supply raising - money, clothes, food, etc., 3) support through letters, telegrams, etc.-- to pressure congressmen, city, state, and national leaders for political action, and 4) recruiting -- to recruit workers for summer projects.

The problems of forming new groups were discussed. Since some trouble occurs on some campus as a result of "reservations" about SNCC on the part of the administration, the group need not be named officially Friends of SNCC. The drive now is for recognition of SNCC, but if it is a choice between having an "unofficial" SNCC group or not having any group, naturally we would urge the formation of a group under a "neutral" title, such as Civil Rights Club, Students for Racial Equality, etc. We decided that it would be best to have the group "on campus" if possible for this facilitates the distribution of information and leads to a greater availability of resources. If there are other Friends of SNCC groups in the area, i.e. local, non college groups, it is advised that the groups keep in close contact with each other. It is important to have an "office," even if it is just a room in someone's home.

Actually, all a group need do to become a Friends of SNCC group is to write to SNCC Headquarters, Raymond St. N.W., Atlanta, Georgia. They will then be placed on the mailing list.

Groups in small areas should try to establish contact with a large city group to facilitate the sending of food, clothing, books, etc. to Mississippi. However, the small groups can send their donations directly to Mississippi if they want to.

If any group or club wishes to help SNCC, they can get information, newsletters, etc. from Atlanta.

The best way to mobilize a group, either on a campus or in a community, is to have someone in Mississippi. This immediately makes SNCC "everyone's business."

It was suggested that new groups try to have a member who works for the campus newspaper, for one of the best means of carrying out the "educational objective" of SNCC is to have articles on Mississippi run in the newspaper regularly. It is also advisable to have a member of the student council who will be sympathetic, for your activities will have to be approved by the council.

It is also good to involve faculty members in the group, either officially or unofficially. They will provide a "buffer" between the group and any external pressure and can also help out by giving lectures relating their specific fields to the situation in the South. The campus ministry should also be involved if possible.

It was brought out that SNCC is operating exclusively in the South. To avoid stepping on toes, resulting in a loss of funds for Mississippi, it is vital that SNCC groups be discouraged from taking part in local direct action movements or local political issues. Certain individual members of the SNCC group can participate in any of these things, but SNCC should not do so officially.

Some people felt that an "umbrella organization" might be advisable in campuses where there is no other civil rights group. Thus all such organizations as CORE, NAACP, etc. might be included. The problems this leads to, however, are a diffusion of effectiveness, power, and coordination, and a lack of common goals within the group. (If you try to please everybody, you end up pleasing nobody.)

Another problem discussed was the possibility of the emergence of a small group of "hyper active" people within the larger group. This is a common occurrence and can mean the disintegration of the large group. It is important to keep all members involved in decision making. There should be plenty of work to keep everyone involved, thus avoiding a "coup" by a small clique.

Friends of SNCC groups have many resources available for raising funds and arousing the general public to concern for the Civil Rights Movement. College groups will play an important role in the general success of the movement, for they can provide the education, the funds, the political pressure, and the actual workers for the Mississippi project.