

SNCC Western Regional Conference...November 14 and 15...Workshop Report
Saturday: Campus Workshop on Political Pressure in Behalf of the
Southern Movement

I. Finding and organizing people for political action: Use people active in local voter registration drives. If these people are organized to some extent, they can be contacted to write letters or send wires to legislators at important times. COORDINATE, through precinct work, different groups working for the same or similar political issues. There should be an atmosphere of general cooperation among political action groups that otherwise might be one of competition. Issues such as Proposition 13 will bring out many people who will work in some way for the movement or who may have key political contacts: these people should be contacted and recruited. Offices such as Democratic campaign headquarters and No on 13 have mailing lists you should get and use...the organization which went into the fight against Proposition 13 should not just disintegrate after the election.

Public Education: This includes such activities as canvassing, radio programs and public discussions and meetings: work with people active in similar political programs, and issues will accent each other. SNCC people can speak effectively in programs centered around Democratic candidates or, for example, No on 13. The conclusion was that people interested in similar issues can do a great deal to help each other.

III. Reaching Congressmen, legislators, politicians: Organize people to write letters. Some letters are more effective than others: two suggestions for effective letters were a) the "I voted for you, but I won't again unless you----" type; and, b) letters from people representing groups or people who will vote somewhat as a bloc on definite issues, such as Negro communities. Visits are important, from representatives of your group to legislators---specially if you can set up a meeting through someone personally close to that legislator, and preferably have him attend the meeting with you. Work with people who have contacts with politicians: there are endless possibilities here. One example discussed was the Parents Group formed in Los Angeles of people with sons and daughters in Mississippi as volunteers. Many of these people are influential in different circles, and this group exerted enough pressure to be a real force in getting the California Democratic resolution to support the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Students often underestimate their power to affect legislation and government action. Find and work with students from your campus who have done work for politicians now in office: these people frequently have valuable contacts with legislators, who may be willing to do them a political "favor", knowing that these are the people who work for them at election time. Campus groups can "infiltrate" congressional districts of not-so-friendly congressmen and then be in a position to wield some pressure. Don't dismiss as hopeless college student government leaders or your college newspaper. Liberals can be found in these groups too, and they can do effective work.

Students can circulate petitions and talk in behalf of, for example, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in cooperation with Young Democrats, Y.S.A.'s, and other liberal groups.

An often untapped source of valuable support can be found among liberal members of the faculty. Professors who have signed advertisements such as the anti-HUAC ones will probably help with SNCC support. Faculty members are respected, valued members of the community: the pressure they can bring to bear is considerable and should never be overlooked.

V. Economic pressures, or the outside-the-system political arena: One thing students should do is investigate the trustees of their college. These people are often involved in complex business and financial structures which are powerful in the South. An excellent outline on what can be done to get to the seats of power can be found in Jack Minnis' excellent The

Care and Feeding of Power Structures. The article is printed in New University Thought, summer 1964; or reprints can be obtained from Students for Democratic Society or the SNCC Bay Area Regional Office, 584 Page Street, San Francisco. The article was highly recommended by resource people and several others who had read it. The problem of the college trustees relates to many political action and pressure issues, as can be observed in Cal's Free Speech Movement..this also comes down to the basic question of who controls the University: an issue which many, many students can be organized about.

V. Foreign Students: are a group not to be overlooked. In many cases, they were chosen because they are people who will, in a few years, be near the decision-making powers. These are often students who look to SNCC as the group to bring about "the revolution". There were student sympathy demonstrations in Europe over the deaths of the three civil rights workers in Mississippi last summer--students are interested all over the world. This further points up the need for awareness, in the United States, of students that they are an important group, who can exert a great deal of pressure and political power if they are intelligently organized.

The final concensus of the workshop was to support a resolution to return to their respective campuses and mobilize students to support the southern movement and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.