

WESTERN REGIONAL SNCC CONFERENCE

Nov. 13 15

Saturday Workshop

RECRUITING, SCREENING & TRAINING VOLUNTEERS FOR THE SOUTH
(CAMPUS)

Recruiting: A good program for recruiting volunteers to go South requires:

1. A good general Friends of SNCC program. An active general program of fund-raising and education will do more than anything else to convince people that SNCC is doing a worthwhile effective job and that would like to work with the kind of people who work with SNCC.
2. A local office or address so that potential volunteers can find SNCC.
3. Publicity that there will be a Summer Project. When possible publicity should mention that volunteers are needed and that they should apply to your local office.
4. Sign-up sheets for possible volunteers at all public meetings, concerts, and other SNCC events.
5. An active education program, including talks and panel discussions by people returned from the South, and showings of the SNCC film, "A Dream Deferred" (available from SF Regional Office).
6. Recruiting pamphlets. These are not now available, and local groups should pressure the Regional and National offices to prepare and distribute them.

Student and Community friends of SNCC groups should make special efforts to recruit volunteers from outside their own ranks. The most fertile grounds for recruiting are: (1) nearby schools that have no Friends of SNCC organization; (2) campus religious groups; (3) groups of teachers, professors, nurses (especially public health nurses), and social workers.

Special attention should be given to recruiting among two special groups. More efforts should be made to recruit teachers (or professors) because, first they are especially well qualified to staff the Freedom Schools, and second, because they are volunteering in considerable numbers already without there being any organized effort to reach them. If more efforts were made to recruit teachers, they would come forward in even larger numbers.

Recruiting of Negro volunteers also needs special attention. Last summer only about 10% of volunteers were Negro. A higher proportion would have been desirable. Efforts should include (1) establishing Friends of SNCC groups on campuses of colleges that have a considerable Negro enrollment; and (2) scheduling appearances of visiting SNCC staff before groups with a considerable proportion of Negro students (and faculty).

One major new recruiting proposal was made: it was suggested that Friends of SNCC groups might arrange to staff one particular community's project on a continuous basis. Assuming that this can be worked out with the National Office, a continuous staffing program would have several advantages:

- 1) Since returned volunteers always feel a special responsibility towards the community in which they have worked, they would work especially hard to recruit new volunteers to go to that specific community.
- 2) Volunteers who go South as a group, already knowing one another, can start working together effectively faster than a group of strangers, who must learn to know one another before they can reach maximum effectiveness as a group.
- 3) Fund raising for a specific project by returned volunteers, or by members of the Friends of SNCC group who have remained behind, is always easier than raising money for an abstract, unknown project. However, any fund-raising for a specific project must be coordinated with the National Office so that scarce funds are distributed equitably among SNCC's various community projects.
- 4) Returning volunteers, and volunteers remaining in the South, can orient their replacements and new volunteers to the structure of the community, to the personalities and abilities of the people with whom they will be working, so as to enable the new volunteer to begin working effectively much sooner after his arrival.

Friends of SNCC groups are urged to explore this possibility by proposing it to the National Office as soon as possible.

Screening: In theory the National Office accepts or rejects volunteers. But in practice, it is impossible for the National Office to make decisions on the basis of written applications. The only possible effective screening is that done by interviewing at the local level, and all Friends of SNCC groups should organize themselves to screen applicants in a responsible way. The following criteria should be applied:

- 1) Volunteers should be 18 or over.
- 2) Volunteers should be able to spend two months or more (winter), or three weeks or more (summer) in the South. People who want to go for shorter periods should be made to realize that they will be unable to do much good in the South, although their experience might still be worthwhile if they plan to do extensive fund-raising work when they return.
- 3) People to be screened out are: (1) those who are obviously mentally ill; (2) those who, in their life so far, have been unable to work with people or in groups, who cannot cooperate or take orders or responsibility or who are hostile towards almost every human institution. The problems that make these people unable to accomplish anything in their everyday lives will also make them ineffectual in Mississippi. Fortunately, such people will be only a small minority of potential volunteers. (3) Another group to watch out for are those who have quite unrealistic ideas of what they will be doing in the South. In particular, watch for those who fancy that they will be executives, sitting behind a desk giving orders. Also watch out for those who are obsessed with the idea of violence directed against themselves. These people may have vivid ideas of the dangers to be expected, but no idea of the work they are to do, and when they arrive in the South they may find the work not at all to their liking. The interviewer must emphasize the realities of the work in Mississippi to such people, which will often discourage them from applying.

The most important thing about screening is that every Friends of SNCC group should take steps to set up some formal screening program, and should inform the Regional and National Offices of who is in charge. Do not leave screening and recruiting to chance or to the National Office, for only the people at the local level are in a position really to perform these essential functions.

Training: Training of volunteers should begin at least a couple of months before they leave for the South. Training seminars serve a screening purpose as well as a training one; some people, when they have spent a few hours thinking seriously about what they realistically should expect, will decide they really do not want to go.

One useful type of training program is the training seminar. Prospective volunteers meet weekly with "experts"; returned volunteers and other people with special knowledge of the South, or of teaching, political organization, etc.

Tutoring disadvantaged youths is also very good training. Programs for tutoring exist near most Friends of SNCC groups. It will usually be better to work in cooperation with existing programs than to make the very considerable effort required to create a new program.

Books suggested for training are:

SNCC: The New Abolitionists, by Howard Zinn

MISSISSIPPI: The Closed Society, by James Silver

THE MIND OF THE SOUTH, by W. J. Cash

CRISIS IN BLACK AND WHITE, by Silberman

CASTE AND CLASS IN A SOUTHERN TOWN, by John Dollard