

WHAT WE CAN DO ON CAMPUSES

I think that SNCC is trying to make **it** so that people can have a say over what happens to them. That's what freedom means, having power in the ~~system~~ and over how the system is styled. Now, that freedom can't be useful unless people care about one another. Otherwise we end up with a series of power struggles. There are many people who need one or the other, to have some say so, or to develop some concern for other people. Some need both, like many poor white folks, I think.

The problem is, where do the priorities lie? We have decided that for right now at least, the most important thing is to find ways that Negro people, who are on the very bottom of the heap of powerlessness, can gain a say so over their lives. And that's what we are trying to do. But as we have worked our sphere of influence has grown larger. Lawyers, school teachers, white middle class college students, Negro middle class college students, doctors want to work with us now. In order to really use the skills and concern that they have made available to us, we have had to address ourselves to some of the things that are wrong with them. Like we couldn't use the sets of lawyers in Mississippi unless we created a situation where some of them were able to accept the fact that the possibility of being red-baited is not reason enough for not working with someone. We have to extend ourselves to their hang-ups and ways of life in order for them to work with us on what we think is the most important problem. And so with each new source of help, we have to cut off a bit of attention to this main problem and plough back into the problems of the people who are bringing that new help. Right now, we are using some of our staff to plough back into the problems of the Negro college campuses. I think the biggest one of these problems is that the students don't care about other people.

Let's start from the position that people ought to take care of one another when things are such that some of us can't make it by ourselves, like when some of us can't eat decently or can't send our children to school warmly clothed in the winter. That indeed it is the quality that makes the Negro people (the best of us) unique, and that must be maintained. Then a big set of offenders are the group of college students (Negro), most of whom really don't care about poor people and often don't even care about members of their own group. The whole environment of the student, that is, the whole college community, as well as the student, himself, would have to be changed in order to get him to feel this responsibility. It seems that that would be best in effecting this change would be an activity along the lines of the Freedom Vote in Mississippi, which took place right in the Negro community. In the Freedom Vote the people gained a great sense of their own power and learned more about what white folks will do to keep power; it was also an organizing tool.

We could try to move the colleges to service the communities around or near them. In doing this there would be a way of continually bringing the community on the campus and the students out into the community, so that the students' own (college) community would be the scene of activity in the same way that the Negro community was the scene for the Freedom Vote. Any efforts on the part of the students to get the administrations to do this would be a fight every step of the way, and the students would gain a real sense either of power or (more likely) powerlessness. For them to realize either would be a good point to begin organizing a good number of students. From these organizations on several campuses could develop statewide student organizations.

One kind of thing the students could do would be to have Freedom Schools on the campuses, using the assistance of the college teachers

and perhaps insisting on getting some kind of credit for their work. They could arrange an evening meal for them in the college cafeteria and work with them in their library. The school's transportation facilities could be used to get to children and adults in the rural areas.

Another possibility is that they could make the resources of the college available in correcting housing deficiencies in communities. They could try to get the school to get funds from the good white government (e.g. through the poverty program) to support a program of repairs on or building of public housing. They could insist that the labor of Negroes in the community be used. Students could organize the people to force the landlords to fix their houses. Students in the technical areas could use their skills, and pull their teachers into, servicing landlords who agreed to "do right" and could service temporary co-ops of home owners, by helping to install heating units or plumbing, etc.

Agricultural schools could provide analytical services (of soil, crops) to farmers and counseling about matters such as land conservation. Students could help develop farm co-ops.

A wedge that SNCC can use in getting large numbers of students moving is that the organizational structure of fraternities, interest groups, etc. (all of which voice a belief in social responsibility) can be approached by a few students who have spent time in the community finding out what people want. SNCC workers can find these few already militant students and can work with them in developing a program and in approaching the campus community.