

THE SOUTHERN STUDENT ORGANIZING COMMITTEE (SSOC) was organized in response to an urgent and growing need for communication and education in the South. The following prospectus includes the role of the Southern Student Organizing Committee, its goals, and its proposed organizational structure.

## INTRODUCTION

Since a few local student groups, based on predominantly white southern campuses, have become increasingly interested in the areas of civil rights, civil liberties, peace, academic freedom, capital punishment, and poverty, the following needs have been painfully recognized: (1) the need for communication among these local groups, (2) the need for mutual support, and (3) the need for the exchange of ideas and experiences. Groups organized on several southern campuses have met with a relative degree of success on a local level (e.g., Nashville's Joint University Council on Human Relations, University of Tennessee's Students for Equal Treatment, Georgia's Students for Human Rights, Duke Universities' Core Chapter, Kentucky's Students for Social Action, New Orleans' Liberal's Club, Florida's Student Group for Equal Rights, etc.). However, the isolation of these groups has been a major handicap, resulting in a reduction of their effectiveness.

On another level, the "moderate" in the South has not become a part of the positive movement toward a new, just, democratic order. On many campuses, the "moderate" has been paralyzed by such various pressures as public opinion and discouragement of participation by university administration policies. As the Negro and civil rights movements have become more "militant" in their demands and tactics, the "moderate" has felt defensively alienated. Various efforts have been made to reach these moderate southern whites and to raise the issues of the hour. Communications and improved human relations have been the goals of conferences, workshops, etc., but they have somehow failed to accomplish their purposes and have not communicated a sense of "what can be done".

The crucial role of SSOC, therefore, is to establish a dynamic, working form of communication among Southerners who have a constructive contribution to make. Thus a sense of unity and strength would be created among students of the South--ranging from the moderate to the militant--in their efforts to promote equality and justice.

## FIRST SSOC CONFERENCE

On the weekend of April 3-5, 1964, forty-five student leaders and representatives from approximately fifteen predominantly white southern campuses in ten states gathered in Nashville at the invitation of students from Vanderbilt University and Peabody and Scarritt Colleges. The goals of the conference were several: to assess the extent of involvement in civil rights by students at Southern campuses; to ascertain the amount of interest in action along other political, social, and economic lines; and to assess their student needs and set up a structure through which felt needs in these areas could be met.

Briefly these goals were achieved. It was determined that there is a great deal of activity on these campuses, ranging from moderate to radical. Furthermore, it was confirmed that students are interested in not only civil rights but in other areas beyond civil rights, e.g., peace, academic freedom, civil liberties, capital punishment, and unemployment. It was pointed out that the specific activities the local groups might engage in would be up to them. Finally, a structure was set up. The group has called itself the SOUTHERN STUDENT ORGANIZING COMMITTEE (SSOC). A Continuations Committee was directed to formulate specific proposals and programs.

## SECOND SSOC CONFERENCE

On the weekend of May 9-10, 1964, forty students met in Atlanta to continue the discussion and planning of SSOC. It was felt that the support and encouragement of other groups was necessary to bring more southern students into the movement. Therefore, SSOC is trying to cooperate and work with other interested groups (e.g., Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The general feeling was that a newsletter could provide one source of communication contacts among various campuses and could be used to stimulate democratic participation on many levels. The proposal for a newsletter was accepted by the Executive Committee and one edition was mailed at the end of the school year. The name of the paper is The New Rebel.

An invitation was extended from the president of SDS for SSOC to become a fraternal organization, meaning that the groups would work as closely as possible, exchange educational materials, mailing lists, etc. The role and potential influence of SSOC have been acknowledged as being very significant by individual student leaders, interested adults, local campus groups throughout the South, and national organizations such as SDS, SNCC, and the United States National Student Association.

Three officers were elected in addition to an Executive Committee. They are as follows:

Chairman: Gene Guerrero, Emory University  
 Treasurer: Ron Parker, Vanderbilt University  
 Executive Secretary: Sue Thrasher, Nashville

The office of Executive Secretary is considered as a full time staff position beginning in September, 1964. In addition, a field secretary will be hired to recruit on southern campuses.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: The Executive Committee consists of one person from each of five geographical regions. Also elected to the Executive Committee was the director of the white Southern student project of SNCC.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The Executive Committee met on June 20, 1964, at Western College, Oxford, Ohio, to continue in the planning of the fall program. Emphasis and priority were placed on the following: the need for organizational structure, fund raising for fall programs, and proposals for the first Southwide SSOC Conference to be held on November 13-15, 1964. The topics of study for the fall conference will be: Students in Politics, History and Economy of the South, An Overview of the Civil Rights Struggle, and Civil Liberties.

## SSOC'S GOALS

The aspirations and general goals of SSOC were verbalized in the following quotations from the statement "We'll Take Our Stand", adopted by the first SSOC conference on April 5, 1964:

"We do hereby declare, as southern students from most of the Southern states, representing different economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds, growing from birthdays in the Depression years and the War years, that we will here take our stand in determination to build together a New South which brings democracy and justice for all its people.

"We hereby take our stand to start with out college communities and to confront them and their surrounding communities and to move from here out through all the states of the South--and to tell the Truth that must ultimately make us free. The Freedom movement for an end to segregation inspires us all to make our voices heard for a beginning of true democracy in the South for all people. We pledge together to work in all communities across the South to create nonviolent political and direct action movements dedicated to the sort of social change throughout the South and nation which is necessary to achieve our stated goals."

SSOC'S goals are the following:

- (1) Not only an end to segregation and racism but the rise of full and equal opportunity for all;
- (2) An end to personal poverty and deprivation;
- (3) An end to the "public poverty" which leaves us without decent housing, schools, parks, medical care, and communities;
- (4) A democratic society where politics poses meaningful dialogue and choices about issues that affect men's lives, not manipulation by vested elites;
- (5) An end to man's inhumanity to man;
- (6) A world working toward the easing of tensions of the Cold War with positive emphasis on peace, disarmament, and world-wide understanding.

"We, as young Southerners, hereby pledge to take our stand now to work for a new order, a new South, a place which embodies our ideals for all the world to emulate, not ridicule. We find our destiny as individuals in the South in our hopes and our work together as brothers."

#### SSOC'S PROGRAM

In view of SSOC's goals and in relation to and fulfillment of the urgent need for campus education and participation in the areas of social change, the following program for the Southern Student Organizing Committee is submitted:

SSOC shall be concerned with and work in the areas of:

- I. Education and Self-Education aimed at the southern campus (particularly concerned with the predominately white campuses which have remained somewhat insulated from the meaning of the human rights revolution in the South). The purpose of this education is to expose to southern students the most vital issues of the nation and the world. This consists of education:
  - A. On a Vision of a New South which is democratic, integrated, and responsive to the needs of all its people and on a vision of all "issues" which vitally affect our society (e.g., human rights, economic opportunity, peace, and democratic politics).

- B. On the Facts about the South today and what is needed to achieve our vision.
- C. On the Opportunities for all young southerners of good will to make a contribution to building the New South we seek, especially to promote the range of roles students can play--i.e., from moderate to militant. Many students start with more "moderate" supportive activity and through positive experiences work their way into more direct activity. SSOC seeks also to promote "employment opportunities" for young people for summer and full time work in community action.

II. Dialogue and Democratic Participation for a broader base of southern students in working for the building of the New South especially through:

- A. Conferences in accord with the vision and purposes of SSOC which will serve to kindle and strengthen interest and participation in the "issues" which confront the South, the nation, and the world.
- B. Special Community Projects emphasizing student participation in ending discrimination, poverty, elite politics, etc.
- C. Campus Projects which encourage students to raise and to express their opinions on the issues which most directly affect their lives (e.g., academic freedom, campus integration, student decision-making responsibilities, and "in loco parentis").