URBAN ORGANIZING

Ivanhoe Donaldson reported on his project in Columbus, Ohio; a full report in writing will be circulated to the staff. He expressed agreement with Bill Hall's written report (on his work in Harlem) that the important area of struggle for Negro rights was the North, but Ivanhoe went on to say that he believed the city was the key situation because that's where the main conflicts were taking place; that is where America's corporate structure is based; that is where the media and the universities are controlled. The major interests in the city are the major interest value of the middle-class, college-educated, salaried people. The/lower class was no longer a labor force but its dependency.

The city presented big problems: where is there enough public democratically authority to deal with all that power and all those conflicting interests? Should a city have one government or many neighborhood governments? Ivanhoe believed the second way was possible, and that it would counteract the feeling of powerlessness in the ghetto.

In Columbus, Ohio, a "community foundation" has been set up as a model of neighborhood self-government. It covers an area 30 blocks wide and 14 blocks long; 7000 people live there. These people (black and white) elect a board of the community foundation, and this board decides how money will be spent in the community (it makes grants from contributions by the people to the foundation). How people will vote (it gave the vote to all residents who are 16 and over), etc. In the community incorporated itself for the purpose of government participatory democracy. The community foundation which has met twice, has about 2000 people present each time. They elected the board. They aim to build up a treasury, and already have $1500; they will hire the unemployed. They are trying to get $200,000 in anti-
poverty funds, but the government has never given OEO money that way. They also have a community center, in a building donated by a local church. Would the community foundation stand up against strong external forces -- the city announced it was going to put a thruway through that neighborhood? Ivanhoe felt that power does not lie in the courthouse but in people, and that they could fight such a decision themselves.

Another question: how could the community possibly become independent economically? No easy answer; this is the big question everywhere.

Ivanhoe was asked why he picked Columbus instead of Atlanta, where SNCC has a real foothold through Julian Bond (people then program Julian had planned for his district asked what but there was no information on this). He replied: 1) the building and set-up were available in Columbus; 2) the home-rule program he had been working on in D.C. didn't work out, so he went on to Columbus; 3) he felt Julian's district was Julian's program. It was suggested that there were urban areas in the South (Albany, Selma, Montgomery) where SNCC had some experience, and that SNCC should experiment in those places rather than going North.

At this point, Ivanhoe said he had just realized that his Columbus program had never been approved by the staff or the Executive Committee, because those bodies hadn't met in 2 months, and he asked for approval now.
Jim Forman maintained that any organization has the right to experiment. The main issue was not Ivanhoe's right to go to Columbus, but to what degree was SNCC willing to experiment in urban areas? John Lewis said he hadn't know where Ivanhoe was, and this had been embarrassing. A vote was taken, 17 to 6 in favor of continuation of Ivanhoe's program. Afterward, Hunter Morey said he felt SNCC was not serious about its work; that we assume there is some mysterious pattern in the things we do, but what is it? Marion Barry stated that he felt we should have discussed all programs and then made a decision on Ivanhoe's program within that context. Our method was too haphazard; we should make decisions in a cohesive way -- or quit and play poker.