

[1966]

## PROSPECTUS FOR AN ATLANTA PROJECT

The startling ouster of Julian Bond, a long-time activist in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, from his duly elected seat in the state legislature has dramatized the urgent importance of SNCC's intensifying its involvement in the major urban centers in the South and especially in Atlanta.

The compromising and politically expedient actions of the seven other Negro assemblymen in this whole affair suggests that unless SNCC steps up its political activity in Atlanta, the benefits of years of struggle may well fall to the politically ambitious and the ward political hack.

Time is very short. Atlanta, the first city in the South where Negroes have achieved a significant breakthrough in political representation, has become a testing ground for the future course of politics in the South. The Supreme Court's one man, one vote decision opens the promise of profound changes in the political life of the South. Georgia is the first state in the south to reapportion its legislature. In the next year or so the other southern states will be forced to re apportion their legislatures. Georgia then becomes critical because it can set the tone for so much that happens in the other states. It is therefore critical that SNCC mount a major political program in Atlanta, a program which will bring community people together to discuss basic problems and to seek common solutions, a program which can enable community people to gain a significant measure of control over the public decisions which affect their lives.

If this is not done there can be little doubt that Southern Negro communities like that in Atlanta will succumb to the fate of most of the Northern ghettos: a welfare and patronage system will be established and the new voting power of Negroes will work to the benefit of a small few. In Atlanta, this direction is already well advanced and the small established Negro leadership is



now working rapidly to solidify still further its political control.

However, the controversy surrounding Julian Bond, his strong stand based on moral conviction, opens the possibility of developing an alternative political model to the conventional politician. It raises a symbol of a new type of political representation not only in the South, but the entire nation. It raises a symbol of a politics of youth and integrity. It strengthens the possibility of introducing civil rights and morality into politics where so many say it does not belong.

How often have we heard the cynics who say that politics has rules and if you seek membership you must play according to those rules? But our experience suggests that this is the argument of the politically ambitious and not of the representative who is sincerely committed to the aspirations of his constituency. Julian Bond suggests the symbol of a humanitarian politics, a politics based on principle, a politics identified with and grounded in the hopes and needs of the very poor.

The Atlanta project is based on still another promising possibility because Atlanta poses a new situation for the Southern civil rights movement.

For the first time, it has become possible in the South to shift the movement's focus away from the federal government as major agent of change.

Systematic intimidation is not a problem in Atlanta. Negroes in fact have already made a major breakthrough in political representation.

As a result the emphasis can now be directed to achieving a real voice over the conduct of local government - on the municipal, county and state levels. The state Assembly district and the municipal ward are small and politically viable units in which the possibility of grass-roots expression is in reality much greater than it is in the federal government. It is on this level that we suspect politics can be made most relevant to the ordinary citizen and as a result more susceptible to democratic control.



The Atlanta program then is more than one of voter registration - the majority of Atlanta Negroes are already registered. It is a program of political organization and education. It is a program to demonstrate to even the poorest person in the Negro community that politics holds out the possibility of achieving human dignity and economic justice.

The project has already selected a number of assembly districts and municipal wards in which it will concentrate its efforts. Through house to house canvassing, block organization, small political education workshops, and the establishment of a new community newspaper - and perhaps eventually, even a small community radio station (citizen band) the Atlanta staff will attempt to raise the issues of segregated and slum housing, inadequate medical care, overcrowded and inadequate education, low wages, job discrimination, punitive welfare relief, and even the war in Vietnam. Together, with community people it will explore the various channels for the political solution of the basic problems which affect their lives. The Atlanta Project tries to break down the mystery surrounding the working of governmental machinery and to overcome the fear which most Southern black people and especially those who are poor feel toward established political authority. Workshops and the newspaper, for instance, will discuss in detail, the operation and powers of the various department, boards, and state government work and commissions of municipal and county government.

Staff workers will try to encourage every possible contact between community people and government officials, always drawing the connection between immediate problems and those who are politically responsible. Wherever possible, the project will support action program - picketing, sit-ins, rent strikes, and boycotts - by community people. But the primary emphasis will be political and the immediate objective will be to work for the emergence of a series of political candidates of Julian Bond's caliber and integrity in the many important state and county elections this fall.

## PROJECTED BUDGET FOR THE ATLANTA PROJECT

|  |            |              |
|--|------------|--------------|
| Subsistence for 20 workers (\$20 per week for 12 months)           |            | \$20,800.00  |
| Office rent (4 offices @ \$50 per month for 12 months)             |            | 2,400.       |
| Telephone (4 telephones at \$30 per month for 12 months)           |            | 1,400        |
| Gas and electricity (\$20 per month for each office for 12 months) |            | 960          |
| Auto Gas (\$100 a month for 12 months)                             |            | 1,200        |
| Paper (\$150 per month for 12 months)                              |            | 1,800        |
| Equipment: 16 mm film projector                                    | \$300      |              |
| Slide projector  | 100        |              |
| Stenorette   | 200        |              |
| 3 sound trucks (@ \$100 each)                                      | 300        |              |
| 2 mimeograph machines (@ \$200)                                    | 400        |              |
| 3 typewriters (\$100 each)   | <u>300</u> |              |
|  |            | 1,600        |
| Office furniture: 6 Desks (\$50 each)                              | \$300      |              |
| 4 Sofas (\$50 each)  | 200        |              |
| 4 File cabinets (\$75 each)  | 300        |              |
| 4 Conference Tables (\$50 each)                                    | 200        |              |
| 40 Chairs (\$6 each)   | <u>240</u> |              |
|  |            | 1,240        |
| Food and Petty Cash (\$40 a week for 12 months)                    |            | <u>2,080</u> |
|  | TOTAL      | \$33,520.00  |

\*Looking toward the political campaigns this summer, it would be of great benefit to our efforts to have a fund for radio and t.v. spots

\$ 5,000

\*\*\*We are also investigating the possibility of establishing a neighborhood radio station operating on a citizen band. While not nearly the expense of an FM. or A.M. station, this project will probably require a substantial capital outlay.