

I want to try to write about the whole picture--the whole SNCC, the whole thing we're trying to do. Especially, I want to try to write about why we tear each other up when we really need each other. It all ties into the idea that people need each other.

THEY--the power structure, the establishment, call it what you like--want to break us up. THEY do it in different ways: money (jobs), making people important (appointments), name-calling (red-baiting), giving a little bit of power to a few people who we thought were part of us, busing us--or trying to buy us--off (power).

We need to respond to THEM. We need to take THEM on where THEY are, and we need to know where we are. THEY get their power with money. We get ours with people. We need people to get what we want. Let's call what we want freedom.

What do the people we work with want? Food, clothing, jobs, housing, health care, good schools. That's one part of what they want. The people we work with want excitement, friendship, power over their lives, love, dignity, a voice in their community. That's another part of what they want.

We, SNCC, want these things too. We have decided, because of a lot of things about us, that we will join in the fight to get these things. The people with the power are willing to give a lot of the first kind of things if people fight for them: they give some jobs, some schools, some food, some health care. These are real things. I don't think we should knock them. I don't think you can tell a hungry man not to take food by telling him that he's being taken in by the power structure. I think you do better by telling him that what he got is his right and that he has a right to a lot more.

So then you have to talk about what it is that will make people see things that way. What will make them see that they have a right to live, love, be free. I think that we should have learned that the best way to do this is to get people together, talking about their lives and letting them find out in their talk that they can do things for themselves, that they have a right to things. When people begin to talk this way, they want to explore things, they want to explore their world. One of the first things they want to do is to look at the offers of things that come from other people, like the people with power. The people with power offer things through Federal agencies, private agencies (we haven't begun to see them yet, but just wait), and political parties. People need the things that are being offered, even if what's being offered isn't all that much.

I think that the things being offered can be taken without losing anything. As a matter of fact, I think that the only way we can build that radical revolution that SNCC people talk about is to begin taking things that they want to give and then saying that these things belong to the people by right and they should have more.

What becomes important then is that we don't let them break us up with their things. It seems to me that the way to keep them from breaking us up with their things is for us to build groups of people who are so strong together that they won't be broken apart by things. That means to me that friendships, love, excitement, dignity have to be a part of the groups that we build so that the things that they can offer can never replace these. When people have groups like this they can take from the people with power and not be broken up while they are taking. They take not as charity but as a right and they way, "we demand more."

So I'm saying that we don't tell people not to try to take from

Folks Need Each Other - Mike Miller



MEM, but that we build groups of people who are so strong that taking doesn't break them up. The difference is at the heart of our work. If we try to keep people from taking by lecturing to them about how evil the system is, then what we're really saying is that we have a better system. But how are the people with whom we work supposed to know this? They haven't seen as much as we have. They haven't had the opportunity to see as much. We have: cars, trips, staff meetings, institutes, a research department, mimeograph machines, workshops, discussions, friends in the North who tell us it isn't much different there, friends in Washington who tell us how corrupt it is there. We eat pretty well, we have money when we need it, doctors, dentists, clothes if we want them, scholarships if we want to go to school, contacts to get people jobs; we really have all the things the system has. We, SNCC, that is. And we have more. We have ourselves. And the people in the deltas and bayous don't have many of these things. Maybe they don't have any. Now some folks say that SNCC isn't radical anymore because we have these things. I don't agree with that. I like having some of these things. I like to fly to Waveland (saves three days) and talk with people. I like being healthy (I work better that way). I like having a home and a record player and books and a car that works and gets me where I want to go (most of the time). I think everybody ought to have these things.

What I think we want to do is get people to see how much they can get from this system without having to break themselves up. At Atlantic City ~~xxx~~ THEY were willing to give a tiny bit, but the price was that people ~~break up their group~~. People learned from that. People learn about that by taking and then demanding more.

So we need to ask what it is that keeps groups of people together. So far as I've been able to tell, the main things that keep people together are the things that have to do with the second set of needs (though always in the context of making demands around the first set of needs)--friendship, love, a sense of power over their lives, and those things. These are all related. They are related to people talking together, to communication, to a sense of community. The maintenance, the nourishment, the development of these things, then, is as important a part of our work as the challenges to the system: the Congressional Challenge, the ASCS elections, the trips to the Courthouse, the demonstrations, the protest telegrams, and so forth. If we ignore this, the inter-relation of these two things, then the Challenge work is bound to suffer; we are bound to see the fruits of our labor plucked by someone else, rather than see those fruits develop and themselves become new trees.

This is one of the things that makes a movement for change in this country basically different than any movements we know about in countries like Ghana, Kenya, Zanzibar, and so forth. In those countries, the system couldn't give very much without falling apart. In our country, the system seems to be able to give a whole lot without being torn apart. That ~~xxxxxxxx~~ seems to mean that in those countries a small band of organizers could get together and speak for a lot of people and bring about a pretty big change. That means that the people like SNCC in those countries didn't have to always go to the people in forums and discussions because it was already clear who the good guys and bad guys were. And it was also the case that those SNCCs didn't have to worry about losing people from their side. The other side was so bad that it didn't matter; I don't think any of these things apply to this country. At least now they don't. Maybe they will. I don't know. If you wanted to read the history of the



movements of the 1930's and look at them as attempts to apply ideas from countries where scarcity was a very basic problem to a country where scarcity wasn't such a huge problem, I think you would understand a lot of why the movements of the '30s didn't leave much of a dent on this country.

So we need to talk about what keeps people together even when someone can buy them off. They are held together by struggle, demands, organizing, conflict. AND, they are held together by a lot of things that we sometimes don't want to call work: photography, film-strips, tape-recordings, painting, writing, talking, traveling, singing, dancing. The trick, the art, the important thing is to keep these two sets of things related in one organization.

To work in these things is to do work if the people doing these things will tell those of us who don't know how to do them what they are doing, what they think its relationship to our work is, how we can help them, when they think they might finish what they're doing, how we can learn to use what they're doing, how local people can learn to do what they do and get involved in their programs.

There's another part of the discussion about the people doing these things that have to do with binding people together. Some people say that what they're doing is all right, but that it takes away from more important work. They either mean that these people should be doing something else or that they're wasting money. Now I would say that our experience here is that people really do what they feel is important to them, and that when people say they're doing something that they don't want to do that really isn't true. That means that I really want to fund-raise because I can do that and other people can't and I can enjoy the results of my fund-raising by seeing the Democratic Party tremble at MFDP and by reading Cobb's poetry, and by hearing McLauren talk about Sunflower County. Sure I'd like to organize farm-workers in California, but how could I do that very well if I didn't have a SNCC around that could keep me and 206 other people going. So I organize people in San Francisco to raise funds. I'll wait a while on my other projects.

The other thing people mean is that money is being wasted. Now that's not true either. And this relates to how this society is a lot different from others where there have been revolutions. In this society there are people who will give \$1,000 for a film about freedom but who'll only give \$10 for a Freedom Democratic Party. Don't write them off. Find them and plug them into the freedom film makers. And there are people who'll think that the freedom films are frills and that the money has to go to the hard work: voter registration. Find them; let them into the movement too. Let them give to the voter registration drives. Move on the inside and the outside. Take people where they are and work with them. Tie it all together in SNCC. Ask everyone in SNCC to let everyone else in SNCC know what he's doing. Tie it all together in the communities. Get everyone in SNCC to fit their thing into the organizing work, into the lives of the local people--for that's where the final validity of our work must be demonstrated, in its ability to move the people who are not in motion.

Most of ~~xxxxxx~~ the things that we think of as being either/or are not. They are one/and/the/other. They all tie together. We need to look at them that way so we can work.