

TO: FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
FROM: Mike Miller, Regional representative
RE: RECENT SNCC NATIONAL STAFF MEETING AND SUBSEQUENT NEWSPAPER STORIES

Snick is again in the headlines with a number of exaggerated or distorted stories about its recent national staff meeting and changes in leadership. The following points may help clarify some of the issues that have been raised (a more detailed statement should soon be available and can be obtained from the local SNCC office by request):

1. SNCC has always been interested in the development of independent Negro power in the South. This interest goes back to 1961 and the first organizing efforts in Albany, Georgia and Southwest Mississippi. John Lewis, Chairman of SNCC for the past several years, has always called for the development of "black pockets of power" in the black belt (Counties with over 50% Negro population) of the South.
2. The third parties formed in several counties of Alabama are a new form of this independent organizing. It should be noted that in Alabama it is legally possible to form a third party on the county level. Thus, in black belt counties there is a possibility of Negroes being elected to the seats of county government through their own political party. (The fee for Negroes to file as candidates in the Democratic Party primary was \$500 in Lowndes County. Average Negro income is about \$1200.) John Hulett, Chairman of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, whose symbol is the black panther, recently said that whites could join the Freedom Organization if they wanted to. He also said that his interest is in establishing independent power for Negroes and that the form of this power would vary with the local situation.
3. It has been SNCC's experience in the South that the remnants of an inferiority complex still exist in sections of the Negro community. To deal with this problem-- which is best summed up by the well known ghetto phrase, "If you're black stay back; if you're brown, stick around; if you're white you're right"--SNCC has decided that more attention must be paid by the organization to issues of culture and identity in the Negro community. To that end, there will be an increased effort to develop materials dealing with Negro history and the American Negroes' heritage in Africa. The development of a "cultural base" now becomes an important aspect of the SNCC program.
4. SNCC's refusal to participate in the forthcoming White House Conference on civil rights is based on the organization's feeling that the Conference will be just another talk session with no action forthcoming. It is also based on a disagreement with one of the basic assumptions of the conference. This assumption was made explicit when Conference Chairman Ben Heineman said that the Conference was concerned with how to assimilate the Negro into American culture. Two remarks can be made about this: (1) it is SNCC's explicit purpose to change aspects of American culture; (2) SNCC is opposed to that kind of integration that leads to the denial of cultural uniquenesses and contributions of different ethnic and racial groups to the country. The full text of the SNCC Statement on the White House Conference on Civil Rights is available from the local SNCC office.
5. The change in SNCC leadership is probably best understood as a desire on the part of the staff to have as chairman someone who comes out of independent County organizing in the black belt and who can give this direction to the whole organization. Stokely Carmichael worked for about one year with the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. He was SNCC's third national chairman (he was preceded by [redacted] and [redacted]). He was elected to the new 10 man central committee of the SNCC.