SNCC Does Not Speak for Whole Movement

BY ROY WILKINS

According to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the United States is the aggressor in Vietnam. No other civil rights organization, after discussion and vote, has made such a charge.

The National Assn. for the Advancement of Colored People quickly issued a statement dissociating itself from the SNCC paper. The NAACP action was the result not only of its support for our country, but of the habit of many in its ranks of classifying any action by any group—a local unit or a national body—as action by "the civil rights movement."

The statement then attempted to draw a parallel between the killing of a Negro student in Tuskegee, Ala., and the killing of Vietnamese in Southeast Asia. It counseled persons of draft age to seek employment in civil rights organizations "as a valid alternative to the draft."

This resolution is, purely and simply, a statement of the position of one organization, SNCC. A 23-member executive committee drew it up. The report says it was approved without dissent by the entire staff of more than 130 persons. The document, then, is hardly the official sentiment of 20 million Negro Americans or of the many organized bodies through which they express their group opinions.

SNCC, organized in 1960, originally as a genuine coordinator of student groups active in civil rights, has become a separate organization in itself. Each member is a staffer; that is, all are workers in the cause. It has remained small and has worked hard in the local urban and rural areas, largely in the South.

Its original Negro student members brought intense dedication to the struggle and their friends from northern campuses and from elsewhere brought strategy.

The Mellowing Was Slight

From elsewhere, too, came financial support. In the first years, in its enthusiasm and militancy, SNCC was contemptuous of all others, black and white, who did not fit a doctrinaire formula of thinking and acting. It has mellowed but insensitively and lost none of its far-out daring. It does not hesitate to adhere to a policy because that stand might also be the official left wing theory—politically, as well as religiously. SNCC, then, is hardly the official voice of 20 million Negro Americans. It has recognized the smallest of the civil rights groups, is, in some substantial measure, the product of the smallest of civil rights groups, the minute of the smallest.

Obviously, SNCC has considered the possible consequences of the harsh wording of its Vietnam resolution. It has decided that its objectives, stated and implied, are without parallel. But the question arises: And what of SNCC, the document?