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SNCC Does Not Speak
Inter-group - SNCC
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 disassociating 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 persons of classifying any action by any group—a local unit or a national body—as action by "the civil rights movement."

The Shriners, the Elks and the Ancient Order of Hibernians are not lumped together as "fraternal societies" when one takes an action. But all civil rights groups are handled under the umbrella of "the civil rights movement."

Following the line of the left thinkers, the SNCC statement branding the United States also expressed the belief that our government had been "deceptive in its claim for concern for the freedom of the Vietnamese people," just as, it declared, the government "has been deceptive in claiming concern for the freedom of colored people."

Parallel and Recommendation

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, quickly became a separate organization unto 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 naivete, SNCC was contemptuous of all others, black and white, who did not fit a doctrinaire formula of thinking and acting. It has mellowed but infinitesimally 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 racially. Of course, the indefensible history of persecution of Negro citizens invites left wing comment.

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 worth the turbulence. But it is important that Americans remember that this document, while an expression of but the smallest of the civil rights groups, is, in some substantial measure, the product of the snail's pace of racial justice in the United States. Intemperate statements on racial matters are shaped, not around conference tables by 23 persons, but by the stubborn hostility of crude or subtle white supremacists.

In the face of this truism, many persons in authority continue to temporize with intolerable conditions and to refrain from the forthright action required to redress grievances and to forestall tactical excursions which may or may not aid our nation's ideological enemies.