BULLETIN FROM THE NEW YORK OFFICE OF SNCC
June 23, 1966

This will be a brief bulletin since news of our most important current activity, the Mississippi march, has been widely covered in the press. However, we call your attention to the continued misinterpretation of SNCC's position and of "black power" -- not only by the press but also by other Negro organizations and spokesmen. In this connection, please read the enclosed statement recently issued by SDS (Students for a Democratic Society); it is excellent. We also call your attention to an excellent letter in THE NEW REPUBLIC of June 25 and to the following:

Excerpts from copy of memorandum received by New York SNCC 6/21/66

TO: NCC Elected Staff
Executives, State and City Councils of Churches
Denominational Race Staff and Social Action Staff
United Church Women Leaders
Southern Demonstration Veterans
Commission on Religion and Race

FROM: Benjamin F. Payton, Executive Director
Commission on Religion and Race
National Council of Churches

SUBJECT: Meredith Mississippi March and the Nation

> The two items (Manifesto of the March by King, Carmichael, and McKissick; N.Y. Times article of June 12th), attached to this memo reflect very accurately the new mood which has become apparent to those of us who have been working in the field in the midwest, the far west, the east and the south. This new mood might well be described as the crystallization and mobilization of Negro talent and effort toward self-determination in the best sense of that concept.... This mood is not in most instances a rejection of white people or white support, personal or financial. This mood is a conviction that the Negro must present his own concerns, program and plans for his own economic, political and social relationship to his inheritance in our nation.

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BOYCOTT IN NEW YORK OF DI GIORGIA PRODUCTS

Schenley signed a contract yesterday with the National Farm Workers Association (California grape strikers). Products of Di Giorgio, the largest ranch being struck, are being boycotted across the nation. In New York, members of the NFWA have been directing the boycott effort from the SNCC office. It begins tomorrow, Friday, June 24 (5-7) and Saturday, June 25 (11-1) with a picket line at the Gristede store on Lexington Avenue and 83rd Street.

DO NOT BUY:

S & W canned foods (mostly fruits and vegetables)
White Rose products, including tea
Redi-Tea
Tree-Sweet juices (including frozen)
Met foods

RESOLUTION ON SNCC, passed by National Council of Students for a Democratic Society, SDS, June 18, 1966:

SDS has long maintained fraternal relations with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Now that SNCC is under fire from a variety of liberal organizations and publications we feel a special urgency to restate our support. Let it be clear that we are not merely supporting SNCC's right to its views, we are welcoming and supporting the thrust of SNCC's program, and expect to continue our joint work.

SNCC has emphasized "black power." This is not a magic charm or a promised land; it is a strategy for social change and a mode of organization. Both the strategy and the mode become clear if the United States is understood as an essentially racist culture. Yet at the same time Negroes have been an exploited caste, they have been taught to seek their salvation in integration -- that is, in an accommodation to the dominant social values, under white leadership.

We know that not all SNCC's critics resemble George Wallace; that is precisely why we try to lay bare the liberal assumptions that lead to attacks on SNCC. We are struck with the fact that among the critics are liberals vociferous in their praise of an America in which minorities organize themselves and preserve their cultural integrity. They are now denouncing SNCC's "black consciousness" as "racism in reverse." We doubt these critics would find themselves so upset if SNCC sought to accept the major premises of American life; it is precisely because SNCC is revolutionary -- because it is trying to bring about a fundamental rearrangement of power in America -- that they shrink in horror.

Racism and economic exploitation confront Negroes as a group, together. So, of course, Negroes, especially in the Southern black belt and the Northern ghettoes, must act as a group in order to challenge their condition. This is not "racism in reverse" any more than American revolutionists were "colonialists in reverse." It is a recognition of the fact of common identity and the beginnings of a strategy for change. We must not simply tolerate this "black consciousness," we should encourage it.

Measured against the necessary social, political, economic, educational and cultural changes, integration is very literally irrelevant, since integration assumes the integrity of the dominant (white) culture. "Black consciousness," on the other hand, understands very deeply the exploitativeness of that culture and seeks to make a beginning in reconstructing it. We agree, then, with SNCC in asking why Negroes cannot seek to live and rebuild where they wish, in their own schools, with their own economic base, without being dismissed as "racist."

Some liberal and radical critics argue that SNCC's strategy will be frustrated by the sheer fact that Negroes are a minority, even in large portions of the Deep South. To this we say that the responsibility for that frustration would lie with those whites who fail to build white movements that can at some point ally with the black movement for common goals. Whites in the civil rights movement have almost always been auxiliaries, and at the present stage they easily frustrate the Negro movement unless they recognize the right and the need for black radicals to organize independent bases of power in Negro communities. Power means the ability to act autonomously; it is a truism that the power of black communities is limited to the extent it depends directly on white help. (This is not the only factor to be considered when the white radical thinks about organizing Negroes, but we cannot dispute its importance.)

SDS seeks to call white critics to their true tasks, not to impugn their motives. If we really want to help we will be organizing primarily among the powerless, the disenfranchised, the dependent whites -- poor working class, and middle class -- toward their power in communities, unions, and professions, so that they may move toward authentic alliance with the organizations of black power. There can be no true coalition for radical change unless there exist people in many spheres, wherever they are, committed to and organized for the reconstruction of American life.

Finally, SNCC has been criticized for having a position on the Vietnam war in the first place; and second, for having the position it does, one of deep and wholehearted opposition. But we applaud SNCC for recognizing that the enemies of deep-seated social change at home are the enemies of revolution abroad, and for acting to forge alliances with the oppressed in the Third World. We are saddened to see presumed internationalists attacking SNCC for articulating its solidarity with their brothers -- whether in Guatemala or South Africa or Vietnam -- and we intend to work closely with them in making international contacts: Without sectarianism, but also without illusions as to the real position of America in the world, or for its own poor and powerless.