

REPORT OF THE COMMUNICATIONS SECTION OF THE ATLANTA OFFICE

1 August 1966

Attached to this report are two memo's dealing with procedures in the area of communications in the Atlanta office. Hopefully, both of these memo's provide a framework for effectively functioning in terms of routine.

We've been trying since the last exec comm. meeting to provide improvement in the news gathering and transmitting our information services to the field; our use of the Atlanta office physical plant. For these reasons our efforts in communications and news and promotions cannot be separated from the routine and function-ing of the Atlanta office. More and more, those of us in the comun. dept (specifically Bill Mahoney and myself) are becoming very much involved in the overall direction of the office. This has been particularly true during the last 2 or 3 weeks with all of the officers of the organization out of Atlanta and Jim out of town for a period of time. The substance of this report, however, is to be in the area of communications. So I would like to here outline some of the things that we have been doing, some of the bigger problems, suggest what i feel the nature of SNCC Commn. should be. i also have 2 organizational proposals.

What we do

Bill Mahoney and myself share overall responsibility for communications and news and promotion. Working in the office with us, writing and or collecting news and getting it out, are five other persons: Gwen Butler, an Ala. student, is our Wats Line operator. She also transcribes tapes. Michaeld Wright, George Curry, Doris Keeble are also from Alabama, and there is John Hampton from Virginia. These persons write news releases of the Wa-ts type, help get out mailings, write articles. Willie Paul Benian from Atlanta comes in for a few hours each night and calls the filed on the Wats Line. In the audio room John Tilson is the in the process of giving that section some order. Often he works with Gwen who makes tapes of her field calls.

The attached memo's pretty much describe the procedure within which we function. In addition to this, there have been an increasing number of African delegations coming to the Atlanta office, and we have been attempting to establish contacts with them (with some success). Several delegations have been to the office, where we have held discussions in the office conference room.

An ancient veteran of the 60's, who will be in the Atlanta office for the next month or two, is conducting writing workshops with the students who are participating in the Institute.

We are all collecting material for a magazine to come out in September. We have finished shooting the negatives for the FREEDOM PRIMER. Some 7,000 copies will be available next week. Within the month, 13,000 more copies will be available.

Within days there will be some 10,000 copies of a SNCC produced book of FREEDOM SCHOOL POETRY from the Mississ-ippi Summer of 1964.

We are attempting to re-establish the Southern Reporting Service, which will mail out in-depth articles and features. Also it will mail out mats of available photos for sale.

We get steady requests for articles on BLACK POWER and/or Stokely Carmichael. We are now requesting payment in advance. Whoever authors these articles is expected to contribute at least 50% of the money to SNCC.

Problems.

A good deal of the physical aspect of our work is handicapped by two things:

- (1) the shortcomings of our production department
- (2) the nature of the Atlanta office, particularly as it relates to the students.

Firstly, on the production department. A varitype machine is simply too slow to efficiently and effectively typeset large quantities of materials. We would rather send out printed materials as opposed to mimeographed materials. We in communications request, suggest...and urge...that either a justiwriter be gotten, or that we pay to have extensive materials typeset.

Wilson Brown is not physically able to do all the printing that has to be done. We strongly urge that another printer be hired who would handle a SNCC Commercial Printing Effort. (Incidentally, we have one of the best equipped plants in Atlanta.), and a training program. Sometime in August, several of us will begin receiving training in printing, layout, copy--camera, and production machines, though a federally sponsored program. This will aid--we hope--in creating an efficient production department. Generally, while in terms of production to meet our National needs (e.g. BLACK POWER STICKERS or MOVE ON OVER posters) we are slowly improving. At present, we are poorly meeting local needs.

The way SNCC functions poses special problems for the students who have been here this Summer. Their coming from a rigidly structured situation into the creative freeness of SNCC makes for a difficult transition in regard to work. For instance, use of the Wats. Line is not a matter of signing up for times when communications is not using it. The Wats line is taken on the basis of the strength of personality and longevity. Cliques seem integral to personal survival in the office.

It appears that conditions at Houston Street (another SNCC house of creative dis-organization) acts as a drain on the effectiveness of the students.

The Nature of SNCC Communications

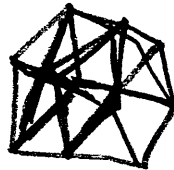
We are beginning to re-evaluate what communications should be. The two main stimuli for this are the (1) pose and tone of the regular press, and (2) Stokely.

It becomes increasingly clear that we cannot beat out the regular press in terms of gathering and getting out the news to newspapers. What we can do in terms of the regular press is to condition the emphasis (slant) of the news. This assumes, of course, that they first print our releases--which some do. It is felt that these releases are pretty ineffective except in terms of some of the small dailies and weeklies and the colored press. By no means is it felt that releases should be our main emphasis.

At the risk of getting abstract, it is suggested that there be developed a philosophy of communications for SNCC...and that we have to be commanded and guided by:

- i) acceptance of the fact that the press is doing us no favor by their stories on SNCC. That in fact they write what they want (as they have always done).
- ii) acceptance that the handling of the press is a political act and requires that we accept a certain posture
 - A. All formal press conference be held in the Black community
 - B. That we cultivate the negro press despite its short-comings for the sake of image in addition to the other reasons.
 - C. That the Radio be seen as vital if we talk about speaking to the Black Community.
- iii) insisting that our officers --especially Stokely-- become more and more, and then some, inaccessible to the regular press
- iv) intensifying our efforts to feed information the SNCC staff and the Black Community.
- v) cultivate the foreign press with special efforts to the African sector.

- vi) development of news ways of distributing information.
- vii) Projection of the Central Committee as SNCC spokesman.



Stokely

Stokely's projection since his election to the chairmanship of SNCC forces us to consider very seriously, and define very sharply, what leadership articulates for SNCC.

The value of the chairman is in terms of the national role he plays.

The internal organizational leadership is dependant on what we see ourselves doing...how we understand and implement that. Speaking specifically to Stokely it is felt that he can be of internal value if he can get a chance to develop that role. He has not had that chance. For this reason (reason of his growing capture by the country). It appears that as he continues as chairman, he should devote himself to the devolpment of his internal role. The national press is expendable. Repeat, expendable! SNCC's needs, as far as can be determined at this precisi~~s~~ moment in history, are not best served by the kind of role of external leadership presently practiced. The best move we could make is for Stokely to step out of the chairmanship by expressing fear over being isola-~~ted~~ as a national leader. He would perhaps welcome this move because of the arduous and corrosive effect on him of attempting to meet the unreasonable demands made on him by the national press. It is certain and a certainty that Stokely's role is with SNCC and the SNCC staff. He does have an awful lot to give...and he needs a way to render this gift unto us.

Central Committee

The Central Committee, as a body, should commit themselves to the minimum of a month in the field, carrying with them the decisions, discussions of the three central committee meetings. Such a trip would be designed to consolidate the organiz-ation in terms of what we have said and what we are.

- 30

magazine

isolated

*assumption ⇒ Internal organization
BLACK PANTHER
BLACK POWER CONVOCATION*