

August 1, 1966

To: SNCC Central Committee
From: Marion Barry, Jr. and Washington SNCC
Re: Free D.C. Movement (FDCM)

After watching the frustrated efforts of local "Home Rule" Committee and Civic Organizations losing the right to vote battle to a powerful coalition on part of the business community and Southern racist Congressmen, Washington SNCC decided to enter the struggle for self-government in the Nation's capital and to try to give it new impetus by introducing methods that have been at least partially successful elsewhere-education and mobilization of the people, economic pressure on businessmen by withholding our money from those who did not support the right to vote and, when necessary, demonstration.

A successful bus boycott, organized by SNCC in January to protest a nickel increase in bus fares, gave the people of Washington some faith in their own power and provided the needed momentum -for an action organization dedicated to self-government for the district. The bus boycott gave Washingtonians a sense of power.

After a couple of organizational meetings to which poverty workers, civil rights people, college students, and religious leaders were invited. There were 40 people at the first meeting and 60 at the second meeting. The idea of launching the Free D. C. Movement was discussed and support pledged. The Free D. C. Movement was launched February 21, 1966. Besides SNCC, support for the new movement was pledged by Rev. Walter Fauntroy, Suffragen Bishop Paul Moore (Co-Chairman of the D.C. coalition of Conscience a group of 30 religious and civil rights organizations that have worked on welfare cases and made some previous effort on behalf of "Home Rule") D.C. Chamber of Commerce (predominantly Negro business group) Uptown progress (20 civic and professional groups) several UPO Centers citizens advisory council (these are the local "poor" people) and Rev. Ed Mailse executive director NAACP.

At that time FDCM announced plans to counter the Washington Board of Trade's \$100,000 Nation Wide Campaign (which has been claiming local residents don't really want the right of self government) by garnering our own support from the business community. A Washington barber, John Diggs, had agreed to head up a "Merchant's and Businessmen's Committee to Free D.C." and to contact Merchants with several requests; to sign a petition for the right to vote; send telegrams in support to President Johnson and certain members of Congress; display a 5 7 orange and black Free D.C. sticker in his window; and to make a contribution to the movement.

Within two days the Free D.C. Movement (FDCM) had been branded as "extortionists", the new Al Capone's "blackmailers" and a couple of other prize phrases, by the opponents of self government and "Home Rule" in Congress. Mr. Diggs, suffering from a heart condition which we had been unaware of, received more than 70 phone calls, including one from the Chief of Police. Mr. Diggs resigned, necessitating a restructure of the FDCM,

but we knew we were on the right track—we had touched a sore nerve.

In the days following, the heart and pressured increased. The NAACP decided to withdraw while several church groups, civic organizations came out in support of us. This has caused several changes in day-to-day strategy.

The Free D.C. movement first target area for local community support was H Street N.E. between 2nd and 15th, a shopping district comprised of 400 businesses. The merchants are predominately white, but the neighborhood is primarily black. Canvassers visited the merchants in pairs, requesting their support in any one (or more) of a number of ways from agreeing to allow literature to be passed out in their store, or putting a sticker in the window, to voluntary contributions to the cause of self government.

While the canvassing of the merchants was going on, workers (primarily SNCC people) distributed over 40,000 pieces of literature in the area. Two educational rallies were held. (About 50 persons at the first and about 100 at the second). After working in the area for 10 days, all but 25 of the 400 merchants had placed stickers in their windows. At the end of this 10 day period we had an afternoon March in the neighborhood. The March area about 250 persons (most of whom were from the local community). We then announced plans to move to another area of the city. The announcement was made by Marion Barry, Fr. William Wendt and George Storey (later two live and have groups in the neighborhood where we were moving).

The FDCM moved to an area in N.W. Washington called the Cardoza area (14th st. between T St. and Spring Rd.—30 black area). Fr. Wendt, President of University neighborhood council

(local group working on poverty-but not financed by Federal government) and Storey agreed to do the canvassing but they fail to do this. Therefore, again SNCC people did the canvassing of the merchants. After a week on canvassing about 90% of the merchants had put up stickers. Again, an educational meeting and March was held to try to get the local community involved. About 50 persons participated.

The FDCM then decided to move downtown and actively picket a department store. After a month of picketing and boycotting which was 40-50% effective, Kann's department store agreed to put a sign in their window saying that "The principle officer of Kann's do support personally self government for D.C. This ended the picketing.

Workers are working in the N.E. Washington trying to get more people involved in the FDCM.

What kind of people has FDCM related to?

The premise that FDCM works on is that we want to organized black people for power.

During the bus boycott the stragisy area and primary organizers for the Cardoza area were from UPO center #3 (the local poverty center for that area). The Coordinator fro the North East was Mrs. Willie Hardy-Ex. Secty of Metropolitan Community Aid Council-(neighborhood grass rootsxorganized). One of the assembly points for the boycott for Northeast, the local poverty center for that area.

Since FDCM came into being, workers on speakers have visited seven of the eight poverty centers and talked to the neighborhood citizen advisory council. FDCM got support from seven of the eight centers.

Report: To the Central Committee
From: Free D.C. Movement

In early June, FDCM started holding street corner rallies on 7th St. (bound by New Jersey Ave, 10th st. Rhode Island and New York Ave.) A number of these rallies were held with marchers, singing and the people talking about their problems. Weekly community mass meetings were held. Several hundred people showed up at the weekly meetings. Local committees were set up with about 18 persons signing up to work on their block and in the neighborhood.

Rallies were also held on 1st and Rhode Island across from SNCC office.

In early July, FDCM started a series of block parties. The first one was broken up by cops. A warrant was sworn out by cops for Marion Barry and Lester McKinnie for holding the block party. Marion and Lester posted the \$110,000 collateral. Trial is set for Aug. 11th.

FDCM uses the block parties as a means of getting young people involved. FDCM hopes to get to the point where they can hold block parties each week. The parties stressed maximum community participation.

Marion Barry:

A number of SNCC people have raised the question as to why I am chairman of the Free D.C. Movement. When the FDCM was first announced at a press conference consisting of Rev. Walter Fauntroy, Negro bishop Paul Moore Co-Chairman of Coalition of conscience (coalition of civil rights and religious groups), Ed Hailes ex Secty NAACP, and John Diggs local barber, the chairman of the Merchants and Businessmen's Committee to Free D.C, because of the tremendous pressure most of the persons displaced from public view. Our experiences in Washington have shown that a large number of people are self advocated and have selfish interest (even grass roots and low income people). In order to try to develop a sense of militancy in DC (which didn't exist), and since I have no self interest, I along with others decided that the movement women remain purer if I remained chairman (John Diggs is case in Point) There are 1,000 "Leaders" in Washington and all of them want to

project "their thing" and want to be leaders. This is some what different from Lowndes County or rural areas of the south. (I will give a better verbal description) There has been no attempt not to project local Washingtonians and we are in the process of finding a number of local Washingtonians to Project as being involved in the FDCM.

A number of person want to know what FDCM has done "outside of Marion Barry". For those who know Washington, they know of the great difficulty of getting people to put their bodies rather than their mouths in the movement.

Julius Hobson admits to being able to get only 25 or 30 people out with regularity. CORE can get 10-15. The Meredith's rally and march (with all of the group's sponsoring it) drew about 300 people. Therefore numbers and organization are not an indication of ones effectiveness.

There are a number of concrete things we have done in terms of educating, mobilizing and organizing people in Washington.

FDCM has distributed over 700,000 pieces of literature; has sold or given away over 30,000 Free D. C. buttons; has talked to or been invovled with a large number of groups. A number of neighborhood rallies have been held.

Outside of thes, I think that our biggest contribution has been to break through the psychological barrier of "can't do anything" to a feeling of power. Most people still say that "you all are beating the hell of the folks downtown". It is still a "you all" and "us" thing rather than a we. But the "we" is the next stage. People allover Washington now have a sense of "believability" in themselves. Groups are now organizing all over town. UPO is stepping up its organizing. Therefore a lot of what FDCM has created doesn't feed back into FDCM.

PROBLEMS

Washington has a population of 900,000 people and area ofj about 72 sq. miles. SNCC only has 2 full time staff people in Washington. (Myself and Lester) It is very difficult to get good people to work for SNCC's low salary and even worst not to get paid at all. UPO (local poverty p'rogram) steals all of the old SNCC people and any experienced field workers. Therefore experienced personel is a very serious problem --particulary skilled community organizers. In addition, some of the old SNCC people doesn't with or understand FDCM's method of operation. When they are asked for concrete suggestions, the suggestion rarely come forth.

~~What are the main problems in getting people to work for SNCC?~~

~~1. Low salary~~

PROBLEMS CONT.

The other problem is fundraising. The main problem is finding someone to devote full time to fundraising. Most people want to act but none want to fundraise.

Secondly, Washington SNCC's money base was about 70% white. Since the Viet-Nam statement and "the black power" concept, contributions have fallen off a great deal. Efforts are now being made to change the base, but that is a slow process. FDCM still has not reached down in the community as far we would like.

The Washington staff and volunteers have changed, since last summer, from nearly all white to nearly all black.

The work force is all volunteer with the exception of Lester and myself. There are about 20 hard core people who work every afternoon and night.

Finally -- What is the objective of FDCM? To organize black people into a very powerful block in D.C. , so they themselves can get rid of police brutality, slumlords, bad schools, etc.

minutes from

Attached are copies of FDCM meetings (which are staff meetings, other meetings held in the community). The FDCM staff meetings are held every Monday night at 8 p.m.