

MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING

October 22nd and 23rd, 1966
Knoxville, Tenn.

Saturday, October 22nd, 1966

Present: Ralph Featherstone, Jennifer Lawson, Bob Mants, Jack Minnis, Charlie Cobb, Stanley Wise, Shirley Wright, Ruby Doris Robinson and Stokely Carmichael.

BLACK POWER CONFERENCE:

Ruby moved that SNCC DOES NOT OFFICIALLY ATTEND THE BLACK POWER CONFERENCE.

Charlie Cobb seconded. 5 in favor of the motion. PASSED.

Discussion then centered around the issuance of a public statement from SNCC. Chairman suggested that a letter be sent out to all offices stating that SNCC does not officially attend. Statement about our attendance should be sent to 1) press, 2) Black community and 3) Powell.

Ruby suggested that there be no statement to the press but that a statement be sent to all offices and to ghetto listing reasons why we are not going (that statement should say 'not for publication'). Powell should get a letter stating that SNCC will not attend.

Cobb agreed that there be no statement to the press. Re Powell and the ghetto, a position paper should be written about our reasons for not attending the Conference.

Mants had no objection about going if we could think of some way to utilize the Conference.

Discussion held on how position paper would differ from stipulation of reasons why SNCC is not attending.

Cobb stated that Paper should say there is a need for black people getting together and substance of what should transpire. Could question the concept of the Black Power Conference and offer ideas of what Black people should discuss.

Carmichael voiced question as to how SNCC would answer questions from the Black community about why we weren't going.

Wise suggested that we should stipulate that Conference is bad for all people to attend because it will not supply answer as to how Black people can use the power. Conference seems to be saying that Black Power has overstepped its bounds. Conference is designed to limit the scope of Black Power. There is nobody equipped to define and limit black power. This is a time to come together and discuss material needs and not only an intellectual exercise to doom the power of Blacks. We must say that the Conference is bad and shouldn't be attended.

Mants expressed the feeling that Black Power Conference will work against SNCC. Out of this meeting, the delegates will be in turn transformed into the spokesmen for Black Power as opposed to SNCC.

The Position Paper, once written, will mean we are saying that we are not going.

Cobb emphasized that it should be implicit that we are not going but the argument should not be centered around this question but what is important is that Black people get together and how they participate in these conferences, the substance and circumstances of such conferences. These are the things we must present to the Black community. Our views must be secondary. We should only say that SNCC is not sending a delegation.

Discussion then followed concerning the reasons for Powell calling the Black Power Conference at this time. This was seen in light of Powell being stripped of his power, and also in view of the coming election.

Ruby stated that she thought that we should point out that SNCC is not participating and that SNCC people should not go because they are to visible and easily identified. It should be o.k. for people working with SNCC to go but not those identified with SNCC or on staff.

Carmichael thought some one should go and develop contacts and gather information. However, Ruby pointed out that we do not have the mobility to follow up on such contacts.

There was a consensus that we should state our opposition to the Conference and not to Powell himself. Stanley felt that to state our opposition to the Conference would be interpreted as our being against Powell.

Charlie felt that one alternative would be to have no formal public statement concerning the Conference. We should just issue statement for the staff use. He felt the only way to keep from coming out against Powell was to say nothing.

Carmichael stated people were afraid to say we are not going. We have to make a decision regardless of whether it is right or wrong.

THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE TAKES THE POSITION THAT SNCC DOES NOT ATTEND THE CONFERENCE.

Carmichael stated that the Conference was called against SNCC's policy and was counter-revolutionary. Powell is talking about stopping the throwing of molotov cocktails and not about stopping the causes that brings about the throwing of the cocktails. Powell has never talked about independent politics. He is trying to get people together under the Democratic party. SNCC has given momentum to call a conference against us. He further suggested nonattendance, no comment to press, Statement to Black community on position (not for publication) and letter to Powell stating our reasons for not going.

Karen raised the question of whether or not SNCC could not use its influence at the Conference.

Carmichael stated that SNCC should not move into situations unless they are sure of a win. Since SNCC is not in this position, it would be poor political move. Secondly, he stated SNCC was not in a position to use the momentum it might capture at the Conference. Therefore, it would be unwise to attempt to control it.

It was moved that THERE BE NO COMMENT TO THE PRESS, A POSITION PAPER BE SENT TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY AND A STATEMENT TO POWELL CONCERNING THE FACT THAT SNCC WILL NOT BE ATTENDING THE BLACK POWER CONFERENCE. ALSO, THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE WILL SEND OUT LETTER TO ALL STAFF STATING THAT THEY ARE NOT TO ATTEND.

Vote: 6 in favor, 0 against, 1 abstention PASSED

Mants stated that he would be strongly in favor of having a Black Power Conference for the purpose of mapping out and planning for political and economic Black Power. This Conference should be held before the Nov. 8th election.

Wise spoke against this suggestion and raised logistical questions regarding planning, utilization, etc. Main contention was that it was physically impossible.

Charlie Cobb and Ruby-Doris were assigned to work on position paper and that prior to distribution of the paper, a formal letter be sent to Powell stating our non-attendance of the Conference. In addition, a letter be sent out by the Secretariat and the Central Committee to all staff stating our non-attendance of the Black Power Conference.

EDUCATION PROGRAM OF SNCC:

Cobb spoke to the issue saying that the program which is now virtually nonexistent is the responsibility of the Program Secretary to carry out.

Questions were raised as to the stage of development of the program. Replies were that it was in the planning stage but no one was sure where. A question was raised as to Cleve's efficiency in implementing the education program.

Ruby asked how the education program was to be implemented as it was three months lagging in production.

Cobb felt that the Central Committee should talk about organizational secretaries. The individual should be responsible for working on a program such as staff education, i.e. time, place, resource materials, informing the staff.

Cobb also proposed that EDUCATION PROGRAM BE HELD BEGINNING FEBRUARY 1.

Jennings suggested that the Central Committee should discuss the already established guidelines. She also stated that she and Ruby would be responsible for implementing the Education Program.

Ricks proposed that a Central Committee meeting be held in New York one week before the staff meeting.

Ruby suggested that at the next Central Committee meeting the Education Program be expanded. Suggested that Minnis and Featherstone draw up an approach to study economic program complete with bibliography, and that other experts, i.e. Frank Smith be consulted and asked to contribute material. This is to be presented at the Central Committee meeting prior to the staff meeting.

Carmichael suggested that a letter be sent to staff asking them to submit what they wanted discussed prior to the staff meeting. Mants then suggested that a meeting be held at the beginning of the staff meeting where submission for items to be discussed can be accepted. Both suggestions were taken.

Central Committee then moved to discuss the secretariat's report.

MEETING OF ARTISTS:

Belafonte is on tour until November 27. He agrees with suggestion and said that meeting should be held while he was on tour so he could contact artists throughout the city. Felt Ivanhoe and Stokely should be at the meeting to make formal arrangements. Artists should be asked for commitments which could be handled by SNCC.

Ruby voiced support of the Artist Fund raising idea and reiterated the importance of SNCC's central role in the program to develop the mechanism for stabilizing the contacts made by various SNCC members. Those persons, Mildred Foreman, Dwight Williams and J.P. Tillman would be responsible for developing this program.

It was moved that CHARLIE COBB CONTACT CHARLES HARTMAN TO ATTEMPT TO STOP THE FILM MAKING OF SNCC.

ORGANIZATIONAL SECRETARIES:

Ruby asked what is an organizational secretary and its role and function?

Stokely said that the organizational secretary needs to follow up work in areas where SNCC is not functioning. He then raised the issue of affiliate organizations.

Mants suggested that there be a serious re-evaluation of SNCC affiliates. It seems that there is no structure in SNCC that allows for affiliates. The structure that did allow once for campus affiliates was abolished.

Cobb explained his current stand by stating SNCC is not a membership organization but a staff organization. He felt that the answer was not to bring interested groups into the organization but that they should function independently but also retain close communications with SNCC.

Stokely suggested that an organizational secretary follow up his visits to various cities in an effort to organize the momentum that is stirred up during his visit, a resource area which heretofore has been laid to waste.

Featherstone felt that SNCC was not in a position to direct any activities of other communities since SNCC had not developed itself in such a manner to offer any meaningful suggestions or programs.

Charlie Cobb agreed with Ralph's assessment and stated that his major frustration was not with lack of ideas but with the inability to follow up requests for SNCC's assistance.

Featherstone said that all he was trying to say was that SNCC doesn't have a program and the things Stokely has been saying around the country are meaningless.

Charlie felt that programatic ideas could be developed through ideas of others in community.

Returning to the discussion of organizational secretaries, there was a fuzziness as to how to define given the unclarity of the role of SNCC. Discussion was tabled until the staff meeting.

DEVELOPING INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

MONEY FROM SPEAKING:

Question was raised about the handling of funds obtained through speaking engagements. It seemed that money was being absorbed into the local SNCC offices.

Ruby stated that money obtained through speaking engagements was to be sent into the National Office. Featherstone supported this position. Ruby further stipulated that a decision was not necessary for the Central Committee but this would be handled by her.

THE MOVEMENT (SNCC newspaper):

It was felt that the newspaper was not representative of SNCC. A Black editor should be appointed. A series of letters were read where it was suggested that SNCC needed a Black newspaper and that this newspaper was not organized or did not focus into the Black community.

Ruby asked that the Central Committee wanted to change their former position which asked for a change in newspaper. The secretariat recommended that we reconsider former mandate.

Cobb suggested that paper should not say it was published by SNCC and they should not aim at the Black community.

A discussion followed concerning the need for a SNCC newspaper or for several newspapers, as Charlie stated, an official voice for SNCC. It was generally agreed that there was a need.

It was suggested that contacts be made for people who could work in production dept. to support newspaper. (Frederick Brooks of Tennessee A & I was suggested by George Ware as a possible worker. He is studying printing now).

JIMMY McDONALD:

McDonalds was hired by SNCC at \$150 a week in the New York office as a fund raiser to develop independent sources of funds. He will be expected, within a 6 month period, to submit a proposal for additional fund raising. Stokely asked for suggestions regarding kind of political framework he should be given.

Ruby suggested that instead of providing a political framework, Jimmy be asked to submit a plan of action for fund raising.

It was moved that AN ANALYSIS FROM IVANHOE ASKING FOR EVALUATION OF THE CAPABILITIES OF MC DONALD BE GIVEN AT THE NEXT CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING and

THAT MC DONALD SUBMIT THE REQUESTED PROPOSAL AT THE NEXT CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING.

The secretariat was requested to take care of communications.

SELMA OFFICE:

The point was raised as to how the Selma office could be re-opened. Irma Jean Moore had offered to work in the Selma office if she were guaranteed a salary.

Charlie suggested that Stanley and Cleve, as Organizational Secretary and Program Secretary, should speak to these issues.

Featherstone suggested that the entire role of the Program Secretary should be re-evaluated at the next staff meeting.

LOWNDES COUNTY:

Central Committee Meeting
Page Five

It was suggested that:

- . Afro-Asian nations be asked to come to Lowndes County as observers either the 6th, 7th or 8th (Shirley will take care of this)
- . Ask other SNCC project workers to come to work in the county (Ruby will take care of this)
- . Four cars are needed for the county (4 cars will be rented until after Nov. 9)

Ruby asked for a clarification of priority; that priority was given to Lowndes County.

Featherstone said there was a need for 2-way radios and 2 girls to work in the office (Julia Polk and Karen Edmonds suggested).

The press was the next issue. Bob Mants stated that the people in the Freedom Organization be consulted about any press statements.

Carmichael suggested that press conference be held on November 3 where candidates could be showed. There was a general objection because it was felt that SNCC would be projected and not the LCFC.

Bob Mants felt this was politically unwise. All of the Alabama staff agreed that the people in Lowndes County objected to press conference being called by SNCC. He also felt that communications with press be outside of Lowndes County in such areas as Philly, New York.

Question raised by the Chairman, Does Lowndes County want a press conference or press release (called by SNCC)?

It was decided by the Lowndes County staff that SNCC should not call any press conference for LCFC.

The question of a paid announcement in which Martin Luther King would call for people to vote was discussed. It was decided that it would be worthwhile to have King come out with this request even though he would not endorse any specific candidates. It was agreed that we could use this by editing the tape so as to endorse the Freedom candidates.

Stanley Wise reported that he felt the chances of winning in Dallas County were fairly good. He also said that there had been a problem or morale because the people in Dallas County felt that Lowndes County had been given all of the resources, cars, people, etc.

Sunday, October 23rd, 1966

Present were: Charlie Cobb, Jack Minnis, Bob Smith, Shirley Wright, Jim Forman, Jennifer Lawson, Willie Ricks, Bob Mants, John Buffington, Stokely Carmichael and Ruby Doris Robinson.

ORAL REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN:

Rhetorically, there have been a lot of mistakes made. These mistakes were not made in a vacuum. These mistakes were made because we did not address ourselves to thinking politically. Most of my engagements have been in the North since the last Central Committee meeting. There has been some question about the northern offices becoming project offices rather than fund raising offices. Our current expansion into the North is experimental; New York, Boston (Roxbury), D. C. and Chicago. There is a question as to precisely what is being done by Monroe in Chicago.

In San Francisco, there is no organizing being done. There are no Black people working on the staff there. In Los Angeles, there has not been any word from Cliff since the program he presented at the Central Committee meeting.

Atlanta is moving around Rev. Samples' campaign. The Democratic Party refused to let him run. Ware intends to organize around this and build a base in his area. Ware is on the Vine City Council. The Council is trying to get Hector Black out.

Mississippi -- Cleve should go to Mississippi for a month going from project to project viewing the work being done and reporting to the Central Committee.

Alabama -- after November 8th, there will be only one possible person going to be there (Rapp Brown). There will have to be discussion about recruitment. How are we going to sustain the movement?

In Harlem, Bill Hall is building around IS201 (Intermediate School 201). Parents are united against the School Board who first promised that the school would be integrated. The principal first resigned and then was rehired after pressure from the teachers' union. Bayard and Young are trying to isolate SNCC but the parents are looking for SNCC to help. Randy Glenn is working with Bill. There is a Black Panther Party.

One of the problems we have in the North is that we do not understand political machinery. A lot of political mistakes have been made in the North because we do not understand this.

Internal Discipline and Structure:

SNCC can not be individuals any longer. The Central Committee must set new trends in thinking of SNCC. We must develop structure that will impose upon us discipline. Given the financial resources, we will have to get people who misuse these resources. We are going to have to check up on people and not just assume that they are working on our programs. We must convince people of the need for discipline and the Central Committee must set the example.

Carmichael continued by saying that there must be some guidelines from the body as to which way he can move. There must be these guidelines because of the issues we are facing. What kind of programs and where are we going?

Buffington stated the need for expansion of staff with experience. He has two girls who have been working with him in West Point for two years whom he feels should be taken beyond just contact with FDP and be given the opportunity to function with National SNCC.

Carmichael raised the question of how are we coordinating Clay County (Miss.) with Lowndes County. We need to have this internal discipline. We need to understand these things are important and develop this in our own minds. The reasons some problems come up is that no one is given responsibility. We cannot assume people work for SNCC unless we know their political orientation. We need to read and understand what is going on within this organization. We have never developed that discipline.

Featherstone suggested that Carmichael devote all of his time to the internal structure of the organization.

Ruby stated that one of the questions raised by the Mississippi staff is that people do not feel a part of SNCC because of the lack of communications. What people are doing now is just an extension of what they have been doing. People don't feel SNCC has offered them anything. There has been a lack of direction and program.

Stokely mentioned that one of the problems has been that Cleve does not function as Program Secretary.

Stokely made the following recommendations:

- that he stop making speaking engagements after the 10th of December and spend the time developing programs and work on internal structure
- that this body mandate Cleve Sellers to spend one month in Mississippi (there is no reason why Cleve should spend his time in Atlanta; his time should be spent in the field with reports to the body).

Cobb suggested that the secretariat should make specific schedules to determine what should be done and set down these specifics. There should be a written report between now and the staff meeting.

- that the Central Committee recommend SNCC lease apartments for the Atlanta staff so the people will not become involved with the problem of paying rent every month. The Atlanta office has to become stabilized and this stability depends upon the ability of staff to work without the problems of rent, etc.
- that we hire a staff of printers (not SNCC people) who will work for a specific salary
- that we develop our own apparatus for fund raising in the Southern states
- that we should schedule the month of March for staff people to travel to Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (at the expense of the countries)

Ruby stated that most of the recent additions to the staff have been in the North. We have always made additions to the staff on the basis of who was available

Central Committee Meeting

Page Eight

rather than planning for a certain number of people. We should move to have a budget for printing and every other part of our operation and if we do not have that amount, a percentage of funds should be allocated. We should also cut the Atlanta payroll in half and pay rent on apartments.

Featherstone commented that the Freedom Primers should be held up because of content. He also felt that were sufficient people in the organization to do the work. He further commented that we should raise questions about the fundamental structure of the organizations and that these questions should be re-evaluated at the staff meeting.

Carmichael said it is impossible for the chairman to become administrator and fund raiser. He needs to speak to the internal needs of the organization.

Forman stated that everything that had been said pointed to the framework and degree of cohesion. What had been discussed is some kind of political education program. Secretariat cannot solve problems of cohesion and unity. Staff should be holding work shops each week studying programs and discussing internal problems. We have no framework under which we operate.

Buffington raised the question of F.ora Henderson and Carolyn Tillman, who work with him in West Point, attending the staff meeting.

Discussion of this followed and it was decided that there should be a meeting later for "orientation" of new people. Ruby stated that it was time that SNCC should not have to apologize for having closed meetings and that other avenues should be established for new people.

Cobb moved that CENTRAL COMMITTEE RECOMMEND ATLANTA STAFF HOUSING BE TAKEN CARE OF BY OFFICE AND SALARIES BE CUT IN HALF.

Seconded by Jennifer Lawson. 7 in favor, 3 opposed PASSED

There was a general discussion about people being added to staff on the basis of need for a particular skill. It was assumed that people who do not fulfill a certain need would not be recommended for staff position.

The chair recommended that ONE SPECIFIC PERSON BE APPOINTED (at the discretion of the Executive Secretary) TO DO SOUTHERN FUND RAISING IN AREAS WHERE WE HAVE PROJECTS. THE MONEY RAISED TO GO TO THE PROJECT AND TO THE ATLANTA OFFICE..

March trip to Africa, etc:

This trip can be used to give people in the ghetto an identification with Africa and enable them to see the struggle in its entirety. Jack Minnis suggested that the trip include visits to "unfriendly" countries such as Angola and South Africa to give us a picture of what is going on.

Stanley Wise saw this as perhaps a way not only to channel information but also taking some definite action in the future such as international boycott, etc.

It was agreed that this trip should include others besides the secretariat.

Forman pointed out that if we are going to take these trips, there should be intensive study of the area. We should have more discussion and reading. We should understand the limited nature of these trips also. In themselves, they cannot bring about profound changes. Also, we should be aware of the danger in thinking that the chairman reflects the thinking of this body at all times.

Featherstone stated the need for an International Affairs Committee; suggested Sandy Leigh. Forman suggested Fay Bellamy.

Carmichael moved that ON NOVEMBER 20, THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY AND ONE OTHER PERSON (Ivanhoe Donaldson) GO TO THE BARBADOS AS REPRESENTATIVES OF SNCC FOR

THEIR INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION AND AROUND THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS SIX (6)
PEOPLE BE SENT TO STRATEGIC ISLANDS OF THE CARIBBEAN.

Vote: 8 in favor, 1 against, 1 abstain PASSED

FREEDOM BUDGET:

Cobb stated that SNCC signed the Freedom Budget because of indifference; there didn't seem to be much comment one way or another. Evidently, the Foundation called up and wanted an immediate reply and Shirely and Charlie said to go ahead.

A discussion of the 75-page Freedom Budget followed. It was decided that the proposal for the 100 billion dollar budget was not really designed to eliminate the causes of poverty.

Featherstone pointed out that the analysis proceeds from something completely opposed to SNCC's position. It is clear that there is nothing in the Budget which deals with the fundamental institutions which cause poverty. Folks are not raising any fundamental issues in the country. All of the assumptions the Freedom Budget are based upon, we disagree with. On one hand the Budget may be nothing but trash but on the other hand they are speaking politically and this might become the basis for another poverty program.

Ruby stated that this should be studied and our objections written down. Changes should have been suggested and some one should have read the proposal and made concrete suggestions.

We will have to develop a way in which we can handle these problems. We should withdraw Stokely's name and give reason. We should say it was signed on the basis of our relationship with A. Phillip Randolph and not substance.

There was a general discussion about the fact that we always make commitments before we have thoroughly studied proposals. We have always developed a rationale for making decisions under pressure.

Jack stated that SNCC should never have signed the Freedom Budget especially considering who finances the A. Phillip Randolph Institute. If we were put under pressure, then we should have said "no".

Featherstone stated that we should deal with the assumptions and control the the money and how the program is going to be initiated. SNCC should have position as to why we do not support it.

CDGM:

John Buffington gave a report on the Child Development Group in Mississippi. This group, a part of CEO, conducted the headstart program. Recent attempts were successful to have funds cut off. This was a political move and all of the resources in the state were to be liquidated or moved to a central storehouse by October 15. Stennis stated the reason funds should be cut off were mis-allocation of funds as well as alleged SNCC workers participation in the program.

A mass meeting was held at Tougaloo to protest the cutoff. The program is being taken over by MAP (Mississippi Action Project) which is the same in composition as the Democratic study group which is trying to deliver the votes for Eastland. The cut off of funds is of importance to many people because of the payroll. Some of the same people (excluding people involved in the movement are being rehired) under the new program.

Ruby spoke about the proposal that the FDP take over the centers and each community make sure the money goes into the community. The committees could be used as vehicles for FDP organizing.

Cobb saw Guyot's presentation as to interpret and appeal to CDGM in terms of national politics. An alternative could be the strengthening of FDP and the broadening of policies. He also stated that the secretariat, when scheduling work in Mississippi, should be cognizant of the situation. A lot of work between now and the staff meeting should be a dialogue with people in the state who have ties with SNCC. He saw Mississippi important not only in terms of the 67 election but in terms of working on new dimensions of problems in the South.

A discussion of Mississippi and Guyot developed. It was felt that Guyot and the FDP were open to SNCC becoming actively involved again. People in Mississippi feel isolated. Despite this isolation, SNCC still has a lot of roots in Mississippi both in terms of learning as well as the money poured in.

Buffington reported that Negroes are probably going to vote for Prentiss Walker to take away Eastland's power. Guyot has been asking for either a boycott or a write-in candidate.

THE DRAFT:

Stokely raised the question of the political implications of his being drafted.

Stanley felt that in view of the fact that we do have people working on the draft program, there should be a dialog with Gwen Robinson and Mike Simmons. All of our offices should be alerted about this possibility and also about Schutz.

Forman gave a brief report on Schutz' case. He was convicted and sentenced to three years for appearing one day later before the draft board. The woman at the draft board sent Schutz a letter stating that if he did not appear, he would be delinquent. The letter was sent on May 4 and Schutz appeared on the 5th telling that he would not go because of the segregated nature of the draft board. The Judge allowed no discussion of the segregated board. Schutz was indicted following his arrest in Atlanta.

Ruby stated that whatever action Carmichael takes will set a pattern. The case could represent the Black people in the country and can be used as a forum.

Stanley said that the case should be drawn up on lines similar to the cats in California. One problem is that our people do not know steps they can take. A forum can be created to show Black people that the draft system is not fair and give grounds to talk about alternatives.

Carmichael questioned the use of lawyers because cats in the ghettos cannot hire lawyers.

Bob Smith brought up the point about the possibility of Stokely being deported. We should direct the attack on what can be done to Carmichael rather than wait until something has been done and become on the defensive.

Stokely expressed the need to develop contacts with people who are now working with SNCC and subject to the draft. The peace groups can be used for our protection.

Ruby was against Carmichael holding a press conference. Priority should be given to getting out fact sheet. Carmichael and Schutz should not be lumped together as their cases are not alike.

Forman suggested that all SNCC people transfer their draft boards to Atlanta. He also suggested contacting people on the West Coast who had just returned from Vietnam. We should try to get people who are dissatisfied to work with SNCC.

It was agreed that these suggestions should be given to Larry Fox and Mike Simmons. Also, we should ask for a review of the action on the draft program.

It was decided that there should be another Central Committee meeting just prior to the staff meeting. Secretariat was to determine time and place.

Meeting adjourned.