

# CHICAGO REPORT

September, 1966

The 4th Ward of the city of Chicago, where the SNCC office is located was originally one community, but urban renewal has cut it in half so that socially and economically, it is now two communities. The Congressional District lines were also moved to further the split politically. The northern half of our ward, which contains the majority of the population is a hard-core, black ghetto. South of the 47th Street dividing line, is a middle-class, integrated community where the poor have been removed by Urban Renewal. Our Alderman, like all of the other black Aldermen in this city, is a quissling, a tool of the Democratic machine. His power lies in the fact that he is also the Democratic Committeeman and thus controls all of the patronage jobs in the ward. This man lives in an ultra-modern condominium on the lakefront where our tax money built him a new pedestrian bridge across the expressway to his new beach and a new street. He lives completely cutt off from the rest of the community on the other side of the railroad tracks. We intend to replace this man and his entire ward machinery.

SNCC has been located in the center of this ghetto in the northern half of the ward for over two years and is an accepted part of the community. All SNCC organizers are black volunteers (not paid) who live in this community.

We began our political organizing with what we called a community awareness campaign - talking to the people and leafleting about community problems, how they relate to the political structure of this ward and the city and how to go about organizing to solve them.

Shortly before the Primary elections in June, we began a campaign against the Bond Issue, explaining that the money would not be used to help us but to pay for more Urban Renewal (black removal) like that already completed to the North and South of us. We told them that we are an isolated island in the middle of Urban Renewal and that the bulldozers are already on the way.

At that time, we started printing the message "The Black Panther is Coming" on our literature. This message immediately attracted a number of neighborhood youths, some of whom had been in small

nationalist groups (up to date on Malcolm X and black history) and others who were moved to join SNCC through our continuous contacts with all of the local street gangs. Along with some members of the SNCC Youth Council, they became our present organizing team. We have been working daily with this team, having discussions on Black Power and organizing, giving them books to read and bringing them into contact with others in the black community who are working on the same problems.

By the time Stokely came to town at our request, and spoke at the Packinghouse, July 28th, we had decided to call our program the Black Power Project, because of the enthusiastic response in the community to the whole concept of Black Power. We had some buttons made and Black Power car stickers and blanketed the community with posters, leafleting daily and sometimes going out with the sound equipment. We began to assign some of our people who were ready to work to specific precincts.

Another part of our program deals with the relationship of the people and the businesses in our community. We have been educating people about business and credit practices. We have been dialoging with the businessmen in the community about "Black Power" and began placing "This Business Supports Black Power" posters in the local stores. We found that when you send young men out to place these posters in their windows and ask for donations, the merchants were afraid and screamed, "Extortion," but when teams of both men and women went together, they had a much better response.

After we distributed the August "Black Power" issue of Notes and Comment (our quarterly newsletter), the response in the community reached a new peak and we now feel the people are in motion and ready to move on. At present, the phone rings constantly, unsolicited contributions and Black Power Project applications come in the mail daily and people come to our door both singly and in groups from all over the city asking for literature, buttons and "How can I join?" Many more groups than ever before are requesting speakers and our recruiting in the community has stepped up as each new recruit brings in his friends. We have a large group working inside the Chicago Post Office and for the first time, many West Side people are coming to the office. Our SNCC group in the South suburban area reports the same response.

A "Friends of Black Power" group is going to be formed this fall to do education work in the white precincts in the southern end of the ward and to help with fund-raising.

We have many allies in other community organizations. Just this week for example, several member organizations of the CCCO got together and approached us to join them in trying to do something about the problem of the CCCO and King because they felt it was time for the public to be informed of the sell-outs that are going on and that Black Power was the only solution to our problems. They also want us to help them work out educational programs on Black Power for their groups. The aldermanic elections will be

held next Spring. We do not expect that we will grow strong enough to elect a new Black Power Alderman at that time, nor do we have any candidate in mind, but we feel that we can make a power show, perhaps by asking people not to vote and that by itself will hurt the machine. We do not intend to make a move until we have real strength in all of the precincts of the ward. We will take just as long as is necessary to do our organizing block by block until the people become aware and take control of their precincts.

As before, this is a self-funded project. Because we have gained so many new supporters in the black community over the past two months, our fund-raising base has shifted and we are no longer dependent upon white liberal donations.

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