

[Dec., 1966]

Memorandum

To: THE SNCC STAFF

FROM: THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

RE: ECONOMIZING...beginning with the WATS line.

Wide Area Telephone Service (WATS LINE) - After surveying the use of the WATS line with regard to organizational business and the outstanding bills for 1966, AND the fund-raising apparatus which shows at this point, no possibilities for meeting the organizational financial needs at its present rate of bill making, I in consultation with a few other people decided that the WATS line should be temporarily disconnected for an indefinite period.

Justifications for the Decision:

1. We are three months behind in payment on the WATS line or approximately \$5,000 in debt to the telephone company.
2. Similarly, we have outstanding bills from Hertz and Avis totaling approximately \$4,000.
3. Likewise, we were in debt to the Employment Security Agency, State of Georgia, for approximately \$7,000 for back taxes dating from 1963. However, this bill has been taken care of in the past few days and because of the payment, other bills have had to wait. Understand the importance of making the effort to pay this bill out in its entire amount...the interest penalty, alone, amounted up to \$3-4000 for each month it was not paid.
4. The over-head expense in Atlanta is mounting daily and will continue to mount if we are to make effective use of the existing resources (such as the printing operation, the photography operation, garage, etc.) Hopefully, with some investment from the organization, these endeavors can be self-supporting and indeed help in defraying the overhead of the organization. But, until then . . .
5. Unlike the yesteryears of '64 and '65, we do NOT have projects spread over a large geographical area in the South; (only 18 full time staff of organizers) and only seven project offices in the North (including one on the West Coast that was not reached by the WATS line, anyway).
6. Most of the calls to projects and offices result from an unorganized ad hoc means of administering the business of the organization. Ten calls sometimes accomplish what could be done with one call IF our calls were organized.
7. Writing letters in this organization has become a thing of the past. Consequently, there is no written record of most transactions, not to mention progress and/or informational reports from projects. (One of the reasons that there could be no overview presented at the staff meeting -- in advance of the meeting -- was because there existed no information from which to compile one. It is my feeling that we simply must begin to reply on the printed word; actually, the Post

Office is a much more reliable source than the switchboard operator for messages.

8. Most importantly, the WATS line is used more for personal calls than for business purposes. Sure, it could be organized so that business calls take precedent, but let's face it, WE DON'T HAVE THAT MUCH BUSINESS!
9. Last, but not least, quite a few of our calls can be made collect if people understand that we do not have money. This is especially true of organizations, press, and businesses.

What We Do Now In Lieu of the WATS Line:

1. The Communications Department will send out a schedule to projects giving the day and approximate time that they will be called-once a week. Details will be given as to how the calls will be made (person to person)/(Station to Station). This will probably not be done until after the holidays; until then, call ONLY if there is an emergency. Do not run up local phone bills by calling direct if there is not an urgent matter. When there is an emergency, we will accept the charges.

Although we hope to start by making weekly calls, this procedure can be altered if there is a need to get information on a more regular basis in a given situation.

2. The New York Office will be called daily. The time will be worked out by people in Atlanta with regard to when most people need to speak with the N. Y. office. Hopefully, this can be coordinated with the New York office in an effort to minimize direct calls on their phone.
3. Call ONLY when there is a matter that cannot wait another day. Most mail is delivered overnight. Use airmail for letters outside of a 500 mile radius.
4. Be defensive! Act to avoid emergencies such as overdue bills, getting to meetings on time, etc. O.K.?

Oh! for those who would use this memo for acts of irresponsibility, an automobile accident is always an emergency! A raid on the office is always an emergency. O.K.?

With those things in mind and in practice, we should be able to save almost \$1,000 of the approximately \$1,700/month WATS line bill.

REMEMBER, this does not have to be forever. It is only temporarily disconnected. To the extent that we are able to organize ourselves programmatically and financially, we can look forward again to the luxury of the dial tone. However, it is necessary for us ALL to be aware that there are no golden hens laying eggs for SNCC. Some people work very hard to raise funds for the organization. More of us will have to assume some of that responsibility on all levels of our work. But for those who will not raise funds, at least make SNCC fund-raising legitimate by being effective in building bases in



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the communities where you work.

I have much more to say but fear that it won't be read, so have a BEAUTIFUL BLACK CHRISTMAS! See you next year, hopefully, in better spirits.

"When an organization's membership reaches 2,000, it becomes so involved in internal crises that it becomes ineffective outside of itself." Let's hope that whoever said that wasn't 1900 too many.