SOME IDEAS FOR POLICY DECISIONS BY SNCC

At the last meeting of the Executive Committee, there was some discussion of the "black-white" ratio of SNCC. Some of the same ideas were presented ina week long staff meeting in Mississippi (Miss. staff). Neither F orman or I were able to attend; however, I am enclosing i a copy of the minutes taken by Jane Stembridge.

Now as then, I have my own little thoughts about the matter. . . some of which will be presented in the following paragraphs as well as what I see to be a means of alleviating the problem--if there is in fact a problem.

In my opinion, before we can examine the question bbjectively and rationally we must first examine SNCC, its historical role in the FREEDOM MOVEMENT AND the direction in which the movement is now progressing and how it will continue to progress in the future (its future dierection). It is imperative that we do this . . . not so much for ourselves, but for the sake of the masses of people whose destinies we are attempting to mold.

Of primary importance in this regard, is the purpose for which we exist. Has it changed since the Spring Conference of 1960? Or, do we still, in fact profess to operate under the statement of purpose drawn up by James Lawson in Raleigh, North Carolina. Unless we are willing to deal with this question, to analyze our motives and take appropriate action, we can not possibly move forward.

I strongly feel, as evidenced by the reason actions of the Federal Government e. g., March on Washington, Albany Indictments, the Birmingham situation, etc. that the "white powere structure" has not quite gotten the message. We have so far only talked about revolution. We have not yet began to act like revolutionaries. We seem to be playing a game among ourselves BUT NOT ONE OF US REALLY know what SNCC's ultimate goal is or should be.

We are no longer a group of students "striving to be accepted in a middle class "white society" . . . walking the picket lines and sitting in lunch counters wearing our "Sunday best" in every respect. Nor are we now attempting to present an image of the "New Negro. Our work of the last three years has brought most of us to the realization that this is a struggle, not for acceptance . . . but for liberation.

In this regard, it is important for us to be cognizant of the most dynamic factor in the liberation of an oppressed people--in this case the American descendants of Africa; that factor, in my opinion, iis the psychological degredation of which we have all been victims.. On other words, instead of struggling to become "New Negroes" we should be teaching our people what the "Old Negro" is and what it stands for. One does not have to be a sociologist or historian to know how culturally deprived the black man is in this country. This factor is so real that most Negroes are as-

ashamed, not only of their characteristics (physical) but of that period of servitude in this country which constitues one of the most culturally rich heritages of any group in America; moreover, many Negroes do not recognize their contribution to American history and development. It is these things (the cultural heritage, the slave heroes, etc.) that we should attempt to communicate to the people withwhich we work. But, we must first have some understanding of these things oursleves.

The question naturally arises as to how such a "nationalistic" trend can become a part of the orietation of SNCC's present program or whether such is desireableat this time. Since I have already stated my position, the decision is left up to you. I would like to point out, however that many staff people have taken it upon themselves to make this kind of orientation a part of their individual programs.

Getting back to my original statement in reference to iwhite workers. . . . . there has been some discussion around the Atlanta office and, I understand, in Mississippi about the possibility of developing programs in the white communities in an effort to utilize the large number of whites who want to join SNCC's staff as well as to try and lay the groundwork for fundamental changes in society. If such changes are to take plane, there has to be--it seems to me--grass-root action on both sides of the fence. In this regard, I strongly recommend that there be serious thought given the development of such a program at the Washington meeting and that some individual (s) be designated to write a prospectus for action.

"ONE MAN, ONE VOTE"