MEMORANDUM

January 17, 1967

TO : Central Committee

FROM : Lester McKinnie
Washington SNCC

In this report I really don't know where to begin, for Washington seems so complex to many people, all of whom I do not know. Nevertheless, I shall begin here.

It is very important to know a little history. I came to Washington, D. C. two and a half years ago from Mississippi out in the field to enter Law School. After a year of Law School, I dropped out and began to work with Washington SNCC. In September of 1965, Marion Barry was appointed Director of the office. A short period later Washington SNCC seemed to become very controversial to many people. The controversy seemed to stem from the period of organizing of the January 24, 1966, bus boycott, at which time Featherstone and L. D. Pratt were working on the Greenbelt Consumber Project. He sort of introduced L. D. to Marion and Washington SNCC. People began to wonder if he were a spy, they didn't trust him and the longer he stayed around the worse the problem got. The shit really hit the fan during the organization of the Free D. C. Movement in February 1966. (People thought that he would leave after the bus boycott, but he stayed around.) Certain people of the office staff felt that Free D. C. should be under a separate roof from that of the SNCC Office. Later, the same people began to have personality clashes. Tina Smith began to raise questions about the amount of time that had been spent on organizing in relation to the amount of time that had been spent on fund-raising for the South. Later, people began to leave and (unquote) they all said it was because of Marion. However, more new people came in and began to work. They left after the cry of "Black Power" and perhaps for various other reasons. The SNCC Office still exists at 107 Rhode Island Avenue, NW. Many people had thought that the office was closed because they tend to believe in the newspapers. Even SNCC people believed that the office was closed, from Atlana and around. And we've talked about how the paper distorts the news. For the last month and a half, I have been running the office. Just recently I have begun to pulliin more new people and old SNCC people. The majority of these people, however, are from Howard University (about 16 students). What amazes me most of all about these students is that they are taking their final examinations and yet they are coming to meetings four or five hours in length.

q On the subject of programs, we are in the first stage of formulation co-ops, a school which will be at some point connected with the New School for Afro-American Thought, and also we are now in the process of planning another possible bus boycott. (D. C. Transit just received a bus fare increase).

The building that we are in is a beautiful set-up for the school. We are on the first floor and there are two more floors which have five rooms. The owner said that we could have the whole building for $200.00 a month. The original monthly payment was $150.00 a month for one floor and the basement. The new owner is willing to let us have the other two floors for one $50.00 more, which is a good deal. Money is hard to get, but we will.

On the subject of fund-raising, we are in the process of setting up a new fund-raising apparatus which hopefully will self-sustain this office and send money to Atlana. I recently met a black woman who is concerned about SNCC and who knows about fund-raising. In our meeting, we are also discussing how to establish a policital and economic base .

I've talked with Cleve and Stokely and Stokely suggested that I come to the Central Committee. I told him that I didn't think it was feasible for me to leave Washington particularly during the time that I am pulling together people who are willing to work on Programs. The Central Committee, unfortunately, is meeting while I am in the process of formulating a new group. They all feel that I shouldn't leave the city at the present time. I agree, and you would if you really could see the picture. I hope that I will be able to make the meeting. However, I have no money, no car, can't get a plane ticket according to Freddie Green. One thing I do have is people willing to work, and if we still have to think about black people, then you understand. Many people want and think that I have become the Director of this office. I am not, but will accept being Director. However, it is up to the Central Committee or somebody.

Black Power

L. McKinnie

Lester McKinnie
Washington SNCC