

Berkeley Campus CORE
Box 162
Berkeley, California
September 1, 1964

Freedom House Organizing Committee
c/o Mr. Eugene Novak
453 61st Street
Oakland, California

With great regret the Executive Committee of Campus CORE has come to the conclusion that the Freedom House as presently organized, staffed and conceived is unworkable. Because we still feel deeply committed to the idea and feasibility of a West Oakland Freedom House, we wish to be very specific about why we feel the present endeavor is doomed to failure.

Financial Problems

Neither the Finance Committee nor the part-time and full-time staff have fully realized the amount of money required to run the Freedom House. Regardless of the means of financing the house itself, we can expect that at least \$500 per month will be required to feed and house a five-member full-time staff. The salaries alone would amount to \$200 per month. Despite the fact that the purchase of a house was considered imminent several weeks ago and that it was voted to begin paying salaries to full-time staff, no funds whatsoever have been raised yet. And even at the Thursday, August 27th meeting, the Finance Committee report consisted of only vague allusions to projected fund raising events. Even with the greatest optimism, the present plans could never raise anywhere near the money that will be needed in the first few months of operation. Furthermore we have very little faith that the present Finance Committee will even develop to the point where it can regularly raise \$500 per month and this amount is a conservative need estimate which includes initial and special expenditures.

It has been pointed out by a number of persons with experience in other Freedom Houses, that such a project must derive its support from the community in which it works. In view of the fact that both the Finance Committee and a majority of the staff have rejected the idea of fund raising by the staff itself we see neither possibility nor intention of drawing financial support for the Freedom House from the West Oakland community.

Program Problems

We feel that it is absolutely essential to distinguish between a Freedom House and a settlement house, a distinction which has not been made by most of the full-time and part-time staff. A settlement house is designed to help disadvantaged people live within their environment. A Freedom House is designed to stimulate oppressed people to change their environment and to oppose forces which oppress them. We can see no justification for CORE using its limited financial and human resources to establish a settlement house. Yet it is clear that most of the full-time and part-time staff think

in terms of a settlement house type program and they have no clear ideas about the relationship between this project and civil rights. One full-time staff member when asked to join in a civil rights demonstration said, "I don't think that full-time staff members should take part in demonstrations because their pictures might appear in newspapers and some of the people of West Oakland might not approve."

The mimeographed report on the progress of the Freedom House which was presented at the August 27th meeting contained according to its writers a description of projected programs. Some of the full-time staff members at this meeting seemed to feel that no further questions were necessary, that the report answered all questions as to program. But what is in this report? It contains a few cliches about the needs of West Oakland including "getting the kids off the streets" and establishing some sort of recreation program. The net impression of this Freedom House report is that the purpose of such a project ought to be the satisfaction of immediate superficial needs of the West Oakland residents. All and any involvement in civil rights or in raising political awareness should wait until the house was firmly established and could, to quote one of the full-time staff, "become more radical." We object to even starting the Freedom House on this settlement house basis. Besides this objection, however, the argument that the tone of the project could be changed ignores the impossibility of changing the central idea of an establish project.

The report on the possibility of redevelopment in the area of the Freedom House indicated incredible naivete about the operation of Negro removal projects. We were told by one of the full-time staff that the reason West Oakland would not be redeveloped was the difficulty of finding new housing for displaced residents. One wonders why the San Francisco Freedom House in Area 2 was started.

Most of the staff seems to hold a ~~patronizing~~ patronizing attitude towards the West Oakland residents, an attitude which perhaps explains the inadequacy of settlement houses. Furthermore they seem to wish to establish themselves as "leaders" of the community. This is in direct contradiction to the original statement of purpose which advocated stimulating indigenous leadership in the direction of civil rights. Contracts have been made with a number of local leaders and in at least some of these contacts the attitude of Freedom House people has been impossibly patronizing.

Suggestions for a civil rights oriented program have been made by a minority of the staff, but all such suggestions have been ignored.

While no one of these objections would be overwhelming by itself, the undeniable fact is that the majority of the staff workers do feel that they are going into West Oakland to "uplift the natives," and this attitude not only is alien to civil rights but it foredooms the project.

Organizational problems

For a long time we've heard talk about forming a board of directors and organizing the Freedom House in such a way that it is financially responsible, non-bureaucratic and democratic. An initial constitution was adopted which allowed the full time and part time staff to make virtually all policy decisions on the Freedom House. This constitution which we find quite satisfactory has not only been disregarded without any formal modification, but plans unsatisfactory because they involve less commitment to the community and more bureaucracy are being suggested seriously. These suggestions are not only unsatisfactory but that the project has been reduced to this lot of discussion indicates in another way how unlikely it is that it will ever really get started. That members have been added to the full-time staff without informing all the full-time staff let alone allowing discussion either of individual qualifications or of increased financial problems involved is only another example of what can only be termed, literally, irresponsibility. A continuation of this lack of communication and consultation, if it does not defeat the whole project before it ever gets started, can only lead to bureaucratic dictatorship by that part of the staff we tend to distrust and disagree with.

Thus the actual effective organization is unacceptable. At the same time the formal and constitutional organization has been reduced to the level of discussion and total disagreement as to values and goals. If there is ever a formal organization effected at all, it will be, to judge by the current ideas and discussion unsatisfactory.

It is not that anyone or any number of these problems might not somehow be overcome. All but overwhelming difficulties are dealt with frequently by those of us active in the civil rights movement, and neither risk nor difficulty has overwhelmed us yet. It is that the project as a whole is no longer what we were excited about and committed to and it is moving further away from its best nature. Even this might not have compelled us to cease supporting the Freedom House except for the financial problem mentioned above which seems in the context of the program as it is developing insuperable. We of the Executive Committee have become convinced of these things slowly and with much regret, but we do feel that reality is as we have discussed it and since this is so we, as officers of Campus CORE, can no longer support the project nor can we in good conscience recommend to or encourage our chapter to work on the Freedom House.

Written and submitted to the Executive Committee by David Friedman and Michael Anker and approved unanimously by those present at the regular Executive Committee meeting, Monday, August 31, 1964.

Gretchen Kittredge, Chairman
Campus CORE
for the Executive Committee