

September 9, 1965

TO: ALL MEMBERS

FROM: DON SMITH, CHAIRMAN

SUBJECT: NEW DIRECTION OF LOS ANGELES CORE

CORE, from its inception in 1942, launched its efforts to end discrimination by use of non-violent direct action. The principal problems of that era were problems of public accommodations. The freedom rides, marches and sit-ins were effective tactics used to achieve goals in the first two decades of CORE's existence.

As Bayard Rustin points out, "the dynamics of the movement has moved from demonstrations to political action in order to correct the problems of society." If political action is to be a prime goal, organizations must emerge that will reflect the needs and aspirations of the minority communities.

The concept of organizing a community is a very confused one. Everywhere, we hear talk of going into the ghetto and engaging in what has become known as "Community Organization." Too often, people seem to have the concept that the ghetto or community simply means a group of unaffiliated persons, juvenile gangs, or delinquents of some type. The most superficial examination of this premise proves it to be naive and immature. The ghetto communities in all northern industrial cities have many facets. In Watts, for example, there exists a culturally deprived group, unaffiliated with any organization and owing allegiance to no precept or religion. On the other hand, there

is a large number of persons who are oriented toward religion and are members of one of the 76 churches in the area. In addition, there is a sizeable group of property owners, blue collar workers, and a handful of professional and business people that make up what could be called a middle class. In view of the foregoing, community organizing becomes a three dimensional endeavor. It should begin with an approach to existing organizations in the area; first, to gain acceptance of the idea that organization is needed and then to enlist the help and support of these organizations. A second dimension should be contact with religious groups in the community, preferably by workers who are church-goers or those who, at least, have some kind of religious orientation. The third dimension, consists of developing a task force to send into the community to work with people in the street, to become one of the frustrated, hopeless and angry people who live in an area, but do not really form a community. These workers must be able to speak the language of the people, dream their dreams, sing their songs, and feel and express their angers. An additional function of this task force is to engage in a relentless house-to-house project to develop communication with the residents, to listen to them and assist in any manner possible in solving their problems. Achieving a degree of continuing effort is only possible if funds are obtained from foundations, through the anti-poverty program, from agencies, from church groups and by new creative, methods for the express purpose of employing workers who will be able to function on a steady, day-by-day basis to insure the repetition and concentration necessary to bring about meaningful

involvement. It is obligatory that the Chapter commit itself to pay subsistence wages to the workers.

In order to effectively implement the foregoing, it is obvious that certain structural adjustments should take place. I therefore recommend the following constitutional changes:

All committees should be eliminated except the following:

1. Finance
2. Employment
3. Police mal-practice
4. Public relations
5. Membership

All members of the organization not involved with the work of the above committees will participate in some aspects of community organization.

Upon approval and commitment of the general membership, classes in technique and community sensitivity will be developed, area coordinators assigned, workers selected so that CORE's efforts in the community will become primarily that of consultants or advisors.

Training must be intensive, having as its goal the development of self-discipline, organizational techniques and yet flexible enough to be geared to any community under study. In this way, indigenous leadership will emerge and the needs, aspirations and decisions of each community will become the guiding force in its development.