

SNCC has a picture of a Negro farmer who is sitting on a stool. He is an elderly man with brogan shoes, old overalls, and a beat-up hat. His mouth is bare and his hands are very rough from many, many, years of hard labor on the farm. He more than likely lives in an old, worn-out house with a washpot in the back yard and an out-door toilet. He has never been to school. He probably does not know a y e b from anything else and only goes to town a few times a year. He has always lived and worked on this white man's farm. There is a sign printed on the picture which reads ONE MAN-ONE VOTE. Do you think this man should have the right to vote? Do you think he should have the right to make decisions? Or do you think he should stay in the backwoods and be quiet while the "educated", respectable Negroes make decisions and speak for him?

In this paper, I intend to deal with two questions: 1) How do we organize and 2) How decisions are made.

Back to our farmer. In Mississippi we have organized the Freedom Democratic Party and placed it on its own. We have paved the way for framers like the one above to sit down and make decisions and decide just what it is hat they want. The other night, a SNCC staff member, who is now working for SNCC, said that he did not feel that the staff should have the right to make decisions because it was too stupid. Yet he works for SNCC. SNCC says ONE MAN-ONE VOTE. What does tha mean to you? Does that mean that farmers, like the one above, should be organized into groups of their own and turned loose to make decisions by themselves? Or do you think this a mistake on our part? Do yo think that SNCC should organize little groups that it can control and tell what to do because they are really too illiterate and uneducated to make decisions on their own? Does ONE MAN-ONE VOTE include the sharecropper who has never been to school or are we really teasing when we say that? Do we really believe what the white man tells us, that the Negro is really too stupid to vote. You know that there are some Negroes in SNCC who believe that.

I happen to believe that every man, farmer, lawyer, illiterate, PHD, has a right to speak and to be heard. I believe that no man, regardless of whether he calls himself, SNCC, NAACP, or anybody, can speak for him. I believe that he has a right to speak, to vote, and to associate freely even if I do not agree with what he says or does. That is what ONE MAN-ONE VOTE means to me, what does it mean to you. What Does it really, really, mean to you?

In SNCC we are having the same problem. There are some people who say the staff should not have the right to vote and to make decisions about policy and to elect people to its' offices. Under the present constitution the staff cannot make policy and elect people to office in SNCC. At our last staff meeting there were people who insisted that the staff did not and should not have the right to make its own decisions about its own policy. They had two main reasons: 1) too many staff people and 2) they were too stupid. That what we really needed was a few sober-headed, intelligent, educated people to sit down and make decisions because the whole staff just was not capable. In Mississippi white folks will not let Negroes

register to vote. They say that negroes are too stupid to vote and cannot make decisions and that voting should be left to the intelligent white folks. There are people in SNCC who say the same thing about the staff. Do you think they really believe in ONE MAN - ONE VOTE.

The way SNCC is presently organized the residual body is the campus groups. A group called the Coordinating Committee. A group which no longer exists. However, there was a time when they did exist and they fought for their right to be the decision making body. Today there are no more student movements on college campuses and SNCC is composed of a staff which lives in and has its roots in the negro communities.

Today the staff is demanding its right to make decisions the same as the Coordinating Committee did when it was the base of SNCC. Today the staff is the base and it should have the right to make decisions since it is the people are affected by those decisions and will have the job of carrying the decisions out. The people who do the work are the staff and should have the right to make all decisions. Some people just like to talk about ONE MAN-ONE VOTE, and about every man's right to decide (when it comes down to everyday actions and doing things that are important, they're scared to give everyman a voice and a vote).

I think the staff should have the right to make decisions about what programs it wants to run and how it wants them organized. I think further that the program should be decided upon at this staff meeting. I think that every person who is to work in the Atlanta office or anywhere else on that program, should be elected from the staff at this November meeting. Not just this, but that all persons and officers involved in SNCC programs should be nominated and elected by the staff.

The only way for the staff to make its own program and to make sure that the programs get run the way it wants them run is to make sure that it puts people into positions that it trusts and has confidence in.

SNCC is no more than a group of people who have set about to make changes in society, it has a right to say what those changes are. Every person in SNCC has a right to say what he thinks those changes should be. After we decide what the changes are, then we also have a right and a responsibility to say who we want to run those programs. We can also tell them how to run them.

It seems to me that we really need to question ourselves as to what we really believe. Do we really believe that everyman has a right to vote or are we joking? Try saying this over to yourself while you think about the farmer that has been mentioned before: "I believe that everyman has right to vote and to be heard, even if I don't agree with him."