

CR 219

Southern Student Organizing Committee

STUDENTS IN THE SOUTH

by ED HAMLETT

(Ed Hamlett is on the staff of SNCC, and now on loan to SSOC as a campus traveller.)

A new organization, the Southern Student Organizing Committee, has emerged in the South to work for "a new order, a new South, a place which embodies our ideals for all the world to emulate, not ridicule."

Why SSOC? Certainly a legitimate question. Suffice it to say that there is a need, that no other organization is meeting this need, and that those who formed SSOC feel that it must be met. Another group of students, these black, talked about needs in the spring of 1960. They discussed the problems of communication, coordination, and stimulation within their ranks and of the necessity of extending their concerns and goals for a new order to other students. Perhaps here much of the similarity between SNCC and SSOC ends. Those who organized SSOC emerged at a time when the sit-in movement was almost at an end. SNCC arose out of the sit-in movement, and by the time of the demise of the sit-ins, had largely moved on to other issues. The passage of the civil rights bill was imminent when SSOC got going. Most of the fifty students who gathered in Nashville in April of 1964 had been involved in direct action of one form or another; however, there were many others who were not there who had done absolutely nothing to relieve the sense of guilt which pervaded their consciences. It appeared that the civil rights bill might, in many cases, prevent their getting relief through direct action means. On the other hand, there were many more things to be done just in the area of civil rights, though these required a lot more work and thought than did the organizing of a picket line. And, there were, of course, many broader issues beyond civil rights, but, before we look at these, let's go back to 1960.

At the fall SNCC conference of 1960 there were, by actual count, twelve white southerners. They came out of curiosity, and some "never did anything," as we say. Very few forces were operating to stimulate their involvement. Not many were willing to participate in sit-ins or on picket lines. Some of the organizations which were trying to get white students involved in the South were as follows: Southern Project NSA, through its southern human relations seminar; some state human relations councils made attempts to set up college divisions; and the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF) which always had existed for the purpose of involving more whites.

In keeping with this central purpose, SCEF, in September of 1961 made a grant of \$5,000 to

SNCC to be used in working with white students. Bob Zellner, a minister's son from Alabama, was selected to work for SNCC on white campuses. A few other white students, some of whom had been associated with the NSA seminar, were active in and around SNCC and CORE. There was limited activity by these and others at the University of Texas, at Florida State and at the University of North Carolina and Duke, with smatterings of interest and action in Nashville, Louisville, and New Orleans.

Zellner, who was on the SDS National Council, was active in SNCC in many areas, but it was not until his second year on what became known as the white southern student project that he got to the campuses to any significant extent. One of his recruits for SNCC was Sam Shirah, another Alabama minister's son. When Bob went back to school in 1963, Sam took over. It is believed by many that the climate prior to 1963 in the South was such that few white southerners would dare to buck the system and face the social ostracism, the irate parents, and the racist school administrations; but the horrible events of that summer along with a certain amount of thawing in the upper and border South brought changes. Negroes now became the "tokens" on the picket lines in many areas.

Stimulated by the press and television coverage of atrocities, many students were ripe for organization. Local student leaders emerged on white campuses as Negroes had in 1960. Some of these in Nashville began talking among themselves. Why not set up an organization that would do the things that the coordinating committee of SNCC had done in 1960-61. They talked with Sam Shirah and others and SSOC was born. At the April SSOC meeting, the students from fifteen campuses in ten states who attended formulated a statement of purpose:

"We do hereby declare, as southern students from most of the Southern states, representing different economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds, growing from birthdays in the Depression years and the War years, that we will here take our stand in determination to build together a New South which brings democracy and justice for all its people."

And there were goals which had to do with these ideals--"full and equal opportunity for all...an end

(cont. p 18)

PEP

POLITICAL EDUCATION PROJECT

by JIM WILLIAMS, PEP Director

The debate and discussion around PEP at this NC was exciting and stimulating, even though there were a few rough spots. The PEP staff presented its campus program and presented a new community project based on coalition-oriented theories of organizing as mandated by the PEP committee. In a panel before the plenary session began, Steve Max outlined some of our ideas about the role of students as a minority political group, pointing out that the booming student population would give an enfranchised student body a hefty political leverage. A new paper, For A New Coalition, by Doug Ireland and Steve Max was distributed in the working papers. This dynamic new paper discusses specifically the needs and problems of the Negro-Labor-Liberal coalition. Another working paper prepared by PEP outlined a series of long- and short-range legislative demands.

The PEP campus program passed by the NC consists of:

1. Organizing SDS support of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.
2. Developing a major legislative issue to be decided upon by the PEP committee for a major campus program, e.g., 18 year-old vote, free college education, Clark Full-Employment bill, etc.
3. Continuing and expanding the PEP publishing program.
4. Distributing information and analyses on legislative developments.
5. Developing campus programs on other legislative issues, e.g., Nelson Abolition of the Draft bill, McGovern Economic Conversion for Peace bill, etc.

Oddly enough, there were a couple of extreme-leftist attacks upon the PEP program by some people who called PEP's legislative demands "coffin nails in the caskets of the poor" and who charged the PEP staff with being "agents of the Liberal Establishment on campus."

In view of PEP's strained financial situation, the NC voted to loan PEP \$500, as requested.

PEP's community project did not fair so well. PEP as mandated, had investigated a number of possibilities for a project. Cairo, Illinois was found to be the scene of a rapidly developing

insurgent political movement of poor Negroes and became the choice of the PEP staff to put forth at the NC. Southern Illinois University SDS students had been working since June in the Negro ghettos, doing organizing of people on relief and laying the groundwork for a precinct-level political reform movement in Alexander County. The proposed project fell into trouble when the NC first voted to consider Cairo separately from the rest of the PEP program. The next day, the NC voted to consider Cairo in a meeting of an "augmented" Economic Research and Action Project committee meeting. Although the Cairo project was thriving and had organized more poor than a majority of the other projects, it was turned down and its request for a grant of \$700 was refused.

The PEP staff was disappointed that the members of the committee did not support the Cairo project publicly to the extent that they supported it privately.

PEP activity in the coming period should be exciting. Much activity will be centered around the MFDP challenge and there will be many things happening in the new Congress which will be of importance to the left.

PEP mailings go to the SDS worklist (who should make sure that other people in the chapter see them). If you want to receive PEP mailings yourself, drop a note to PEP, Room 309, 119 Fifth Avenue, NYC 3. Donations will certainly be appreciated.

AMAZING FACTS ABOUT PEP

PEP can help you in mysterious ways.
PEP is your friend.
PEP can tell you how many Negroes there are in your Congressional District.
PEP can tell you the election returns in your district.
PEP can tell you about Right-wing participation in the election in your area.
PEP can answer questions about the poverty bill.
PEP can give you a guide to community political research.
PEP can give you new papers: The March on Frankfort, This is the War that is, When the Southern Vote was Counted, Johnson With Eyes Open, and For a New Coalition.
PEP can tell you how your congressman voted on the MFDP challenge and the Rules changes.
PEP can give you a picture of Eugene V. Debs.
PEP can send you a catalogue of political and labor films.

CHAPTERS...

This increase in university reform activity is certainly due in large part, if not almost entirely, to the FSM demonstrations at Berkeley and the campaigns in support of the FSM that were begun on many other campuses. Many chapters, in addition to calling for support for the FSM began to look at and talk about the conditions on their own campuses. And they found that Berkeley was not alone in its need for basic changes in the university. And they began to have hope that perhaps they could have an effect.

Although university reform is seen by some students in a narrow sense on minor reforms, to some it means major reforms in the university and its system of education.

There are many issues, even whole areas, that I haven't mentioned yet—political work of all sorts, civil liberties issues.... The list is really endless. And the possibilities for chapter programs are also endless.

SSOC...

to personal poverty and deprivation...an end to public poverty...a democratic society where politics poses meaningful dialogue and choices about issues that affect men's lives, not manipulation by vested elites...an end to man's inhumanity to man...a world working toward the easing of tensions of the Cold War with positive emphasis on peace, disarmament, and world-wide understanding." Thus SSOC was to be multi-issue, rather than single-issue, oriented; however, it was realized that most students were there because of their interest in civil rights and equal opportunity for Negroes; it was also realized that much had to be done to arouse interest in the other goals, and that this would take a lot of time and work. Bearing this in mind, much emphasis was given to the desire that SSOC be virtually all-inclusive--that a student, whether he be moderate or radical, could have and would have, yes, even should have, a place in SSOC. All believed that the ability to grow and change is present in every individual; that a person will be respected for what and where he is; and that within and through SSOC he can grow and help others to grow. It was not expected that more than a few would take giant steps but that through increased awareness and involvement, all would grow. This means that stodgy old radicals can learn from groping young moderates (and of course the other way around). Utopian, you say--this desire to be all inclusive? Perhaps. But for years we've been dreaming in the South, and almost always about the wrong things.

So what have you done and what are you doing; you ask. We've placed a lot of emphasis on stimulation through communication. There were 125 students representing forty-three colleges in ten states at our November '64 conference. We talked about civil rights and liberties and academic freedom, and southern history and politics past and present. The varying degrees of awareness

of those present can be illustrated by two questions heard there: "Pardon me, but what is HUAC?" and "When can I come to your campus to talk about what I learned in Cuba this summer?"

Campus groups and individuals are involved in lots of things including: tutorials; university reform; public accommodations testing; picketing "private clubs"; research on urban renewal (Negro removal); meeting Negroes--and meeting whites (and if you don't know what that means, you have a lot to learn about the South); recruiting Negroes to go to previously all-white schools; trying to find someone who has some ideas on conversion; hunting for someone on the faculty who has some ideas (Casey Hayden, who went to the U of Texas, once said, "I was twenty-one before I ever met a full-fledged idea."); labor organizing; fighting gag laws; bitching about "double-jeopardy". While SSOC as an organization cannot take credit for a lot of these things, it has found three campus travellers who believe in its goals and program enough that they are going around telling others like themselves, "spreading the word" as it were. And this Christmas, about 45 people gave up part of their vacation to work in Mississippi.

As of now, SSOC is a predominantly white organization, but the staff has been mandated to work to bring about a truly "inter-racial, inter-collegiate" student organization in the South.

It is not anticipated at present that SSOC will sponsor a summer project, but that we will try to feed people into the programs of other organizations in the South, e.g., COFO, SNCC, and AFSC.

Plans for this spring include a large conference in Atlanta in Mid-March; possibly a spring-vacation Mississippi project; a joint SDS-SNCC-SSOC conference on University Reform in April; and an effort to organize the state of Tennessee around capital punishment. We shall also continue to publish The SSOC Newsletter.

Finally, I want to say something about a bit that everyone else has said something about. For a good century now, at least, there has been a lot of talk about "Southern tradition" and "the Southern way of life." In more recent years, they've written about "the mind of the South" and "the Southern mystique." Mainly this is all about Palegra, Incest, Murder, and Pucky-politeness. And the acronym for all this is PIMP. The pimp for a land and people which has prostituted itself for all the world to ridicule. Then do you ask why do we care, why do we work, when we appear so bitter? Because we, too, are responsible for this pimp and this prostitute. We have sired and suckled them, oftentimes without realizing it. And we who know them best must help them and ourselves and love them. Pimps and prostitutes have always been scapegoats for the morally superior. I wonder what would happen if the former got reformed?

Y'all tell us where the good guys are.

FSM...

The organization of the graduate students and their entrance into the policy-making of the Free Speech Movement marked a turning point in the course of the movement. The graduate students were among the most experienced and sophisticated members of the FSM and tended to raise the level of the discussions within the FSM. Furthermore, they were able to call on vast resources of intelligent and hard-working colleagues who had some leverage--the teaching assistants.

Until the free speech controversy, graduate students were unorganized. They were disfranchised from the Student Government (ASUC) in 1959. A few unsuccessful attempts were made during the following years to set up a Graduate Student Association but by the onset of the fall semester 1964, the organization no longer existed.

After the October 2 crisis, the graduate students set up the Graduate Coordinating Council consisting of two elected members from each department. Immediately, the GCC elected seven delegates to the FSM Executive Committee. As the dispute continued, graduates began to take the initiative. They felt deeply about the free speech issue, and especially feared the effect the restrictions on advocacy might have on the civil rights movement in the Bay Area. Graduate students were not convinced that FSM members practiced the right tactics, but they were persuaded of the justice of the FSM aims, and assumed they would have an important influence in FSM councils. This assumption was borne out.

The entry of the graduate students into the Executive Committee of the FSM paralleled an increasing amount of graduate participation in rallies and in the administrative running of the movement, especially in writing literature and handling informal faculty and Administration contacts. Though most graduate students tended to leave direct action to younger quarters, over 20% of the eight hundred students arrested December 3 in Sproul Hall were graduates. As FSM sympathies among graduate students grew, the tactic of a strike became feasible and the possibility was frequently discussed.

The fall 1964 semester of the University of California is generally regarded as the most exciting and dangerous era in its history. Like the loyalty oath controversy of the early fifties the danger came when outside pressures were transmitted by the administration into University policy. But the resistance to the inequities of the policies and the structures generating them has made a difference and has opened great perspectives for university reform in the California university system and elsewhere.

By any standard, save that of those who say that education does not exist outside a classroom

setting, the semester was the most educational in the history of the school. An ever increasing number in the University community were involved in a sophisticated level of dialogue created by a group of students whose main tactic was to continue to clarify the difference between conditions for educational excellence and the reality, and the unfolding of events in which the roles played by various participants became increasingly clear and the relationship between structures and patterns of interest and authority emerged for all to see. By the time of the arrests over 65% of the student body was actively supporting the Free Speech Movement as a result of this educational process.

The Free Speech Movement will continue to live its ideal of uncompromising dedication to principles of democratic participation and free expression both on and off the campus.

CHAPTERS...

Washington) or demonstrations (U of Illinois) on Vietnam. The MIT chapter and others in the Boston area are working with the Boston PREP project, organizing on the issue of conversion of the economy.

University reform, which was almost a dead issue on the campus a year ago, is now far from that. Most of the chapters are considering some action on university reform and for some chapters university reform will be the major activity. The Smith chapter is making plans for a sit-in in the library to protest early closing hours. Several chapters are directing their efforts at changing the student government. The University of Texas will be running a candidate for student body president, Carleton, Roosevelt, VOICE, and others have members on the student government. Harvard is fighting to change student government into a meaningful body.

The University of Illinois formed an Ad Hoc Committee for Student Expression to protest the lack of any student voice in administrative decisions. Duke has been working on issues of In loco parentis and curriculum reform. Queens is interested in working for reasonable library hours, free press, and general lessening of red-tape for extra-curricular activities. The University of Michigan has been concerned with economic issues relevant to students such as university wages and housing costs. The University of Washington has similar plans. Texas is concerned with free tuition, Carleton with press censorship and open-house issues. Pembroke hopes to re-establish an honor system. Vassar wants to change speaker regulations, Simmons wants curriculum changes, Harpur wants off-campus living. The Berkeley Free Speech Movement wants free speech—but more than that, it wants a university quite different from Clark Kerr's concept of the "multiversity"...