

To: Planners of the Staff Meeting

Some Suggestions in Answer to Questions Raised by the "Memo":

1. The structure of SNCC should flow naturally and logically out of what we do, -because the people who are doing-should have direct representation in top policy-making.

So the important question is: what should we be doing? We need to avoid traveling only in the grooves created by our past travels; we need to start from scratch and think about what SNCC is peculiarly suited to do, what is most important. We would attempt an answer as follows:

SNCC is best suited to be a relatively small, mobile, striking force, guerrilla fighters in the field of social change, who will go into the heart of where problems are deepest, awaken people in the locality and in the nation, arouse the kind of tensions and antagonisms that are healthy, and create pockets of power all over the nation which remain outside the official channels of power but bombard these channels with demonstrations of what is wrong in the nation and what is the way people should really live in a just society.

This means, I think: organizing people (in whatever forms or organization are most effective in the locality, whether voters' leagues, or local "movements", etc.) in the Black Belt, using a handful of SNCC people in each locality and only moving on when there is a new handful of SNCC staff people recruited in the area, to take the place of the old. It means also organizing in selected white communities. It means organizing in urban as well as rural areas, because the problems of people become concentrated in the cities. It means organizing in southern colleges, Negro and white, constantly recruiting new young people to go out of the academic world into the communities.

2. In organizing people, around issues and actions which dramatize their problems, SNCC needs to begin using the tactic it made famous: nonviolent direct action, to tackle problems outside of lunch counters and outside of voting, in relation to issues like food, shelter, clothing, medical care, jobs, justice in the courts in "ordinary criminal" cases, right of free expression in press, radio, television, etc. A whole range of imaginative new ways of demonstrating the wrongs in these areas needs to be developed. The sit-in, the freedom

vote, the freedom school, need to be expanded. The basic idea is that we "act out" before the nation how things should be.

5. If we really mean to change the nation, and not just make Philadelphia, Miss. like Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Jackson like New York, we need to start educating ourselves, and the people we organize, to think beyond the vote and the lunch counter to more fundamental changes. This means staff ~~waking~~ time out to read, to study, to think, to discuss-- not in the way its done in the official schools and colleges-- but in a new way. And it means teaching while we learn, going back into the communities of the South, to teach in freedom schools, to show movies, to give classes in community centers, to use mass meetings as educational devices. In other words SNCC should be a corps of organizer-teachers. Our "Institutes" should pour out teachers into the communities.

4. This leads to structure. I think what has been wrong in the past is that: there has been no clear way of getting the opinions of the staff on vital matters; the Exec. Comm. has been a loose and ineffective group, not really representing what SNCC has been doing, and not able to plan intelligently, or to carry out plans efficiently. The result has been, through through no one person's fault, to leave decisions to a few people at the top, or to individuals in the field acting on their own, in other words, both too much localism and too much dictation at the same time. Suggestion: a) Coordinating Committee be abolished as outdated. b) The basic democratic body be the staff meeting which takes place perhaps four times a year and once a year elects the Exec. Comm.

c) The Exec. Comm. should represent what SNCC is doing: it should have key people from each area of activity making up the bulk of the Exec. Comm., both project directors and rank and file staff members. It should have someone representing the college program, and someone representing the white community project. It should have the Chairman, Exec, Secy, and perhaps two other key people from national staff headquarters. And the two advisers. It should not consist of more than fifteen people--it must avoid those wild meetings of thirty or forty that crowd in on Exec. Comm. meetings and get

nothing done. d) The Exec. Comm. must be a planning body, something it has not been so far.

5. The Exec. Secretary is the person who must take responsibility for carrying out Exec. Comm. decisions. He must stay put in the office, with sufficient secretarial and telephone and every other kind of equipment to keep the organization moving and together. He cannot be a public figure, travelling and speaking and at the same time run the organization. Perhaps that should be left to the Chairman. In other words, of the two people in the organization, one should be free to move around, the other should stay put and keep SNCC together.

(At our staff meeting, in planning our agenda, what we should concentrate on doing should be discussed before we get hung up on organizational structure.

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