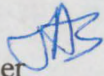


MEMORANDUM

To: Tim West

Fm: Joe Sinsheimer 

Re: Interview with David Jordan [Lynd , Staughton and Alice]

Dt: December 8, 1998

Enclosed is an interview I conducted with Staughton and Alice Lynd. Staughton Lynd served as Director of the Freedom School Program during the 1964 Freedom Summer Project in Mississippi.

In the interview, the Lynds discussed: 1) planning for the Freedom School program 2) Bob Moses' impact on the summer volunteers at the Oxford, Ohio training sessions for the Summer Project 3) SNCC staff dynamics 3) successful elements of the Freedom School program 4) Bob Moses' opposition to the Viet Nam war and his ability to connect it what was happening in Mississippi 5) the development of the Assembly of Unrepresented People 5) the liberal-left split inside the civil rights movement 6) and the issue of movement "burn-out."

Interview with Staughton and Alice Lynd
December 30, 1985
Youngstown, Ohio

- Sinsheimer: {Interview started with brief description of the interviewer's project} How did you eventually get recruited for the Freedom School project? Maybe we should just start there.
- S. Lynd: In the fall of 1962 there occurred the Cuban Missile Crisis and the mayor of Atlanta at that time was a gentleman named Ivan Allen and he wired or telephoned President John Kennedy that "Atlantans stands behind you as one man."
- A. Lynd: One hundred percent.
- S. Lynd: And we figured that we couldn't take that lying down so SNCC and its friends and relations at Atlanta University set up a picket line in downtown Atlanta. Incidentally, Alice was fired from her job at a day-care center.
- A. Lynd: Don't say fired. I was ...
- S. Lynd: Forced out.
- A. Lynd: I was forced out. They changed the schedule in a way they knew was impossible for me.
- S. Lynd: And as we were leaving that picket line someone approached me and said that there was a young man named John O'Neal who had just drove up to work with SNCC and he would be talking with Jim Forman tomorrow but could he spend the night with us. So I said sure. John's big concern at that moment was to go to the bathroom as I recall, this being downtown Atlanta. And SNCC being SNCC, it was about two weeks before Forman showed up and John got straightened away, and we got to know him pretty well. He has since gone on to create the Free Southern Theater.
- Sinsheimer: Right. Okay.
- S. Lynd: And at some point in the winter 1963-4, Alice may remember better than that, I think he

{O'Neal} called up from Jackson and asked me if I was interested in being the Freedom School Director.

Sinsheimer: He being John O'Neal?

S. Lynd: John O'Neal. Although Charlie Cobb was very much involved in the kind of initial envisioning of the Freedom Schools. He may have some better or some additional recollection. It could have been Charlie that called but I don't believe I knew Charlie at that time. I think it was John that called and then I went to Jackson to talk with Charlie. And ironically, my initial concern was why they would want a white person to do this and shouldn't there at least be a black person associated with me. And they said that was fine if I could locate such a person.

And so I approached a friend named Harold Bardlille who had been active in the civil rights movement in Orangeburg, South Carolina and happened to be a graduate student at Atlanta University. And Harold checked out the scene and said, "Staughton somebody may get killed on this project," and in the end decided not to participate and I was kind of obliged to do it.

Sinsheimer: I know that in the SNCC papers there is a letter you wrote to Bob Moses sometime that winter where you really expressed concern about the number, having an all-black voter registration force and then all-white Freedom Schools. So that bothered you from the very outset then?

S. Lynd: That is interesting because I didn't recollect-- as it turned out, you may know better than I-- but there were blacks involved in the Freedom Schools. For instance the largest Freedom School operation was in Hattiesburg where there were I don't know how many schools-- hundreds of them, students. And the couple that ran the Freedom Schools in Hattiesburg were a black couple from New York if I am not mistaken. I just can't come up with the names.... But in any case there they were running next to what I was doing I would say the most significant administrative situation in that operation.

Contrary-wise, whatever the initial

expectation may have been, at least of the summer people, the overwhelming majority who worked on voter registration were white. Now maybe if you take that group together with blacks who were already working on {it}, it would have been a different scene, racial composition. But I expect that that letter is most appropriately simply evidence that I was concerned about it.

Sinsheimer: Right. It was in the same letter where you more or less agreed to do it so it must have been very early on. I am sure that there were different proposals being sent around. So were you involved in the actual planning of the schools? Was there a lot of talk. Were you meeting with Moses and Charlie Cobb?

S. Lynd: I went to Jackson, I went to a meeting in New York which was not especially substantive. But I went to Jackson and talked with Charlie, not in depth with Bob to the best of my recollection, but particularly with Mendy Samstein for whom incidently I have an address in Brooklyn. He has never responded to our Christmas cards for instance. He seems

Sinsheimer: Howard Zinn told me that he seems to have lost a lot of his zeal over the years. Howard set it was a bit depressing.

S. Lynd: Well, Mendy at that time was full of zeal. And I can remember his going over the map of Mississippi with me to the best of my recollection indicating that the area around Philadelphia and the area around McComb were particularly dangerous. And kind of laying out the basic format for the Freedom Schools which just was that in every community SNCC workers would try to cash in their IOU's from the period of previous struggle and find a) a person who would provide a place for the school--usually a church basement and b) persons who would take white teachers into their homes.

Sinsheimer: Right. Did that end up being a problem administratively to try to find housing for everyone or did it just sort of happen?

S. Lynd: The SNCC people who worked on it could say

better than I. Clearly there were problems. The three people who were killed in Philadelphia were killed because a church that had been made available for a freedom school was burned and they went out to look at it.

Sinsheimer: Right.

S. Lynd: And I believe to try to find another one.

Sinsheimer: So that summer did you base yourself in Jackson?

S. Lynd: Yes, now I am not, let me say some more things about ...

Sinsheimer: Okay, right.

S. Lynd: About what happened inbetween. There was a Freedom School curriculum hectorgraphed in our apartment in Atlanta. Typed and hectorgraphed.

A. Lynd: Some of the things I think we had reproduced or got in mass. But the enveloped were about this thick {laughter}.

S. Lynd: Big brown envelopes. I drove from Atlanta to the orientation in Oxford with three Spellman students. And I had no realistic idea of how much paper weighed so by the time that car got to Oxford it was like this {laughter}. I had to have its wheels realigned. And I don't know how much significance the curricula actually had. It was just a point of departure for people.

A. Lynd: It included things like the Port Huron Statement.

S. Lynd: It included the Port Huron statement. It included an essay by A. J. Muste which you could find in Liberation magazine for 1963-4. It had some such title as "Guns" or something else and it was on the subject of nonviolence. It also included a document called "Ad Hoc Statement on the Triple Revolution," or some such thing which was sort of a think tank product of the time. The triple revolution was automation

A. Lynd: Would a copy of that entire curriculum be either in the Swarthmore Peace Collection or in the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

S. Lynd: If it is anywhere it is at the Wisconsin State Historical Collection. I deposited what relatively few papers I had there.

A. Lynd: I may possible still have your Mississippi letters from that summer. I don't know whether we sent them to Madison or not. I think I retained them and they are probably in our loft.

Sinsheimer: Wow. That would be neat if they are still around.

A. Lynd: Well, I know I saved everyone of them at the time but we have moved a number of times since then. So I don't know where I put them.

Sinsheimer: Now who were the primary people putting this curriculum together? Was that done in Missississippi or ...?

S. Lynd: No, I did it. I must have consulted somebody but basically I am the one that put it together, produced it, and carried it there. I carried it to Oxford where when school staffs were formed these brown packets were distributed as your shoulder patch. And the only reason I wanted to mention Oxford for a moment was, well a couple of things about it. The way we proceeded it seems to me was to try to identify particular persons who suggested themselves as coordinators of the individual schools because it was perfectly obvious from the beginning that this was going to be an inherently decentralized operation and what happened in any particular location was going to be all together dependent upon the imagination and persistence of the people involved. And of course there were also going to be presumably continuing discretionary decisions about the amount of violence that seemed to be in the offering in relationship to the white community. It seems like a good idea to begin with the best possible group of Freedom School administrators. And I would say they were by large {laughter} people who were more than sixteen years old and had any experience

at all doing anything. Which is not said derogatively because they were a wonderful group.

And then the way orientation was set at Oxford was that--I am sure you know all this-- the voter registration people were orientated in the first week and then they all went to Mississippi. Freedom School and I guess it was called community center people the second week which meant that the first day of our orientation was the day that Mickey Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andy Goodman turned up missing. Mrs. Schwerner was still at Oxford and the whole orientation kind of ground to a halt. And it must have been the Monday evening following that Sunday when there was a meeting of everyone who was at Oxford, addressed by Bob {Moses}. You have accounts of this speech?

Sinsheimer: Bits and pieces of it.

S. Lynd: Well, the thing that stands out in my mind-- I was in and out because I was consulting a series of Freedom School teachers who were trying to decide whether to still to go to Mississippi. But the part I remember was where Bob for the first, for the first time in my experience mentioned an author named Tolkien. And he talked about Frodo the Hobbit whose task it was to carry the ring of power. And that evil power of the ring was such that when Frodo finally reached the crack of doom and it was now his task just to drop the ring in he wasn't able to do it because the ring had become important to him. And Bob said that leadership position in the Movement is like that.

Sinsheimer: I never understood that because all there is there is one letter in Elizabeth Sutherland's book {Letters from Mississippi} where someone mentioned it.

S. Lynd: That is what it is about.

Sinsheimer: Wow.

S. Lynd: You better believe it. All of this of course said Bob-like, very slow sentences, tremendous pauses. And then Bob said, you know, nevertheless I am in that position. I

have to make a decision. The decision is that the Mississippi Project should go forward.

Here I want to digress because it is a kind of a delicate subject. Suggest that you talk with Bob sometime about the dynamics of the decision to have a Summer {Project}. Because I was subsequently told ... that in fact the SNCC staff voted not to have a Summer Project. The concern being which I think-- I think both sides were right. I think the Summer Project was a terrific success but that the concern of the people who originally opposed it was also justified by events to wit. That the effect of all these fast-talking, middle class white people from the north would somehow disorientate the process of local black leadership. So I think really you have to ask a lot of questions like why was it that after the Atlantic City Convention work to the extent that it did came to a halt in Mississippi {Break}.

So Bob said that the project should go on and I was just digressing to say that I think the coming of the white volunteers on the one hand caught the attention of the nation but on the other hand it appears to me did disorient the process of the development of local black leadership and also disorientated the SNCC staff I think. The whole phenomenon of what the 1964 and 1968 Democratic demonstrations did to the black and white movements respectively is a big topic because in each case you just had a general sense that all the people who came streaking in through convention city, that out of all the people who came streaming into convention city both in 1964 and in 1968 much less than one hundred percent found their way back to wherever they had been organizing from.

And what you should discuss with Bob is whether he and Dave Dennis of CORE really that pushed that decision through, that is really sought a reversal of the initial determination by SNCC staff that they didn't want the Project because that is what I was told.

Sinsheimer: It is interesting that Bob said that you know that he had wavered and that a lot of the local people like Mrs. Hamer had wanted the project but most of his organizers like Hollis {Watkins} and Willie Peacock had not

not wanted it and he was torn between that.

S. Lynd: That is interesting, I hadn't known that.

Sinsheimer: What pushed him over-- and he talks about it very dramatically-- was driving to Hattiesburg and finding out that Louis Allen had been killed. And he said that it was at that point that he couldn't protect, he couldn't protect Hollis and Peacock anymore. That there was no way of protection. And that is interesting that there was sort of that trigger and then it is a question of how much his own influence, and that is sort of a delicate subject with everyone, is how much if Bob wanted it did it just become and

S. Lynd: And I think the answer is probably yes but not because he did it in some backroom deal-- because he had the natural authority to persuade people. When you speak about protecting Hollis and Willie had the business of going out over the roofs in Greenwood and so forth, that was '63 so that had already {happened}.

Sinsheimer: But I guess it was because he felt like that he had talked with Doar and he had talked with the FBI about Louis Allen's situation and that-- he just sort of lost faith in the government's ability to protect people and realized that he had to sort of push the country to a white heat or whatever.

A. Lynd: And if whites were killed then the country would react where as long as just blacks were killed it wouldn't.

S. Lynd: Not that I think it is fair to accuse Bob or anybody else of wanting people to get killed.

Sinsheimer: Right.

S. Lynd: It just that if whites were at risk ...

A. Lynd: The country would react differently.

S. Lynd: So coming back to Oxford. The only other, well actually, two vignettes superimposed. I was rather constantly in the situation that because I had a fair amount of authority I got to be part, in one or two cases asked to

be part, of meetings that I otherwise would not have been present at.

One of those incidently was in Atlanta before Oxford. I don't know if you have heard an account of this meeting. But there was a meeting of all SNCC staff which took place I believe at Morehouse College, probably in May. That is the Summer Project had been decided, that there had been a lot of tension, pulling and hauling in the process of making that decision and I guess it was felt very wisely it would be good to be together before the project actually began. I can remember-- off the top I would say Ruby Doris Smith although I could be mistaken-- saying at that meeting, you know, we are never all going to be together again.

And I particularly remember at the end of that meeting, this is Atlanta now not Oxford, people standing in a circle to sing we shall overcome in a way I heard it sung on no other occasion. Everybody sang all the verses that they could think of and then people began to hum. And John Lewis, who was chairperson of SNCC at the time, spoke over the humming. And what he spoke about what the occasion when he and others at Fisk went from Nashville to Birmingham in-- it would have been 1961 I guess at the time of the Freedom Rides-- and they were picked up by the police in Birmingham, driven back to the border between Alabama and Tennessee and set down and told to head north.

The feeling that I got from the way he described it was that it wasn't just difficult to know what to do, but it was a real humiliation, it was as if the power structure.... {Break} So John told all this. And he said we didn't know what to do. He said that the one thing he knew we needed to do was to start back towards Birmingham.

So now back to Oxford. I would say that within twenty-four hours of the three men turning up missing the SNCC staff were convinced they were dead. So there was a meeting and it seems to me that this again must have been maybe late in the afternoon Monday, sometime late in the day Monday. And this was just a close meeting of maybe two dozen SNCC people. I remember particularly singing Kumbaya at that meeting, again many verses... "Someone missing Lord ...We all

need you Lord..." And Bob Zellner and a couple of others, I don't know the names, volunteered to go to Philadelphia and go through the woods at night talking to black families as to whether they had any information. Which I thought was one of the bravest things I have ever been a part of.

And then we came out of that meeting and it was on the terrace at Oxford, and for some reason there was a square dance going on, and I remember Bob putting down the papers he was carrying and joining the square dance. It was just like a Now we go to Jackson and one of the people at the orientation was a fellow named Tom Wahman who was I believe a theology student at the time and has since become, or was ten years ago, an administrator at a small foundation, maybe the New York Foundation or some such {place}. And Tom indicated to me that his wife Susan was going to have to be in Jackson for the summer because she was going to be part of what I guess became the Free Southern Theater. Therefore, he would like to be in Jackson also.

And I said well I will tell you what we will do. You sit in Jackson and answer the telephone, and I will futz around the state and visit the different Freedom Schools and see what was going on. Which turned out to be a pretty good arrangement. So I proceeded to futz around.

Sinsheimer: I mean this is a twenty year evaluation but is there anything you would have done differently with the Freedom Schools? Have you ever thought about that?

S. Lynd: Well, I thought the Freedom Schools themselves were a crashing success. And it was one of the happier organizing or administrative experiences of my life because one was working with this extraordinarily motivated group of people. If you tried to tell them what to do they would have blown you away anyhow. And the situation just lent itself to the style of administration that I find most natural which is {to Find} the initiative they can possible handle and just be around to-- well in fact I did when there was a problem in Hattiesburg I would go there.

It was sort of like being a parent, you know, when they would put on a play at Holly Springs I would go and watch the play {laughter}. When they were having a little trouble getting going in Shaw and Ruleville I remember driving up there and finding Heather Tobias, now Heather Booth, and somebody else sleeping in this enormous feather bed with a quilt drawn up to their chins ... talking about how to promote the Freedom School work there. I remember driving Judy ... Judy something, who you should talk to if you are interested in Greenwood, Judy ... something was the Freedom School coordinator in Greenwood. And I remember driving south of Greenwood with her and her teaching me "One Man's Hands," which I had never heard before. Her background was in CORE.... Etc., I went to McComb, Gulfport....

The best thing I experienced in the Freedom Schools, only because I wasn't working in a local school day by day, was that we had a so-called Freedom School Convention in Meridian in which each school elected delegates to come to Meridian with resolutions as to the future of black young people in Mississippi, education but not just education. And we had this wonderful convention. The first evening we attended a funeral for the three men who had been killed and whose bodies had been found. People broke up into workshops and came back and reported their resolutions. Somehow I particular remember the question to whom are we going to send these resolutions ... the United Nations-- to all the usual people, Senators-- the United Nations and the Library of Congress for its permanent archives which is the way we all thought about it, you know.

And Bob was there. I think it was the single time in my life that I have seen Bob happiest. He just ate it up. He was asked to say a few things and came to the front of the room, which was in itself a rarity, but when he got there he asked the questions. And I just remember driving back from Meridian to Jackson afterwards and Bob was one big Chesire cat {laughter}. He just thought this was what it was all about.

Sinsheimer: That is great.

S. Lynd: Now something I did that Stokley Carmichael told me in no uncertain terms was a dumb thing to do was to suggest that a white person, a young woman named Liz Fusco, be {left} Freedom School coordinator in Ruleville, kind of be the Freedom School coordinator for after the summer. Because there were a lot of heavy questions as to what should happen next-- should people go back to regular schools, on what terms should they go back.

And this gives me a chance the other most brave thing I saw that summer which was-- I didn't see it, I learned about it-- that in Philadelphia the black kids went back to public school on the first day of public school at the end of the summer in 1964 wearing big buttons saying "SNCC" and "Freedom Now." For which several of them were thrown out of school and it became a big courtcase and was in fact, everybody knows about the case in Iowa where students wore black armbands to protest the war in Viet Nam and the Supreme Court said it was protected by the First Admendment. The case on which that case relied for authority was the case of the school children in Philadelphia, Mississippi which was decided in the Fifth Circuit.

Sinsheimer: What did you do right after the summer? Did you go to Atlantic City?

S. Lynd: I did not. I had to try to prepare a course on the history of the South at Yale in about ten days.

Sinsheimer: You were--I taught ~~to~~ to a fellow named John Dittmer who teaches, who was teaching at Brown and now is at Depauw and is doing some work similar to mine. And I have not seen the letter but he found a letter you wrote to Howard Zinn before Atlantic City kind of saying that you weren't sure that this was really the right direction for the Movement, which was interesting because it was so early. And I don't have the letter and I wish I did because I could show it to you. But you seemed critical, like this was almost like playing the game their way at the time.

S. Lynd: Well, you see I can remember about November, 1963 meeting my friend Jack Mennis who was SNCC's research director, on a sidewalk in Atlanta. And I can just remember the tone of voice in which Jack said, "Staughton, we have the craziest idea you have ever heard of." I guess this was in part reflecting the first Freedom Vote in Mississippi, November, 1963. But it was the whole idea of creating the parallel structure and the parallel process, sending people to Atlantic City. And if there is one thing clear, it was that that process was not expected to result in victory. What it was expected to do was exactly what it did was to put people like Dr. King on the spot so that they would have to make a choice between their liberal-Democratic coalition allies and the rank-in-file black people in whose name they spoke.

And what perturbed me in the course of the summer and what I can imagine writing in that letter is that little by little you say this thing which originally been-- maybe gimmick would be unfair-- at most a tactical {action} all of a sudden becomes strategy. People starting talking to one another about whether or not it could succeed or not. I just got more and more uneasy. I suspect that is what that letter says although now I have additional feelings because you know it didn't just end in August, 1964, there was prolonged Congressional Challenge. And if you read Aurthur Kinoy's book Rights on Trial he thinks this was wonderful. Well, maybe it was in some ways but what I saw it doing was just draining energy from the local work over a period of maybe a year and a half.

Sinsheimer: Right.

S. Lynd: And I don't think SNCC ever got it back together. And I think that that loss of momentum had a lot to do with the sense that we are kind of losing it, we need a strategy, black power, etc., etc., etc.

Sinsheimer: It was interesting, talking with Bob about why he didn't get involved in that context {the challenge}, it was basically, he said it was just clear that there was no one in the Democratic Party that was going to be of any help. That was a lesson. And he talks

about it now, the divisions within the black community today are, you know, who believes in electoral politics and who doesn't. He knew right there and then, or at least the way he talks today, that there was just no hope. There was no one in the country that was willing to make a stand. No one like Morse or Humphrey, no part of that leadership.

S. Lynd: It was every single one of them.

Sinsheimer: And he said it was just vacant, he said it was just like going and trying to find something and there was just nothing there. And in sense he talks today, he was talking about Jackson, and he says he really likes what Jackson did because he hopes that it will speed up the process of people not believing in electoral politics. But a lot of people really do talk about the Congressional Challenge in that way. Leslie McLemore, for example, who is down there now involved in the Democratic Party in Hinds county, you know still talks about the Congressional Challenge as one of those rare, beautiful moments in the Movement, very different from let's say what Hollis would say or what Bob would say.

S. Lynd: Now with regard to the peace matter. There is a possibility I may give you one really amazing new piece of information. It is amazing in any case whether it is You know that when the three bodies were discovered there was a funeral out in the country. Indeed, that funeral may have been on the site of the church that was burned. And it was a rather somber, unorganized process of assembling there. People went in groups of cars and they were determined not to repeat the process that led to the three people getting killed which, you know, involved many errors of judgement on the part of those three people beginning with going to Philadelphia when they had just driven from Ohio and were exhausted.

So we all got to this place which the more I think about it must have been the site of the church that was burned. Which I incidently gave some thought to because had there not been any Freedom School program

those three men would not have been killed. Led to a sort of a continuing dialogue throughout the summer about whether a Freedom School could be begun in Philadelphia or whether it was too dangerous. And there was a project {proposal} at one point for Ralph Featherstone to take a pick-up truck to Philadelphia, Mississippi as a kind of a traveling Freedom School.

A. Lynd: Wasn't it a bus?

S. Lynd: It was some kind of van.

A..Lynd: Large vechicle.

S. Lynd: The idea was that it wasn't safe enough to have a Freedom School in one place {laughter}. I don't think it ever happened, I guess I am kind of relieved that it didn't. But it just illustrated the degree to which we were all thinking about it, and so going to the site of that church where the funeral was, was important.

Sinsheimer: So you never did have a Freedom School in Philadelphia that summer?

S. Lynd: I think that is correct.

Sinsheimer: Okay.

A. Lynd: I thought something had been started there?

S. Lynd: I don't think so. And the thing that happened at that funeral service was that Bob talked about the Bay {Gulf} of Tonkin resolution. Did you know that?

Sinsheimer: Yes.

S. Lynd: I don't think I had ever heard of Viet Nam. It was the last thing on the minds of anyone else.

Sinsheimer: Out in the country.

S. Lynd: At that occasion. I can't remember any other conversation during the entire summer, or before the summer, about Viet Nam.

A. Lynd: I remember talking with a Spellman student

whose husband was over in Viet Nam in '63 and my being horribly amazed by that.

Lynd: But Bob made the connection. He said this violence--well first of all he saw through the Bay of Tonkin resolution.... And Bob was in that situation and he said this violence and that violence are connected. So when I went back to New Haven and didn't vote for Johnson everybody thought I was a) crazy and then after the United States began to bomb North Vietnam prophetic. But I got it all from Bob Moses who had somehow seen all of that back then in August. You will have to ask him-- I have asked him-- what made him say such a thing.

But I take it that was the beginning or intertwined with the beginning of his concern for the peace posture. I think the disillusion of Atlantic City fed it also in that-- Bob, I am sure you realize on the basis of your own experience when you described it as coup {getting an interview}, is a somewhat elusive person. But I did in the course of the winter and the next summer have a couple of really good conversations. And it seems to me that one of the things I remember his talking about was the kind of propaganda that the United States put out in Africa.

Sinsheimer: I read about that in that New York Times piece that you did. There was a poster with Mrs. Hamer or something that the U.S.I.A. put out.

S. Lynd: That sounds right. That was one thing. But then there was another memorable conversation where he said in effect I believe in this peace thing, I want to move in this direction, but I can't get my feet on the ground. I can't quite, it doesn't quite feel natural.

Sinsheimer: I am not sure I am following you.

S. Lynd: Well, ...there was a movement among I think essentially local black people in McComb against blacks registering for the draft.

A. Lynd: Wasn't that say early '65.

S. Lynd: It was clearly

A. Lynd: It would have been before August of '65 I think.

S. Lynd: I think it could have been that summer. I think you are right. And then the SNCC staff met in December and endorsed draft resistance if I am not mistaken, long before the white movement. Julian Bond was excluded from the Georgia Legislature about that time around that same issue, took a very principaled position. What I am trying to get at is that it wasn't just a personal trajectory of Bob, I mean there was stuff going on in the black community and black young people were the first to be drafted, and were being drafted in disproportionate numbers and so on. That on the one hand, but on the other hand there was a very strong sentiment that Good God Almighty Bob how many more reasons do we have to have for them killing us etc., etc. So that in November 1965 when I asked Bob to go to Hanoi with me-- and you can ask him about this-- I believe it to be the case that he checked it out with SNCC and they just said Bob we don't need that.

A. Lynd: But he was on the frontline with you in August of '65

S. Lynd: At the Assembly of Unrepresented People. So there was this stuff. I think that is part of what he meant when he said he couldn't get his feet on the ground, that yes he was responding to something that was happening in the black community but no he wasn't quite carrying his closest co-workers with him all the way. Then I would say by the Spring of 1966 he was in a state of mind where he wasn't answering my phone calls and my letters. Didn't see him again until he came back from Africa.

Sinsheimer: Can you give me a little bit of background on how the Assembly of Unrepresented people got put together.

S. Lynd: Well, the basic dynamic was that SDS decided in January {1965} to have march against the war in Viet Nam. There are many accounts of this, for instance in Kirpatrick Sale's book.

And that march came off in April and attracted 25,000 people. It was far larger than anyone even dreamed.

Sinsheimer: In Washington.

S. Lynd: It would look kind of ridiculous in view of the crowds that came later. Senator Glennings and Senator Morse, perhaps in contrast to Democrats of the Atlantic City Convention, spoke. I.F. Stone spoke. The demonstration used the SNCC's office in Washington as its local base of operation. In fact, Paul Potter's speech, president of SDS, was being mimeographed at the SNCC office and somehow the SNCC office got locked. So I was supposed to be chairing the demonstration and I remember being late because we had to some pry out the window of the SNCC office and get in through a window to get copies of Paul Potter's speech.

But Bob spoke on that occasion. And then afterwards there was a meeting at the Institute for Policy Studies and similar meetings I am sure, and SDS in effect decided to not as an organization to continue to push the anti-war movement.

Sinsheimer: SDS now.

S. Lynd: There is a pretty well-documented controversy in which the position that prevailed is that we ought to be organizing for the seventh war from now because if we just respond to this war and the next war we will never be in a position to change American society so that there will be no more wars. I, on the other hand, well sympathetic to the idea of changing American society so that there will be no more wars thought that that notion was nutty as a fruitcake. Right now we had this war and unless protests were kept alive over the summer when all the students were away from campus, we might be in a situation in September where students would come back to campuses but there would be several hundred thousand American soldiers in Viet Nam and dissent would no longer be tolerated.

So I thought it was critically important to keep dissent going over the summer. Of course I can only tell you that portion of reality that I perceived, I was involved in.

But I remember on the little hectograph machine in New Haven sending out a call to people to meet in Washington. It was only one of many meetings but I think it was one of the early meetings that projected what became the Assembly of Unrepresented People. I remember after that meeting going with one other person to the Pentagon and picketing and about a thousand military police appeared and surrounded us and asked us what in the cotton-picking world we thought we were doing. I can remember drawing ourselves up and saying you don't understand we are just the first of thousands. It turned out to be absolutely true.

But that was illustrative of the idea that you know one just had to keep doing something, making some kind of visible protest or it wasn't going to be possible come the fall. And I think, I think as it turned out it was a pretty close thing because if you go back to the press in the period around the national demonstrations in October of 1965 there was a very determined effort by the Attorney General and the President to kind of create an atmosphere in which protest would be regarded as subversive and unpatriotic and they just didn't get away with it. And I think one reason they didn't was that we kept the momentum of the Movement going over the summer. Because it was also at the Assembly of Unrepresented people that the so-called International Days of Protest on October 15-16 were planned. And that kind of got us into the rhythm of semi-annual peace mobilizations which continued thereafter.

Sinsheimer: Do you know where that name came from, the Assembly of Unrepresented People?

S. Lynd: I think it came from a meeting at the Liberation offices in New York City and just who coined it I am not sure. It could have been I, it could have been any of another of people. But I think, I don't recall Bob being present at that meeting but I think Bob kind of grooved on the idea of saying that somebody might be at war in Viet Nam but we were not.

A. Lynd: But didn't you write the statement that was going to be presented to Congress had you

been able to get through to present it.

S. Lynd: I can't remember.

A. Lynd: I know there was like a one page typewritten single-spaced statement, you know, "We the unrepresented people of the United States of America so forth . . .," and I think you wrote that.

S. Lynd: It is possible. And I can remember Bayard Rustin and others trashing us, who did we think we were, a minority of a minority setting ourselves up to tell the Congress of the United States what it ought to do. And there was a lot of what awkwardness, in the whole occasion but lots of good things came out of that. I mean certainly Bob and Dave Dellinger and I splashed with red paint certainly.

Sinsheimer: Now was that in Washington? I have never heard the whole story.

S. Lynd: Oh, well all right, great. You see Hiroshima nad Nagaski lend themselves to three days of demonstrations because the occurred on what the sixth and th ninth {of August}. So that is what we did. We had this convocation where there were workshops of all kinds. There was a workshop on setting up a national coordinating committee to coordinate the work of all the independent anti-war committees springing up. There was a workshop on draft counseling that Alice attended and decided to become a draft counselor.

A. Lynd: Actually, the one that I attended was one where people like Dagmar Wilson were speaking about taking the First Admendment rather than the Fifth Admentment. But HUAC-- that was the big thing that I was concerned about, and I went to the HUAC workshop. And then when it was over I was looking around for something else and noticed this little group of people on conscientous objection so I joined that group.

And it was a result of that that I decided to go into draft counseling, but that was also stimulated by a visit from Todd and Nancy Gitlin somewhat earlier in which Nancy was speaking about the role of the women in

Viet Nam to appeal to the soldiers not to fight. And my sort of looking for an American equivalent to what the Viet Nameese women were doing by way of trying to end the war. And having been brought up in a household which didn't join the Society of Friends until I was an adult but was very much a Quaker upbringing, I just felt that I instinctly understood as aprt of my whole upbringing why a person would become a conscientious objector and all the religious dimension of it that I needed to understand that, that was there. And it was just a matter of learning the technicalities of the selective service kinds of things. And I knew that I was good at dealing with the technical stuff like that.

S. Lynd: If you could ever know, and you can't, who was at that Assembly of Unrepresented people I think you would find that an amazing number of the persons who later were involved in one or another anti-war kind of organizing showed up. I mean people came from the West coast. Jerry Rueben was there, I think David Harris was there.... It was a very important occasion and then on Monday ...

Sinsheimer: I am losing it-- what month are we in now?

S. Lynd: August, 1965. On Monday, which was Nagaski day, a smaller number of people, maybe 600, assembeled at the Washington Monument and from there proceeded towards Congress led by Bob, and Dave Dellinger and myself, down the mall with the idea of getting as close as we could to the halls of Congress itself ...

A. Lynd: To present this petition.

S. Lynd: To present this petition, or to make the statement ...

A. Lynd: Or to read it.

S. Lynd: Might be some people in this building who were at war with Viet Nam but we were not and we thought we represented many other beside ourselves. As we went down the hall some bystanders dashed into the line of the march ahead of us and threw red paint on Bob and Dave and myself. And when we got to the area

just at the base of the steps to the Capitol we were met by the Washington police. I tried to make my way through the line nonviolently, bounced, was arrested. And in fact what happened was that Bob and I and a certain number of others were immediately arrested and taken off. Dave was not.

A. Lynd: Wasn't it about three hundred and fifty people who

S. Lynd: I think it was the largest mass arrest in the history of the capitol up to that point somebody said. In any case, Dave was out there with the remaining people-- you might like to talk to him--

A. Lynd: We probably have addresses of various people.

Sinsheimer: Okay I may be writing.

S. Lynd: And at a certain point it seems to me the remaining people also tried to proceed through the line and were arrested. Some people got bailed out, some people chose to stay in jail.

A. Lynd: I remember people chose not to get arrested and I was one of them.

S. Lynd: Right. Which was fine. I mean the whole design of the occasion was that if we had a couple of thousand people over the weekend, a smaller but still significant number would take part on the direct action on Monday, and that was exactly what happened.

A. Lynd: Well, on the first day there was a group that line up in front of the White House, and there was some civil disobedience at that. I think A. J. Muste and some others sat down in front of the White House or something like that.

Sinsheimer: Do you remember, I think it was Bob and A. J. Muste who went to King to ask King, were you involved in that effort to get King to speak out against the war?

S. Lynd: No.

A. Lynd: King's wife was in the Women's International

League for Peace and Freedom in Atlanta during the years in which we lived in Atlanta which was '61-'64. So she of her own right had an independent concern about peace issues.

Sinsheimer: Let me ask you one more question. I don't want to take up all your time. Did you know Al Lowenstein during this time period?

S. Lynd: Somewhat.

Sinsheimer: Did you remember any conversations you might have had with him about Atlantic City for example, about the war.

S. Lynd: Well, I remember one conversation in particular. Do you know David Harris' book {Dreams Die Hard} ? Okay. If you look in that book there is a description of a certain occasion when Al Lowenstein and Dennis Sweeney had a conversation in New Haven at the home of an unnamed white person. Well, that was me. And I think I was sort of the-- I think Al and Dennis both thought I was a was a person of goodwill however conceivably misguided I was. They sort of had the impulse to have their discussion in my presence. So I was present at that discussion all right.

And Al, with the support of persons like C. Vann Woodward, who will interest you as an historian, was extremely agitated about the idea that communists were taking over SNCC. Now it was not a completely frivolous question in that there was an issue as to what should be done with persons presently or usually in the past identified with the Communist Party sought to be part of one's movement.

Dr. King had fired a man named Jack O'Dell because of charges that O'Dell had I believe in the past been a communist. And at that time the Hardings and the Lynds and the Andrew Youngs were part of a little seeking collective in Atlanta. And I can remember the Hardings and the Lynds arguing with Andy Young about doing that.

On the other hand in SNCC as you know there was very much the attitude that if you are prepared to do the work and take the risks we are not going to ask any questions about where you came from. And that applied

to, for example, Ann and more particularly Carl Braden. And there was hassle at the Oxford orientation where somebody whose name I forget on behalf of the National Council of Churches was trying to prevent the Bradens from distributing their literature about the Southern Conference Educational Fund {SCEF}.

Similarly, there was a controversy throughout the summer of 1964 about SNCC's reliance on the National Lawyer's Guild which was assumed, I think incorrectly assumed, to be communist dominated.... So, and to the best of my knowledge that was only kind of evidence that anyone ever had that there were communists running SNCC. I think judging from his autobiography and some conversations at the time that a Jim Forman was probably more of a Marxist than he led on in those years, but I just thought it was a lot of bubblegum. And that the great C. Vann Woodward was making a fool of himself. There was just no empirical evidence for this hypothesis, and that the real issue which had also been an issue at the time of SDS march on Washington in April, 1965 was not are communists running it, but should communist-marxist allies, supporters, blah blah blah, be allowed to participate.

And that was the only real issue. And I don't say that wasn't a real issue. But it wasn't an earthshaking issue, it was a tactical issue, not a strategic issue. And it was ridiculous for people like, I thought it was ridiculous and I still think it is ridiculous and history has shown it to be ridiculous for people like Al Lowenstein and Professor Woodward to, you know, talk about cutting off funds from SNCC, this kind of thing because of its alleged communist which I think they both did all their influential best to bring to pass. When did I talk with Al other than that?

Sinsheimer: Did you ever talk with Al about Atlantic City?

S. Lynd: That was probably, played some part in the conversation with Dennis because ... it would astonish me that Al had not believed the COFO should have accepted the compromise of two at large delegates.

Sinsheimer: There is a bit of a confusion about that because Ed King swears that white they were at Atlantic City that Lowenstein was willing to abide by SNCC's decision and was helping them. But someone like Forman clearly would view it that Lowenstein was probably maneuvering behind their backs, and may have been.

S. Lynd: I was just reading an account-- Todd Gitlin is writing a book on the sixties. See I wasn't at Atlantic City and this isn't quite the holy writ for me in the same way as some of these other things are. The impression that I got from Todd was that there were a couple of genuine misunderstandings-- you might want to communicate with him.

A. Lynd: You drove Fannie Lou Hamer to Atlantic City didn't you?

S. Lynd: No, to New York.

A. Lynd: New York. For Atlantic City and then she went on down, or was that a different time?

S. Lynd: It was prior to Atlantic City. She would have gone from there to Atlantic City.

A. Lynd: Yeah, but you drove her up to New York and then she made the trip from there to Atlantic City.

S. Lynd: Yes. One of these misunderstandings had something to do with-- there was a meeting that Bob was present at-- I won't even try, but the impression that I got was that there were a couple of genuine misunderstandings-- not that there wasn't irreconcilable differences-- there were a couple of genuine misunderstandings which had to do with that, about people tying other people up in meetings while things were going on, or people promising they would do certain things. And what I got from Todd was the sense that it probably was an error to suppose that there was bad faith. It probably makes more sense to say that there were two fundamentally different approaches to politics which people were passionately pursuing on both sides.

Sinsheimer: I think Rauh has been trying to-- there was a question of whether Rauh negotiated, thought he got the best deal, and then fought for them to accept that deal or whether or not Rauh sold them out. I think Forman would probably say that Rauh may have sold them out. Though I think Rauh went to see Moses and they had this big tete a tete about trying to get the story straight. He has really been trying to clean his image up over this.

S. Lynd: The impression I got from Todd-- I have the feeling that this has to do with one of these misunderstandings. And Jim Forman was also convinced that Al Lowenstein was working for the CIA in all of this. And it seems, who was the French chemist who said that he didn't believe in God because he didn't believe that hypothesis. It seems to me that Al Lowenstein is adequately explained as someone who was very involved in the National Student Association, who was familiar with the fact that the NSA in its overseas activities was funded by the CIA. Who generally aligned himself with the Kennedy strategy for the South which was to tie people in voter registration and electoral politics.

SNCC including Jim Forman and Bob Moses opted for that strategy in 1961-62 as opposed to a strategy of continued sit-ins. And I don't think they feel that choice in itself-- well maybe they would-- was a choice they would make differently today. There is no question that the Kennedys, and the Taconic Foundation and the Southern Regional Council and all of those establishment liberal forces were trying to nudge people in that direction. But I also think it is true that SNCC, a majority of SNCC, not all of SNCC, wanted to go that way.

Once you have made that decision. That was the fundamental decision. Everything SNCC did from 1961-62 was within the parameters of that decision. And what was the infamous thing that Al Lowenstein did. Well, he had at least some part in thinking up this rather creative idea of Freedom registration in November, 1963, at least some part, I don't know how much, in projecting the Atlantic City {challenge}. It seems to me almost not to make any difference whether in some

occult sense he was working for the CIA. He was doing what many other liberal Democrats at the time namely trying to challenge the energy of this movement into an electoral path.

Sinsheimer: He was just the point man.

S. Lynd: That is an excellent expression. And although I don't really know any of these people I would take Al Lowenstein and Hubert Humphrey and some of the other folks involved. I think he was a sincere person. I don't think he was primarily seeking to benefit himself.

Sinsheimer: So did you talk to Harris. The story that is in Harris' book, David Harris' book, did you talk with him.

S. Lynd: No, the stinker. I wrote him after the book came out. What are these unnamed personages doing in this book. He had obviously gotten it from some combination of Dennis and Al. Oh I know who he got it from, he got it from Bruce Payne who is a

Sinsheimer: Did you know Bruce is at Duke, teaches at Duke.

S. Lynd: Really!

Sinsheimer: In fact I helped him with a new course that he is putting together.

S. Lynd: Say hello to him.

Sinsheimer: {Inaudible portion} So Bruce must have been at that meeting?

S. Lynd: I think he must have been, because I am pretty sure that is where David got his....

A. Lynd: We have some very interesting conversations with Gwendolyn Robinson Simmons ... what is her present last name? She worked in the Atlanta SNCC office concerning the Atlanta SNCC office concerning the origins of black power in Atlanta SNCC. And she had been a student of Staughton's at Spellman and they have stayed in quite a lot of communication even into the black power period.

S. Lynd: It was a riot when they wrote their first manifesto about how whites couldn't be trusted she sent it to me and asked me what I thought {laughter}.

A. Lynd: And another person with whom we have been in touch recently was a white exchange student at Spellman who-- was she in Holly Springs in the Freedom School? Pamela...

S. Lynd: Pamela Allen, no Pamela Parker at that time.

A. Lynd: Pam Parker at that home.

Sinsheimer: I know there are letters

A. Lynd: We have her present address {Break}.

S. Lynd: . One thing I would like to say about participatory democracy is that later on in the '60's when people became interested in Third World guerilla movements and in Marxism, there was a lot of discussion about how consensus decision-making was petty bourgeois and if you were serious about changing society you have an essentially military form of organization. To which my response and was always and continues to be as of December 30, 1985 that my observation was that in the most dangerous situations, much more dangerous than these northern white would-be guerillas had ever been in, SNCC people practiced consensus decision-making because they thought it was appropriate was to proceed in dangerous situations.

I saw this, I felt I saw this, very clearly in the summer of 1964 when, for example, Mendy Samstein wanted to go to McComb. And it was-- Mendy was quite a frenetic fellow in those days. And of course there was at all times a kind of psychological game of resistance chicken afoot where people were trying to show they could more risks than others. And it was almost as if that community puts its arms around Mendy and said Mendy we love you but this is not the moment for you to go to McComb. And Mendy in the end accepted that. The whole idea was that when you were making decisions that could lead to people losing their lives you tried to be by a way that was more inclusive of everyone involved than

just taking a vote.

Sinsheimer: You know Bob has been talking about the whole idea of burnout and how do you sustain yourself, how do you find a way if you don't share that responsibility and you don't try to create a community within the movement there is no way given everything else, there is no way you can really sustain the work that you are trying to do.

S. Lynd: I think that is the single most puzzling aspect of the 1960's. You know when you consider the extraordinary people who were involved and the extent of their dedication that so many gave up so soon. There were not more of us who were long distance runners. To me that is almost the question at the center of the question at the center of the question. Maybe that is what Bob feels he is working on.

Sinsheimer: Right.

S. Lynd: It is not just nonviolence as a posture it is an attitude of strength ... it is nonviolence as an attitude that you persist in over years. I think myself, this is an impression after reading Todd Gitlin's manuscript, and I don't how much it fits the southern movement, this is more an observation about the northern movement. But a tremendous amount of energy in the 1960's went into unmasking the pretensions of liberals. The general idea that the most devious enemy and maybe even the real enemy of corporate liberalism rather than the right.

And I think I am persuaded that the psychological experience of unmasking is just not very sustaining. that it leads you with the question well what do you do after that. One of the reasons that Alice and I to the extent that we have kept going is that for some reason we always opted for the creative Freedom School, try to negotiate with the enemy, set up a community, do something that exemplifies what you believe in, as opposed to the ... well Todd Gitlin quotes Tom Hayden as saying at one point in 1967 "you have to awaken the sleeping dogs of the right." You have to provoke the other side to reveal its true nature. It occurs to me for the first

time saying this that one could also ask that question about 1964.

What was happening in 1964. Were we on the one hand building the new society-- I think in the Freedom Schools that really was the atmosphere, or were we more creating a situation where the powers that be in Mississippi would reveal their true nature to a national media audience. And if it was the latter that predominated-- it certainly came to be case with Atlantic City I think....

A. Lynd: Well, what you were saying earlier that was the whole purpose of it until they began to think gee maybe we could also do it.

S. Lynd: Maybe that has something to do with psychologically why people found it so difficult to pick up the pieces afterwards and go back and to work in this other mode.

A. Lynd: Because they weren't building something that was real. Where as the Freedom Schools did have that quality, at least while they lasted.

Sinsheimer: That is the question you have to ask about the FDP. Were you building a political party or were you building-- I think at some level Moses saw at the beginning the building of a political party with Atlantic City the first stop and going on. But it became clear-- Claude Sittin told me, he said he sees it, you know, people have seen Gay Paris and how could they go back to the drudgery of canvassing in Ruleville after they had been there, that that psychologically was just devastating to people, that they had sort of reached Atlantic City, reached a national television audience, and how could you expect for them to go back to Ruleville, you know, two weeks later and just start canvassing again.

A. Lynd: But had that been anticipated don't you think it would have been possible to say after Atlantic City now the real work begins, now we have to go back to Ruleville, we have to build something.

S. Lynd: That is right. And people do that all the time. They take exams and then they start the

next course.

Sinsheimer: Right. Well, Dave Dennis said, he said I just didn't know what to do, you know, just didn't know what to do. I think that was part of the confusion as well. I mean all these things.

S. Lynd: I think in 1965 the Voting Rights Act was passed. Why wasn't it the scenario inherent in the strategy to start running candidates for local office with whatever kind, you know, in or out of the Democratic Party with whatever kind-- I don't think any of that was foreclosed. But I mean what was voter registration supposed to lead to if not running candidates for office. And why people didn't take hold of that when the time when it began to do that.. Or to say-- which would have been equally possible, happens all the time-- we have got the vote, there is certain class of Aaron Henry and what not, Medgar Evers-- not Medgar Evers, Charles Evers-- that are going to take that and run with it, now we will begin to build the fire underneath them, to organize the trade unions, the day care centers, whatever. All that was just there to be done.

Sinsheimer: My friend John Dittmer is working, a lot of work in that period '64 to '68 in Mississippi trying to look at the way Johnson and Johnson were pushing the movement out. And Hodding Carter III becomes a , his image become tarnished when you start looking at the

S. Lynd: The Al Lowenstein of the later '60's , that is what he is.

Sinsheimer: His role becomes very different.

A. Lynd: Have you talked with Bob and Dottie Zellner...? I think that couple was hurt as much as any white couple could have been by what happened. And they were so deeply involved.

S. Lynd: Bob {Zellner} was the white person who had most respect from SNCC.

A. Lynd: But we have lost track of them since the late '60's....

Sinsheimer: Thank you so much.

End of tape.

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