

STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
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SNCC PROGRAMS FOR 1965

Since December of 1963, there has been a debate within SNCC over the structure of the Coordinating Committee, which is the ultimate decision-making body. The staff felt that it should be totally represented within the Coordinating Committee. Prior to this time the Coordinating Committee was composed of representatives of local protest groups. The staff was entitled to voice but not vote at all Coordinating Committee and Executive Committee meetings.

At the spring conference of 1964 a constitutional amendment was passed which gave the staff six votes on the Executive Committee. In June of 1964 we recognized that this procedure was inadequate because the student protest groups were not really functioning and our staff was becoming larger. We postponed any decision on revision of structure until after the summer because of the impending summer project.

Since October we have been grappling with many problems in our organization and within the society at large. We have been struggling to find better ways to effect our concept of allowing people in the communities to participate more in making decisions affecting their lives. We have also struggled with the re-examination of our organization with the spirit of giving more visibility and responsibility to lesser-known staff people.

In addition, the efforts of last summer in building the Freedom Democratic Party, the resulting challenge at the convention in Atlantic City, the Congressional challenge on January 4, 1965, and the Statutory Challenge have led us to believe that the Mississippi Challenge--the unseating of the five Congressmen from Mississippi--is the most important political event of 1965, notwithstanding efforts to get new voting legislation.

Consequently, we have decided on several things.

1. We will try to recruit upwards of 2,000 students who will come to Washington, D. C., around June 15, 1965, and spend from two to three weeks constantly lobbying for the unseating of the Mississippi delegation. We will try to recruit these students from all over the United States, but especially from northern areas where the Congressmen will be politically responsive to pressure.

2. We will ask these students to engage in nonviolent direct action in order to dramatize the need for the unseating of the Mississippi delegation, to dramatize the need for the enactment of legislation based on the concept of one man, one vote, requiring one to give only age and residence as a qualification to register, and to dramatize the need for home rule in Washington, D. C. Hence the mobilization of these students will have three objectives:

- a) to lobby and engage in direct action in behalf of the challenge
- b) to lobby and engage in direct action on behalf of a voting bill based on age and residence.
- 3) to lobby and engage in direct action for home rule in Washington.

We know that all people in this nation are seriously affected by the Congressmen from Mississippi. They must be unseated and we must have Free Elections in Mississippi.

3. We have also decided to hold people's conferences in the states of Arkansas, Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama. At these conferences we expect people from local communities to decide on certain programs, and we will help them to implement these programs.

4. We are shooting for a conference sometime in July, perhaps, when people from across the South, especially from the Black Belt counties of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas will meet in a Southwide People's Conference. Future programs will emerge from this conference.

5. The internal composition of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee has been radically altered. The entire staff is now a part of the Coordinating Committee. We have established a Call Committee which invites as voting delegates members of student and community groups across the south, including representatives of the Friends of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

6. The election of a new Executive Committee is based on the spirit that people who have less visibility in the organization must be given more responsibility. Members at large, already elected, include Mrs. Lee Bankhead, 28, of Cleveland, Mississippi; Stokely Carmichael, 24, a Howard University graduate and New York native; William Hansen, 24, a former student at Ohio's Xavier University and a native of Cincinnati; Jesse Harris, 22, a former student at Jackson State College and a native of Jackson, Mississippi; Dorie Ladner, 21, a former student at Tougaloo College and a native of Hattiesburg, Mississippi;

Silas McGhee, 19, a former student at Coahoma Junior College and a native of Greenwood, Mississippi; Lafayette Surney, 20, of Ruleville, Mississippi; Hollis Watkins, 24, a student at Tougaloo College and a native of Summit, Mississippi; and Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, 46, a native of Ruleville, Mississippi. Dr. Howard Zinn, of Boston University, and Miss Ella Baker, were elected advisers. Eleven other Executive Committee members will be elected. Four will be state project directors; one at large from Georgia, Arkansas and Alabama and one each from every Congressional District in Mississippi. In essence, the interim governing body and the supervision of SNCC's administrative structure is controlled by field staff.

To assist in the day-to-day running of the organization, the concept of the secretariat was introduced. The SNCC secretariat consists of John Lewis, Chairman; James Forman, Executive Secretary; and Cleveland Sellers, Program Secretary.

Notwithstanding these changes in the organization, many past programs are still going forward, but with greater accent on education for organization and agitation. For instance, we maintain our belief in the validity of Freedom Schools, Community Centers, Federal Programs and non-violent direct action against segregation and discrimination. The Freedom Democratic Party, organized by members of our staff and local people, is organizing in new Mississippi counties. Other communities outside Mississippi have expressed an interest in this kind of political organization.

Special situations such as the Moultrie, Georgia, school boycott and direct action against the Indianola, Mississippi, public library will continue to demand our focus.

In Selma, Alabama, our two years of work since February, 1963, has been supplemented by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference since January, 1965. We began organizing in Marion, Alabama, and hope to spread into Wilcox, Lowndes and surrounding Black Belt counties.

We have accelerated our Campus Traveler's program. We now have seven full-time campus travelers going to Negro and white campuses trying to develop student movements. Our greatest success has been in Virginia, where a SNCC-sponsored December 3 - 5 statewide conference motivated Virginia students to organize a summer project in that state's 4th Congressional District.

In Alabama, Campus Travelers have encouraged as many as 20 students from Tuskegee Institute to work on weekends and for longer periods in Selma and Marion. We expect to

hold a student conference there in March.

Building on three years work done by two white Southerners, Robert Zellner and Sam Shirah, Ed Hamlet, a white Southerner, has worked almost exclusively with white Southern college students, and helped to organize the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC). He is an integral member of this Southwide, interracial student group which started its work on white campuses and is now working with "moderate" white and Negro college students. The educational program of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee consists of efforts to obtain scholarships for people who have been in the movement and wish to return to college for further academic training. Also there have been a series of workshops in local communities designed to encourage people to formulate programs on which they want to work. Moreover, the work-study program started at Tougaloo and Miles Colleges has provided opportunities for southern Negroes in college to work in the movement while pursuing their academic careers.

The SNCC Research Department was begun about a year and a half ago. It began with one person clipping newspapers for civil rights and political information about areas in which SNCC was operating, and filing the clips for future reference. SNCC research presently reads and clips 16 daily newspapers for a wide variety of political and economic information which is used to service field requests for information. In the past year and a half a considerable reference library has been built, and the staff has increased to six. SNCC research does not undertake projects which are not, directly or indirectly, related to field requests, or staff training and education.

We have consistently expanded our support operation in the north because the people in the south with whom we work are without the vote and unable to exert the kind of political pressure necessary to bring basic changes in the political and economic system in this country. Our fund raising operation has also been based in the north but plans are now underway to expand southern fund efforts as well. At present there are full time SNCC staff people working in 10 northern offices as well as some 60 community-based Friends of SNCC groups manned by volunteers. Nearly 100 college groups are also active on fund raising and political support. In the next few months these groups will spend a good portion of their time working on political support for the Congressional Challenge.

In addition, we are expanding our information base. There are now complete printing facilities in Jackson and Atlanta. The Atlanta operation is being enlarged, and an Arkansas

print shop is being set up. These printing operations are able to produce literature for use in the field and explanatory materials for gathering support.

The Atlanta photography operation and darkroom have expanded. A force of seven full-time photographers not only supplies news media, support groups and movement publications with photographs but is beginning to develop visual materials for use in organizing and educating local communities.

One of SNCC's programs is to bring resources into local communities and to experiment with new programs. For example, the Free Southern Theater was developed through this concept by a SNCC worker and was financed at first by SNCC. Groups like the Council of Federated Organizations, the Albany Movement, and even the Freedom Democratic Party are aided and developed by SNCC. SNCC people worked closely last summer with the emerging Medical Committee for Human Rights which is becoming a national organization.

Security is one of the main concerns of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. The creation of the Sojourner Motor Fleet--a corporation possessing now more than 60 cars--and the establishment of SNCC Radio, a state-wide Citizen's Band radio system in Mississippi, has aided our work and made field workers more secure. Field workers have said that such a radio system at the beginning of the summer might have prevented the murders of the three workers killed in Philadelphia.

The meeting at Gammon Theological Seminary closed with the singing of "We Shall Overcome" and the dedication of the SNCC people there assembled that the resources of the organization and the skills of its field secretaries must be put to a constant struggle in behalf of poor people. For despite the gains that the student movement has assisted in making, people are still poor, voteless, without jobs, suffering from police brutality, inadequate housing and a denial of dignity.

February 23, 1965