



Chicago Area Friends of SNCC  
(Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee)

1316 E. Madison Park  
Chicago 15, Illinois

268-5077

THE STUDENT NON-VIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE--WHAT IS IT?

The Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) grew out of the first wave of student protests which swept the South in the Spring of 1960. Recognizing the value of preserving the spontaneity of the sit-in demonstrations and the danger of stifling this spirit through over-organization, SNCC was conceived initially as simply a means of communication between different protest areas. By the summer of 1960, the rapidly developing movement necessitated a change in SNCC's role from one simply of communication to one of coordination. At a conference in October 1960, it was decided that SNCC should exert more leadership in the form of coordinated protests. As a result, an Election Day stand-in at the polls and a later theater stand-in were called with moderate success.

The summer following the Freedom Rides of 1961 in which SNCC cooperated, a further re-evaluation of SNCC's function was undertaken. It was felt that sit-ins--while essential to the maintenance of a protest spirit and the continued sparking of a sense of dignity among the Negro mass--were too superficial and that an attempt had to be made to reform those social institutions which had been adapted to the perpetuation of white supremacy, i. e. education, employment and the vote. The possibilities of a voter registration program had been explored during the Summer of 1960; complementing this study were a three week seminar held in Nashville by the National Student Association (NSA) for SNCC members on the social structure of the South and a series of informal meetings between SNCC and Attorney General Robert Kennedy.

After long discussions of the needs of the movement and with an increased consciousness of the long-term potentials of an organized, continuous effort, SNCC decided to operate with a full time staff. At a conference in early October, SNCC elected Charles McDew, Chairman; Diane Nash Bevel (leader of the Nashville Movement) Director of Direct Action; Charles Jones, Director of Voter Registration; and James Forman, Executive Director. The Executive Committee is composed of these individuals plus Bob Moses, James Bevel, and an adult advisory board. This reorganized SNCC is now concentrating the main thrust of its program on voter registration in the rural areas of Mississippi, Georgia, and South Carolina--with the major action occurring now in Mississippi.

At present, some 42 young people, most of whom are between 19 and 23 years of age, make up the Field Secretary Staff of SNCC. They come from all over the country. All of them have been repeatedly jailed on a wide variety of charges, and many have been beaten in and out of jail, and shot at by passing motorists. Many left college or divinity schools either voluntarily or by expulsion for developing action move-

ments in their schools. Some joined directly from high schools. They live, when working in the field, under a constant state of tension. To the extent possible, these young people exist by the hospitality they encounter wherever they work. They have been getting about \$10 per week, during prosperous weeks, from headquarters, plus reimbursement for car repairs, medical bills and other unavoidable expenses.

THE COMMITMENT OF SNCC IN PRINCIPLE AND ACTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF NON-VIOLENT PROTEST IS ABSOLUTE. As a technique, the use of non-violent direct action demands of the individual a high degree of self-control, physical and moral courage, sophistication and deep emotional and intellectual commitment to the philosophy of non-violence. That SNCC has been able to attract young people capable of meeting the strenuous demands of its philosophy and technique is a tribute to the force of its ideas and the insurance of their ultimate success.

#### CHICAGO AREA FRIENDS OF SNCC--ITS FORMATION

The Chicago Area Friends of SNCC was formed by a diverse group of people in the Chicago area who had in common a deep concern over the denial, in practice, of basic civil rights to the Negro in the United States, especially in the South, and who had a shared faith in the methods, dedication and ability of the SNCC to make freedom and equality under the law a reality for the Southern Negro. On January 9, individually felt sympathies for SNCC were channeled into an organization called the Chicago Area Friends of SNCC with a general program to support the work of SNCC in the South, responding to its needs as they arise. When SNCC's voter registration drive and the dropping of the Federal Commodities Program by local governments in those Mississippi counties in which registration attempts were being made were brought to the attention of the group, it was decided to concentrate on the problem in Mississippi. Communication from SNCC field workers in the Mississippi Delta region, and from members of the group who had visited the area, described the hunger and suffering of thousands of farm laborers caused by the discontinuance of surplus food distribution which they had depended on for bare subsistence during the winter months. These reports did not leave any question as to what the first specific project of the Chicago Area Friends of SNCC must be. Committees were formed, and on February 1, the Food for Freedom Drive was formally launched.

#### FOOD DRIVE

The Food for Freedom Drive was originally scheduled to last from February 1 to 10. A letter was sent to people in all parts of the Chicago area who had previously expressed an interest in SNCC or who members of the group thought might be interested. Publicity was given to the drive through the generosity of several local radio personalities, by merchants who put posters in their windows, by some community newspapers, and through the work of interested volunteers who contacted friends and acquaintances. As the plight of the Mississippi sharecroppers became more widely known, calls began to pour into the temporary office, set up in a member's home, from all parts of Chicago--North and South, city and suburb, and nearby towns. Churches, synagogues, labor unions, social clubs, youth groups, businesses, col-

leges and universities, political groups--in short, representatives from the entire community--participated by collecting food, donating money, loaning trucks and cars, and providing manpower for the back-breaking job of packing and loading the food for shipment. The United Packinghouse Workers Union generously allowed their hall at 4859 South Wabash to be used as a central depot for the duration of the drive. On February 10 the first load of food was prepared for shipment. In a few hours a group of volunteers prepared approximately 14,000 pounds of food. On February 11 this food was flown to Greenwood, accompanied by comedian Dick Gregory who donated the funds necessary for the air-lift. On February 16, approximately 34,000 more pounds of food left the Packinghouse depot by truck for Greenwood. This food was distributed by SNCC field workers to hundreds of people who had walked from miles around, some without shoes, to stand in a patient line waiting for food.

#### RESULTS OF THE FOOD DRIVE IN RELATION TO VOTER REGISTRATION

Negroes economically dependent on plantation owners and local merchants had been afraid to exercise their rights to register. They feared both economic and physical reprisal, which was no idle fear. Since the arrival of the food, there has been a dramatic change in Greenwood. Besides feeding hungry people, the distribution of food by SNCC workers in Greenwood has had a profound effect on the morale of the Negroes in the area. Attached to this Newsletter is a copy of a letter this organization received from Bob Moses, which eloquently describes the response of the Negro community to the food shipments and the lift this has given the SNCC Field Secretaries working on voter registration. Mr. Moses' letter was written on February 27.

You will note that Bob Moses mentions being relieved at "the absence of immediate violence at the court house, but who knows what's to come next." Below is a chronological review of events as they occurred after the shipments of food arrived in Greenwood. They bring us to the date of this Newsletter.

FEBRUARY 20....Three Negro businesses were burned in Greenwood. Sam Block, SNCC Field Secretary, was arrested for saying to a reporter that he believed the burnings were in retaliation for the food shipments. The charge was "making public utterances that might incite a breach of the peace."

FEBRUARY 25....Sam Block was sentenced to six months in prison and fined \$500. The judge said he would reduce the fine to \$250 and suspend the sentence if Block would leave the state. Sam Block is presently out on bond and the case is on appeal.

....Over 100 people filled City Hall to protest Mr. Block's trial. That same night a mass meeting of over 250 people was held at a Greenwood Church. Those who attended that meeting pledged to register to vote the next day.

FEBRUARY 26....Over 250 people stood in line during the day at the county court house in Greenwood to register to vote.

FEBRUARY 27....Chicago Area Friends of SNCC and some of its spon-

sors sent a telegram to Robert Kennedy protesting the arrest and conviction of Sam Block and demanding immediate action by the Justice Department "to prevent further denial of basic human rights and civil liberties to Mississippi citizens."

FEBRUARY 28....Jim Travis, SNCC Field Secretary in Greenwood, was shot and critically wounded after leaving a SNCC meeting. Travis, Bob Moses and Randolph Blackwell had observed a 1962 Buick parked near the SNCC office. They noted that it had no license plates. They entered their own car and drove off; about seven miles out of town the Buick drew abreast of their car; rifles were fired from the Buick. Travis was seriously hit. Moses was able to take over the wheel, avoiding further injury. Travis was taken to a Greenwood hospital and later transferred to a hospital in Jackson, where surgery was performed.

....Moses notified the police of the shooting immediately after he drove Travis to the hospital. When contacted by the press, the police denied having had any report of the shooting.

....Chicago Area Friends of SNCC sent a telegram to Robert Kennedy demanding an immediate investigation in the shooting of Travis, and action to prevent further terror and harrassment.

MARCH.....Three white men from Greenwood were arrested by local police in connection with the Travis shooting. They had been traced after the abandoned Buick was found.

MARCH.....Sam Block, returning to the SNCC office after driving some 30 people to register to vote, was aware of being trailed by a police car. He was careful not to exceed a speed of 15 mph and to scrupulously observe all traffic laws. However, he was stopped and ticketed for speeding. He asked the policeman when he would stop being harrassed; the reply was: when he left Mississippi. Block then said he would report that statement to the Justice Department. The policeman tore up the original ticket and replaced it with one for wreckless driving.

....A car containing four SNCC workers was spattered with shotgun fire as it drew up to the SNCC office. The bullets were fired from a car which had been parked across the street; this car had no license. Three of the SNCC workers were injured, none of them seriously. They were treated at a Greenwood hospital and released. One of the injured men was Bob Moses, writer of the attached letter.

AND YET, CIVIL RIGHTS WORKERS IN MISSISSIPPI, UNDAUNTED BY THE TERROR, HAVE PLEDGED TO REGISTER ALL NEGROES IN MISSISSIPPI.

#### WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

As an organization, the Chicago Area Friends of SNCC are committed to a continuing program of support for SNCC's work--until the day comes that SNCC's work is no longer necessary.

One project which will remain a constant one is, of course, the collection of funds to finance the work of SNCC and provide subsistence for its Field Secretaries. We encourage the pledging of fixed

monthly sums so that SNCC can be assured a predictable income. This would make SNCC's planning easier, especially those plans which involve long range programs.

Another project, which will continue until mid April, is the food drive. Food shipments from the North have been an important catalyst to SNCC's successes in voter registration in Greenwood. Another shipment of food and clothing was sent by the Chicago Area Friends of SNCC on March 13. FOOD, CLOTHING, AND DONATIONS FOR FOOD ARE URGENTLY REQUESTED. The central depot is located in the United Packinghouse Workers Hall, 4859 So. Wabash Ave. We will make pickups if absolutely necessary, but ask that you transport the food and clothing to the hall if possible. We are not equipped with either vehicles or manpower necessary to pick up all of the food which is being donated.

Foods in greatest need are staples: flour, corn meal, rice, cereals, sugar, powdered milk, dried beans, canned meat products, cooking fats, etc. Clean, warm clothing, especially for children are also urgently requested.

Send cash and checks c/o Charles Fischer, Treasurer, 1316 East Madison Park, Chicago 15, Illinois.

On APRIL 13 there will be a concert featuring Pete Seeger and the New Albany, Georgia Freedom Singers at 8:30 p. m. at the Opera House. We have been given a block of tickets to sell, from which we will be allowed to keep 40% of the price of each ticket. Proceeds will be sent to SNCC. WE WELCOME VOLUNTEERS TO SELL TICKETS. If you wish to buy and/or sell tickets to the Freedom Concert, call 268-5077 or write to 1316 East Madison Park.

Chicago Area Friends of SNCC has an office on the third floor of the home of Mr. & Mrs. Charles Fischer at 1316 East Madison Park, Chicago 15, Illinois. The office is open Monday through Friday from 9:30 a. m. to 5:00 p. m. It is run by our Executive Secretary, Roberta Galler, with the aid of volunteers. There is a great deal of clerical work to be done at the office; the volume of work increases as the work of the organization is extended. Volunteers are desperately needed for regularly scheduled hours in the office and for emergency tasks, such as mass mailings, as they arise. Please call the office if you are available for such work.

VOLUNTEERS ARE ALSO NEEDED TO PACK AND LOAD FOOD WHEN SHIPMENTS ARE SENT, AND TO PROVIDE PICKUP TRANSPORTATION. In addition, anybody with skills and/or experience in fund raising, public speaking, publicity work, art, etc., are urged to contact the office.

#### A CONTINUING PROJECT

One project which has just been started is the organization of informal gatherings for SNCC. We will provide a speaker for such a meeting who will explain SNCC, answer any questions, and make suggestions for future action for the specific group which is being addressed. If you are interested in holding and/or organizing such a meeting, please call 268-5077 and leave your name, address and telephone number. You will be contacted by some one from the committee

in charge of these gatherings.

NOTE: Do you have a standard typewriter in good condition you can donate or loan indefinitely to our office? Please let us know.

FLASH!!!! TARGET DATE FOR NEXT FOOD SHIPMENT - EASTER WEEKEND.

*We Shall Overcome*