

March 23, 1964

Dear Jim:

As it appears we will not be able to attend the conference because of dire and severe financial straits, I wanted to put down some thoughts and recommendations for your consideration. I have sent copies to Dinky, Howard Z. and Miss Baker because most of this concerns my thoughts on fund-raising, and because I would like our two advisors to have them also.

As you know, we have not received a scholarship check in three months and have enough money for this month's rent and then -- zero. We spent everything we had gotten in wedding presents which I was saving for clothes. Unless advised to the contrary, when this month's money runs out I will begin taking additional expenses from our SNCC fund up here, and will try to maintain a safe level for the Boston expenses. ~~W~~ If we don't receive a salary check this week that will make two weeks without being paid. Fortunately Bob's tuition was ~~partly~~ paid by the Marion Davis fund so he is safe. If you do not approve of the plan, I hope you will call me soon -- if you don't want us to take rent and food out of the SNCC account I will have to quit and go to work somewhere so that we can eat.

I would like to say first that I am not so much sorry but upset that we're not coming -- not only is ~~it~~ the first SNCC conference we'll miss in two years, but I also feel that it is necessary for the project here that we get down. I am not functioning solely as a fund-raiser, but also as a SNCC spokesman in three states, and therefore feel that while I obviously have no voice in policy, at least I should be there to hear what the policy is. I spoke to both Dinky and Walter and both said that apparently there were no plans to have us come down because the financial situation was so bad. When I learned that things were so terrible I called Julie in New York; she said she was asked to come to an executive committee meeting during the conference wherein, apparently, ~~some~~ some kind of policy would be discussed. ~~So...~~ I feel a bit like the nameless Money Making Machine who is required to follow out certain decisions even though I have no part in making them and also am not around to hear the discussion. I do not think this is correct, especially from the point of view of someone who has so ~~much~~ much responsibility up here. Howard mentioned the lack of policy on Malcolm; I only mention this because I am going to be asked to appear on the radio to discuss the Muslims, Malcolm, etc., and in the ~~the~~ absence of any ~~policy~~ policy I will tell them what I think about Malcolm, which is that I think he essentially is a Bourgeois Baby and doesn't pose very much, if any, threat to the system which we are always talking about...the only thing, as far as I'm concerned, which makes him any more "radical" than Roy Wilkins is his open statements about self-defense which many people are thinking anyhow. If there is some kind of SNCC view about Malcolm, please let me know so that I can accurately represent SNCC.



I might also add that I am in charge of recruiting in this area, and since it seems as if we will be recruiting anywhere from 50-150 people, you'd think that it might be important to someone that I learn about plans for the Mississippi project.

Well...enough peevishness (I am sorry for the tone but you know I have a low boiling point. I assure you that it only comes from love and devotion, however.). Here are some specifics on fund-raising :

1. Last week's Times had an article about the finances of the NAACP, Urban League, and CORE. All organizations reported that they were running well ahead of last year. CORE said they had not even completed their fiscal year and had made \$600,000 already. To my mind this is no accident, and I do not think the basic reason is any repudiation of our position. I think two important factors are:

a. The internal situation. I think we are suffering from a long-term ~~xxxx~~ laissez-faire attitude where we let the other guys get away with murder. I can think of about six examples ~~of~~ when I was in the office where the other guys took advantage of our program to make money (~~x~~ and did) and we talked about it, but did nothing. I think we have ~~x~~ to be much firmer in the future, and make them understand that we also have a right to survive, and that they have no ethical right to take advantage of what we do in order to raise funds. Already I can see they are trying to move in here, which is their right, of course, but when they try to run simultaneous events just around the Gregory concert (and they've never done any fund-raising in Boston), I become a little suspicious. I was ~~x~~ very firm and pulled some strings and they postponed their concert until May. The reason why I say I became more suspicious than I usually am is that they shipped Jimmy McDonald from NEW YORK to do an event here.

b. Lack of techniques. Now this is more important. For example, when I came up here I had never raised a cent for anything or anybody in my entire life, and yet I was in charge of building up apparatus for fund-raising. I got practically no instruction whatsoever. The little I did get came from Dinky who in inexperienced herself but worked like a Trojan to help me as much as she could. I wrote ~~fx~~ frantically to New York when I got the office here to ask them simple things like: how do you set up files, what kind of pledge cards ~~xx~~ do you use, etc., and never got an answer. Everything we have done has been accomplished by rank amateurs, of which I am probably the most amateurish. However, we are learning.

BUT....if we had received some kind of instruction we could have saved a lot of time and effort. My six months up here have been ~~x~~ very productive but I have also made hideous mistakes which I made out of ignorance. I am ~~am~~ sure they could have been avoided.



The Gregory tour is a prime and serious example of this. I have never put on a benefit performance in my life. Neither has anyone else in the committee here. Yet we are responsible for selling out a ~~13x~~ 1300-seat auditorium. I asked Dinky for help and she said she would be sitting down with Forman and a tape recorder to get some ideas and techniques and would send it to all of us who were putting on ~~cmx~~ concerts. I never got this memo. I am not blaming Dinky -- far from it -- but I think this is symptomatic of the lack of knowledge on fund-raising which is hurting us seriously. (~~cmx~~ All other organizations have either professional fund-raising people working for them or with them, or have developed some long-range fund-raising techniques which bring in tremendous amounts of money -- like many, many expert and large mail appeals, Christmas cards, etc.)

Suggestions: if it is impossible financially to hire a professional fund-raiser, then it should be possible for some of us to get together with one for a day or two and be taught some tried and true techniques. If people cannot get together, at least someone in New York can take an informal course of instruction and pass on the information to the rest of us. I mean specifics about how to build up a mailing list, how to structure the Friends groups, ideas on benefits, how to organize files, and so on. I think if you came up here and saw my office you would be pretty satisfied, but remember that most of it was done in trial and error and there was a lot of the latter.

c. Real lack of understanding of the financial situation. Now when I was in Atlanta I never wanted to even know the bad news -- but of course I wasn't charged with the responsibility of trying to raise money. Ever since we got up here, Forman has called saying "raise money, raise money!" so that I could hardly sleep at night. I finally realized that if it were up to me, ~~x~~ SNCC would fold up tomorrow, so I stopped worrying ~~km~~ so much about it. Then this real emergency developed; yet I thought all the calls about raising money were ~~km~~ of the same old variety, and never really understood that we were reaching rock bottom with evictions, people dropping out of school, no money for the WATS line, and so on.

It seems to be a ~~x~~ real failing that those of us who ~~km~~ are supposed to know the financial situation didn't know two months ago that funds were really reaching a serious crisis. If we are two months behind in paying the WATS line bill, then two months ago somebody knew that we didn't have the money. If ~~k~~ this crisis started developing then, I think all of us should have been sent a memo which explained the financial situation in dollars and ~~xxmx~~ cents, with credits, debits, and so on, so that we could have leaped into action then..or at least started to do it. I mean, basically, that it does no good to hand out financial reports twice a year at coordinating committee meetings and leave it at that.



I want you to know that I understand how terribly overworked everyone is, and I'm not offering these observations in a destructive way. You know how much I want to help and I ~~xs~~ have felt frustrated and isolated since I got up here because I've never felt that ~~f~~ I was really working the way I should have been. Considering all the ~~xs~~ handicaps, we are doing very ~~xi~~ well. We are far from the \$100,000 that Forman suggested raising this year (we have raised about \$5000 I guess, so far, with another \$5000~~2~~ coming in this month, I HOPE), but I think we are building a community-wide organization which can really be worth a great deal in a year from now. Providing, of course, that I have to quit in order to support ~~xf~~ us -- ho ho. At any rate, as I said, I am writing this out of frustration and out of a feeling that all along, our presence at meetings was something we wanted to do, and not something for which we were needed and requested. That makes a difference, you know, so that ~~x~~ you don't feel you are just a machine to respond to the various crises popping up all the time.

Well...I don't expect to get an answer ~~xx~~ to ~~x~~ this, but I do hope you will read it and think about it.

Please tell everyone we are terribly sorry we can't make it and send love to everyone and wish everyone well. One further suggestion: please, please please get a memo on the conference out to ~~x~~ everyone as soon as is humanly possible so that we in the nether regions can act on whatever policy decisions or administrative changes are made, if they are. And another one: perhaps we should think of creating a separate fund-raising division with a more-or-less professional fund-raiser working on directing long-term projects, working out of Atlanta or New York. I mean this in addition to Dinky who is performing ~~x~~ the liason work with the Northern groups. I mean someone who does the function of a (you'll excuse the expression) O'Dell or Marvin Rich... I think five people ~~x~~ could work on mass mailings and ads ~~x~~ alone.

And now...of course if there is any money around and you want to send for us, we'll be happy to come! (We ~~x~~ can't drive because I don't want to take a week off with the Gregory concert coming up, and also doctor's orders prohibit.) But of course if you can send us the money to fly, we'll be down there before you know it.

Looking at things realistically, of course, we won't be there. I hope you will keep us informed.

Dottie Zellner