

(An organizer's notebook--the following excerpts from minutes of a SNCC staff meeting in Arkansas will give the reader an idea of the kind of discussion that goes on in staff meetings in SNCC.)

The Arkansas staff meeting took place on June 9, 1966. It was attended by most of the Arkansas field staff and by Stokely Carmichael and Cleve Sellers from the national office.

"Stokely read some guidelines for organizers that had been adopted by the Southwest Georgia staff. Generally, these involved things like: (1) no more than three organizers in a county; (2) no more than two consecutive meetings at the same place; (3) no more than four consecutive meetings in the same part of the county; etc. Beyond that, the idea was to be more explicit about what your goals were, how you wanted to accomplish them and what the steps were in getting from here to there. A rough timetable was established so that people could evaluate the progress that was being made by an organizer, and actually evaluate whether an organizer was doing his work, and whether he was doing it as fast as people thought was possible. People were expected to turn in monthly reports.

"Stokely emphasized that these were the guidelines of the Southwest Georgia project and that he didn't think we should adopt them, but he felt we should draw up some of our own, and particularly some sort of timetable. There was some discussion about the nature of the guidelines and timetables, and the understanding which seemed to emerge was that they did not represent an inflexible schedule, but that variations from them called for action and evaluation by the project director. For example, let us say the guidelines called for three mass meetings in different churches by the end of the second month. If at the end of the second month there have been only two meetings, this doesn't mean that the worker is sacked. But the situation does call for the project director to make a judgment about whether the guidelines are unrealistic for that particular area (or in general), or for him to help the worker to deal with any problems that may exist, or, if necessary over time, to decide that the worker is not functioning. The purpose is not so much to provide a way to fire people as it is to provide a measure of how we are moving toward what we want to do. There was a consensus that we would adopt such guidelines and such a schedule ourselves, though we did not do that at this meeting.

"We talked a bit about the question of what it meant to talk about independent political organizing in this state. It was decided that a fuller discussion of guidelines for political program would wait until someone had a chance to go to Atlanta and talk to Jack Minnis (SNCC Research Director). People thought Jack would be able to help us figure what was practical politically in light of the state's laws and population distribution.

"The staff also set an agenda for its next meeting: (1) A discussion of main tactics and goals. Do we work within the Democratic Party? What is the balance between state-wide political goals and activity, and local goals and activity? Do people run for office in areas where Negroes are in the minority? Should a political timetable be established? (2) Guidelines for organizers. Some rules and timetables in our organizing activity, to measure progress by. Guidelines for recruitment. (3) The organization of the Little Rock office. (Note: This is a general problem faced by all organizers--how administrative offices relate to field operations.) (4) Development of a budget for the project. (5) Report on white community organizing."