

- I. We are on a boat in the middle of the ocean. It has to be rebuilt in order to stay afloat. It also has to stay afloat in order to be rebuilt.

Our problem is like that.

Since we are out on the ocean we have to do it ourselves.

1. Somebody says: Only the staff can select the members of the executive committee.
 - i. Who decides this? The staff? The executive committee? Both together? The Spring Conference of student groups together with the staff?
 - ii. If we are agreed that only the staff has the right to select the members of the executive committee, then the staff including some others can s it down and make the selection.
 - iii. Who are the included others? Well, people like Ella Baker, Marion Wright, Bernard Lafayette, Frank Smith, etcetera.
 - iv. Now, suppose the staff cannot agree about the others and the etcetera. What then?

Well, somebody will say, "Exactly what is the SNCC staff anyway?"

Then somebody else will say, "The SNCC staff are those who receive the SNCC checks."

Then others will throw up their hands in despair and we will be HUNG-UP over this question.
 - v. We do not have to be hung-up over this question.
2. If we are not to be in this hang-up then we agree to call the SNCC staff and others together; we say that these are the relevant people and they can make the selection.
3. If we are to be on this hang-up then we.....

And somebody will say, "Exactly who is this 'we' you keep talking about?"

II. Suppose on this boat we are all looking at a board and somebody asks what it is. And somebody says its red squares against black, and somebody says, no, its black squares against red, and somebody else says, no, its red and black squares, and so on. Then somebody says its all of those and they made it like that to play checkers and chess.

Our 'What is SNCC?' problem is like that. And like this:

"Several men were asked to describe an elephant in the dark. One, touching his trunk, said "this animal is like a water pipe"; another, touching his ear, said "this animal is like a fan; a third, touching his legs, described the animal as a pillar.

Suppose we never agree on what SNCC is, but reach wider agreement on how to use it, what to use it for, and especially what not to use it for. And as we use it, we structure it for better use. Then when somebody asks, "SNCC, what is it?", we agree to say, "she has just raised the checkerboard and elephant problem".

III.I think I'm beginning to see.....
I have trouble with "it" and "we".

IV. Some supposes: use one you like, make up your own

Suppose whatever SNCC is, we work with it, in it, through it; whatever its structures are, we use them to work in the movement.

Suppose people agreed how to add numbers, but did not know what they were, suppose they still don't know, suppose they never will know what they are.....what are they?

Suppose someone knows what the complex numbers are: knows about 'i', or about ordered pairs of real numbers. But does not know their uses in physics. What does he know?

Suppose somebody says when you know how to use numbers: add them, subtract them and find their roots, etc. you know all about them, there is no more. That's extreme!

O.K. but suppose a person sees a whatchamacallit and asks what it is. Nobody knows the name but they show her how to open cans with it. Now what does that person know? How to use it to open cans, or, what it is?

Suppose somebody knows how to use COFO to run freedom votes, deal the lawyers, build community centers, wheel the preachers, set up freedom schools, run with the MFDP, but does not know what COFO is. (I mean, can't handle that question, doesn't understand that use of the verb "to be".) What is she missing? Now really, be serious, what does she need to know?

Now suppose a person can tell you exactly what COFO is, but can't run one little freedom day. What does he know?

Suppose everytime someone asks what SNCC (COFO) is, we agree to say, SNCC (COFO) is what we use to

V. Structures are interesting: You make interpretations as to what they are; you can use them without knowing what they are and feel fine; if you know what they are and cannot use them, its not clear what you know

Certain logical structures are so everywhere that almost nobody can see them.

VI. When people ask the question, "What is the SNCC staff?" they usually want to know who should be on the SNCC staff and who should be off. This raises the questions: what kind of staff does SNCC (COFO) need? Need to do what? What is SNCC doing? Who determines what SNCC does? What is SNCC? What should SNCC be doing? What needs to be done and in what order? How can we use SNCC to do what needs to be done?

These questions raise each other and clouds of dust.

VII. "It-we" and decision making.

Suppose people come to me and say, "What do you think of this idea?" And I say, "Let's talk it over". And we discuss it, and they decide they want to try it. And they try it.

Ask yourself: How do the ideas flow in SNCC? Who discusses what ideas with what people? How do you help people explore their ideas in order to develop them? How do you circulate ideas within SNCC? Who got the idea for the Freedom Schools and the Friends of SNCC? How did they get developed?

It took 3 months of staff meetings to 'decide' to have the Mississippi Summer Project. To think about 1,000 college students, mostly white, in Mississippi for the summer was overwhelming. The staff needed time to bat it around, shape it up, sink it in.

"All decisions are not like that." True. But it's important that those that are, get so treated, and that those that are not, do not.

The staff cannot sit in continuous session; important ideas need to stay in continuous circulation.

To say we want the staff to participate in decisions is to work to set up within SNCC the tradition, the climate, the forum for the exploration of ideas about our work and all the problems we face.

Important problems at the center of our work need longer exposure and a wide forum. Every-day problems on the edge can be decided immediately by the person responsible in forum with himself or whoever.

Between the 'crucials' and the 'every-days' fall the working problems related, say, to carrying out a 'crucial'. (For example, in relation to the crucial: political organization, there are the working problems of: precinct organizing, freedom registration, political education, etc.)

Roughly what should happen, it seems to me, is this:

Working problems get cited and circulated. A group of staff who are interested band together to work on the problems. They chunk out their work and carry it through. When it's over they disband.

So, ideas circulate; staff gets together on the crucials; standing problems get every-day attention; if needs be by stationary people; the rest of the staff bands and disbands to hit the working problems related to the crucials as they arise.

"...The fixed man for the fixed duty is a public danger..."