

for the first time i am beginning to look at the movement in terms of the problem of what to do with northern white volunteers, and if they really belong in the state, and the tension they generate. when people said it was a black movement i never really understood what they meant, or rather did not accept the implications of this. now i do because iam beginning to understand what the movement is working toward, and where this leaves people like me. alot of the problems that are going around now are the result of the influx of volunteers. in a sense the movement is just now beginning to suffer the consequences of the summer and the hordes of outsiders that came down them. when i see the old staff stick together, when i feel the resistance on their part to accept the new people who have now been around for five and six months i feel sad now, not angry. the anger i felt is rather directed to these people. i'm angry at them for in a sense fucking up the movement and fucking up the staff. to explain. i guess first historically. the movement talks alot about the good old days. what these good old days were is many different things. it is characterized by " a band of brothers, a circle of trust. " the kids worked together, went to jail together, suffered together, at times starved together. they were for the most part black. they were looking at their brothers in miss. a large part of the work was involved in gaining the right to establish themselves in a community, often the physical right to be there. there was little program. the program was talking to people, telling them about why they were there, talking to them about their experiences, getting them to try and register and vote. they were making headway, while all the time being thrown in jail, beaten, harrassed. then the summer project. so many whites to dramatize, make it a national issue, provide manpower for new programs-freedom schools, community centers, federal programs, contacts, money. it was impossible to trust them when they came. the old way of doing things in the movement, the band of brothers, the circle of trust, the collective discussion and decision making could no longer apply. the new people had to be directed, given orders, watched, kept out of trouble, and kept working. with the excitement of the summer things went along alright. there was really no chance for large decisions and policies to be made. the ~~staff~~ new people accepted their ignorance and the need for direction from people who had been there longer. for the most part they followed orders and carried out programs. and then the summer was over. if there had been little real communication between the old staff and the volunteers it was understandable. with a few staff people and maybe 25 volunteers to direct and supervise, there was little time for long discussions on ideology and the movement and where they were going. beyond that, the staff never really expected the new people to be a permanent part of the structure. maybe because of their skin being white it was difficult to accept them as permanent parts of the struggle. meanwhile many stayed. and now they were no longer new volunteers. they demanded a new role. they felt they had rights to take part in decisions, to go to staff meetings, to plan and suggest from their own experience. and perhaps this

would have worked alright if they had during the time they were there become involved in the ideological issues of the movement but for the most part they hadn't. they applied their northern ideas about how things should be done to problems that they now felt confident to discuss. there were clashes. when the movement was involved in developing local leadership, in waiting for programs to come out of the people, in trying to develop people to discuss their problems and propose solutions, many of these kids were talking in terms of getting things for people. and that was probably the best category. what was really lacking in the volunteers was a real relationship to the community. during the summer they formed their own community of volunteers, their society of peers. in the fall this broke down a little. there were less people for one, and the programs began to run into difficulties. it was hard to get people out to freedom schools in the winter, and problems were developing with the community centers. kids were tired of canvassing. they began to fight among themselves. they did not really know what to do, and they really didn't feel like living in the community and finding out more about what the people thought. this is probably the worst split. the problem of really getting into the community, in wanting to spend your time talking to the mississippi people instead of to people like you, ~~is~~ is partially a problem of ideology and partially a problem of temperament. in the beginning you have to think that this relationship to the community is important, and then you've got to like the people you're working with and really be interested in learning from them. this sounds self-evident, but it is really rare. very few white people i know from the north really want to work with the miss. people and think they can learn from them. most would rather live in a freedom house than a farm house or a family. then there's the problem of time. they really don't intend to stay that long, and don't think of themselves as having to spend a year building a relationship with a community before they have the trust and the knowledge of the people to really be in a position to work with them in a real way, in any way more than being the white person who's come to bring the mout of the domination of the white man and solve their problems. they are at best ready to be organizers, not really considering that they have to be a part of the community in order to be effective organizers. the old staff has a certain ethnic relationship to the community, and the trust of people who have been working there along time. ~~that's~~ ~~staff~~ even when they do not really have the time to stay in one community for a long period of time, they have the long term commitment to the movement and the basic feeling toward their own people of working toward developing them. and even when they themselves lack a true respect for the people they are working with, they still resent this feeling in whites. many of the whites, isolated, distrusted, faced with programs that are in a lull, get nervous, bicker, and begin to quarrel with the project director over their lack of power in the course of the movement. they don't really understand it can never be their movement because they are really not committed either to a permanent struggle, or to the community. the project directors

on the other hand are guilty of not communicating with the volunteers about their ideas that they criticize them for not sharing. many of the things which make the staff feel alienated from the volunteers about are simple instances of not bothering to explain the currents in the movement, and the way things are done and for what reasons. the whole bit about consensus and parliamentary procedure, about the meaning of time, about decision making, about internal organization—all these things can't possibly be discovered by the volunteer stuck off in a corner with other volunteers and a project director who doesn't speak. they are the product of groping and development and openness, and experimentation, and months of controversy among a select group of people. although it may be absurd to think you can present conclusions to people for problems that took so much to work out, and go so much against the grain of a northern orientation, you can do something—ask people to listen, explain to them what listening is, and give them a clue as to the issues involved instead of meeting them with silence, if not hostility. although i think that just being aware of these things will do little, mainly make the volunteer feel less stupid, you owe him at least enough to make him see the complexities of his position, and the difficulties he presents in terms of both the staff and the current of the movement and community development. probably most of them would find they really had

little place here unless they fell into two positions, which it might be possible for them to work toward. one is the position of the specialist, of someone who has a skill to offer in terms of research or something like that, or even the management of offices temporarily while local people are trained to take over. the other is if they really want to try and work into the community, to listen to mississippi people, to learn from them.

this is a long term commitment, but i think one that has to be recognized as such. certainly it is unfair to continue to allow them to stay and waste their time, perhaps do harm in the communities, and scorn them at the same time. either the responsibility is taken for making them aware of the issues involved in their staying, or the decision should be made to get them out. since this decision is really alien to the way things are done in the movement, although this might be an example of the paralysis of movement thinking in terms of handling a problem, it must be faced as a test of this way of dealing with things. certainly this problem must be faced before another summer project is undertaken,

unless, of course, the old staff is ready to be perpetually split. tentative solutions are perhaps requiring a year commitment from people, sending those around out into the field, really out in the field. this would handle a lot of the people that don't really know why they're here, but have been allowed to hang on. there is something else important to consider. it is the education that miss. has given to northern kids in terms of the whole country. it is hard to measure the effect of 800 northern kids coming back from miss. on the course of a country, but it is important both in terms of 800 kids in the mainstream of a culture, and 800 individuals who have begun to learn new things. in any event, i think it is up to the movement to decide whether it feels capable in terms of the work it wants to do in the south of taking on the de-education of american youth in general. i don't think think it is by any means a simple decision, but one that must be faced.