Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

Constitution

Introduction

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee grew out of the sit-in demonstrations beginning in the Spring of 1960. The movement began as a spontaneous student protest, extending from campus to campus, but soon there became apparent a need for a coordinating agency to maintain contact with protest groups and to distribute information. At Easter of 1960, a Conference was called at Raleigh, North Carolina, and at the meeting a Temporary Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was set up. Its task was almost entirely one of collection and distribution of information, and it published a newsletter called "The Student Voice."

At a second Conference of the movement, in Atlanta, in October of 1960, the Coordinating Committee took permanent form, and a general structure and constitution was approved by the assembled delegates. It was to be composed of one delegate from each of the state-wide protest organizations in the South, in addition to some at-large members elected by the Conference. However, the State organizations did not materialize, and the organization provided by the Constitution of 1960 was unable to be made a reality.

Other developments have also taken place. By the summer of 1960 the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee saw the need for initiating certain kinds of program which could not easily be undertaken locally, or handled by the existing staff at the time. The staff of the Committee was expanded to include Field Secretaries and a larger office staff. This means that the relation of the Committee to local protest groups has undergone further change and requires re-examination. In addition, the number of functioning local groups has diminished to the point where the role of the regional structure must again be rethought.

These considerations lead us to the following revised constitution:
I. Purpose

A. We accept the following statement of purpose, adopted at the Raleigh Conference in 1960, as the basis for our action:

We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose, the presupposition of our faith, and the manner of our action. Nonviolence as it grows from the Judaeo-Christian tradition seeks a social order of justice permeated by love. Integration of human endeavor represents the crucial first step towards such a society.

Through nonviolence, courage displaces fear; love transforms hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair. Peace dominates war; faith reconciles doubt. Mutual regard cancels enmity. Justice for all overcomes injustice. The redemptive community supercedes systems of gross social immorality.

Love is the central motif of nonviolence. Love is the force by which God binds man to himself and man to man. Such love goes to the extreme; it remains loving and forgiving even in the midst of hostility. It matches the capacity of evil to inflict suffering with an even more enduring capacity to absorb evil, all the while persisting in love.

By appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities.

B. SNCC shall serve as a coordinating and administrative body for the student movement in the South. By direction of its Executive Committee through its staff it shall have authority to initiate programs in areas where none presently exists, and to work closely with local protest groups in the intensification and extension of the movement.

C. SNCC shall be responsible for the distribution and communication of news regarding any of its staff or local groups. It will publish a monthly newsletter called the Student Voice, which shall cover news of the student movement as a whole. In addition SNCC shall be responsible for the distribution and interpretation of information to local groups which is of specific interest to the student movement.

D. SNCC shall be responsible for calling a Conference of the whole student movement each year, on the Easter weekend. It shall be an open Conference, primarily educational in nature, and shall be a time when information is exchanged between areas, new knowledge communicated, progress examined, and general plans are made for the coming year. In addition SNCC shall be available to assist states or regions in holding their own Conferences regularly, providing both personnel and financial assistance.

II. The Student Base of the Coordinating Committee

A. Any local protest group shall be eligible for affiliation with SNCC which shall consist of not less than ten members and which has participated in some kind of direct action during the past year.

The Executive Committee of SNCC shall have the power to grant affiliation to local protest groups upon application.
B. Responsibilities of SNCC to affiliates

1. SNCC recognizes that local protest groups and affiliates are autonomous and it shall consider them the primary expression of the protest movement in a given area.

2. Affiliates may expect visits and assistance from Field Secretaries and members of the Coordinating Committee as a regular occurrence and part of the task of SNCC and its staff.

3. SNCC Field Secretaries shall be available to lend assistance to other local protest groups upon request and clearance through appropriate channels of these groups. Such visits may be brief or at times Field Secretaries may be assigned upon request of the local area to work with a particular program on an extended basis. 

4. Affiliates shall be eligible for financial assistance from SNCC. Ongoing commitments must be cleared through the Executive Committee, but emergency situations will be handled by the Executive Secretary of the staff and the Chairman of SNCC.

C. Responsibilities of local affiliates to SNCC

1. Each affiliate shall elect one of their members to serve as a voting member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. This person shall serve for a term of one year, shall be eligible for re-election, and shall be a representative to SNCC in the manner of a congressman to Congress.

2. Affiliates shall give every consideration to cooperating with South-wide or area-wide projects decided upon by SNCC or its Executive Committee.

3. Affiliates shall appoint a SNCC News Coordinator whose responsibility shall be to supply the central SNCC office with up-to-date information regarding protest activities in that area. The central office shall in turn supply the news coordinators with news of events and activity in other areas.

III. The Organization of SNCC

A. The Coordinating Committee

1. The Coordinating Committee shall be composed of one representative from each of the local protest groups. The employed staff shall be considered members of the Coordinating Committee, and shall have the right to voice, but not vote, three times immediately after employment.

2. The Coordinating Committee shall meet twice each year, in early Fall and at the time of the annual conference at Easter. If not held in person, the Coordinating Committee shall be from annual conference to annual conference.

3. Membership on the Coordinating Committee shall be for one term of one year.
B. The Executive Committee

1. The Coordinating Committee shall elect from among its voting membership at the time of the annual conference six (6) persons, to comprise along with the Chairman and the Executive Secretary of the staff, the Executive Committee of SNCC. The Coordinating Committee shall determine the method of election. The Coordinating Committee shall elect to terms.

2. The Chairman of SNCC shall be elected by the Coordinating Committee, and shall serve as Chairman of both the Coordinating Committee and the Executive Committee. He shall devote full time to the work of SNCC and its staff.

3. The Executive Committee shall act on behalf of the Coordinating Committee between meetings of that body. It shall be directly responsible for the program, for direction and supervision of staff, for the financial operation of the organization, and for any matters of policy which need action between meetings of SNCC. It shall be responsible to SNCC and implement its programs.

4. The Executive Committee shall meet five times a year: in May, in midsummer, in Fall with the Coordinating Committee, during Christmas holiday, and at the annual conference. It may also meet at unscheduled times as may be necessary.

5. The Executive Committee shall have the power to appoint whatever committees it may consider helpful to the work of SNCC.

C. The Staff

1. The staff shall be responsible for the implementation of the program of SNCC, at the direction of the Executive Committee.

2. The head of the staff shall be an Executive Secretary, who shall be responsible for the day-to-day operation of SNCC. He shall supervise and be responsible for the activity of the other staff.

3. The Executive Committee shall employ whatever staff it understands to be necessary for the operation of the program. All staff appointments shall be for one year and shall be subject to annual review by SNCC.

IV. Finances

1. The work of SNCC shall be financed on the basis of voluntary contributions and through other sources of funds which it shall be able to secure.

2. Since SNCC is the Coordinating Committee of the student movement, efforts shall be made to find ways in which students may contribute substantially to the support of the program.

3. The fiscal year of SNCC shall be from September 1 to September 1. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for the preparation of the budget, to be approved by the Coordinating Committee at the Fall meeting. The Executive Secretary shall be responsible for its administration, and shall prepare reports for each Executive Committee meeting.
The following is being proposed to Northern students and groups:

Over the past two years informal relationships have established ties between various student groups in the North and SNCC. The more fruitful of these ties have provided occasions for increased contacts between students active in the movement and Northern students; opportunity for explanations of the problems of the South and exploration of the problems of the North; inspiration for renewed attack upon civil rights problems by Northern students; and, last but not least, money for the student movement.

SNCC would like to invite such groups to become "associates" with it in which relationship we would work out means of closer cooperation in student exchanges, education about the South and the North in the area of civil rights, action in the North, and fund raising.

Associates would be autonomous, of course, and the structure for association would be minimal. Representatives from associated groups would be able to attend Coordinating Committee and Executive Committee meetings, although without vote.

Every proposed act (incl. expulsion from Coordinating Committee) not voted upon until next meeting of Coord. Comm. Executive Committee shall report to Coord. what course change
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