

The Freedom Democratic Party is a people's organization. It is not a civil rights organization. It represents the organized political efforts of local people. ~~It is not~~ Its constituency is local people. It must have a structure which organizes and represents local people. Its leadership must be made up of local people oriented to their grass roots constituency. Its leadership must understand that it holds its authority as a delegation from the people and that it is responsible at all times for all its decisions to its people. It can not be a leadership which makes deals, which reaches agreements which compromise the interests of its constituency for its own advantage.

The Freedom Democratic Party need not be a statewide party. Its base must be the precinct; where it culminates should depend on the conditions of each region where it is developed. It can culminate, as in Mississippi, in a statewide structure; but it also can be constituted for a congressional district or even a state senate or assembly district. The idea is that it represent the political aspirations of a given area of local people. It must eventually be as broad in its local base and as strong and independent in its decision-making as possible.

The Freedom Democratic Party idea has the advantage that ~~it is not~~ it can not be confused with any ~~other~~ national civil rights organization. ~~It is not~~ Its image comes across clearly as the political organization of local people. This is important because what we are working for is to ~~build~~ build ~~local~~ broadly based community organizations which are independent in their decision-making, ~~and that~~ and that ultimately means independent of every ~~other~~ civil rights organization, including SNCC. Its decision making and leadership must ~~be~~ reside ~~entirely~~ entirely in the hands of local people and arise out of the needs of the local situation. This is the only way we can get ~~any~~ any democracy in this country.

~~The~~ I, Mississippi the Freedom Democratic Party proved a better structure than COFO for building local political organization. While COFO was intended to provide a structure for local people it has been too closely identified with ~~professional~~ professional civil rightism to become such. Nevertheless local political organization does not always have to come under the Freedom Democratic Party rubric. In the 4th district of Virginia, a local grass roots political organization has been formed. It has a structure, but it is called nothing more than "the Fourth Congressional District Voter Registration Committee." The key idea is that it is run by local people whose first interests and loyalties are to the needs of the people of the fourth congressional district.

In Mississippi it may be valuable to attempt to transform COFO into a political structure of local people. Such a structure would be essentially parallel to that of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. It would be organized down to the precinct. It would have county executive committees, congressional district executive committees, and a state executive committee. ~~It~~ The advantage from having such a parallel structure would come from the fact that COFO could take positions and presents alternatives which would not be possible to the Freedom Democratic Party. (In Virginia when the Fourth Congressional District V.R. Committee decided to run a candidate for congress they created a separate ~~non-partisan~~ organization called Tucker for Congress. ~~It~~ By retaining the V.R. Committee they were able to remain eligible for non-partisan financial support. ~~As~~ As in Mississippi, however, there are not ~~two~~ two separate structures. Tucker for Congress and the 4th District ~~V.R. Committee~~ V.R. Committee are still organizationally one.)

In general, the Freedom Democratic party idea is best means for building local political organization free of ~~local~~ identification, and thus control, from national civil rights organizations.

~~We~~ We in SNCC often are disturbed by the argument that ~~we~~ we must work to build political organization which are free from our own control and which are run entirely by local people, ~~which~~ ~~is~~ But we must begin to consider seriously what we are attempting to do, what we are all about. Our annoyance at creating ~~local~~ eventually independent local organizations stems from a number of factors:

1. A unstated distrust of local people, in their ability to remain militant and uncorrupted. (Admittedly there ~~is~~ is much experience to justify such a ~~distrust~~ distrust)
2. An unconscious resistance to letting go of the reins. This we are less willing to admit to ourselves.
3. A need to retain a sense of our ~~own~~ own importance. To project the political development or structure of local people often seems to us liable to detract from the image ~~projected~~ of the professional civil rights workers who had so much to do with creating the local structure. Thus we fear the lose of image and prestige. We usually do not put it in these terms. ~~usually~~

Generally, we come up with the rationalization that we need projection because image is tied to fund-raising and fund-raising is essential to our continued operation. But ~~ix~~ the Mississippi development, i.e. COFO and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, has clearly proved that we can ~~xxx~~ promote local organization and image without necessarily losing our own projection and concomittantly, suffering a loss of funds. ~~ix~~ The idea of SNCC as a staff of organizers can be translated to the North and serve as a basis around which to raise funds. If strong and independent local organizations emerge on the national scene and begin to effect national interests there will be more than enough focus on the dynamic force behind such a development. As happened this summer, SNCC received more than sufficient credit for the Freedom Democratic Party challenge. In fact, those who opposed our rejection of the compromise are incapable of conceiving that this was the desire of the party delegation. They see it as merely the machiavellian influence of SNCC--and this is why there is a move now afoot to contain SNCC, if not to entirely neutralize its influence. That would not have been possible if there had been no question that local people, that is the Freedom Democratic Party delegation were entirely autonomous ~~and capable of making their own decision.~~ and capable of making their own decision.

It ~~is~~ is perhaps true that without the influence of SNCC the delegation might have accepted the compromise. But still several delegates ~~such as Mrs. Hamer and Mrs. Devine~~ like Mrs. Hamer and Mrs. Devine ~~fought~~ fought like hell to have that compromise defeated and might well have succeeded without our assistance. ~~It is clear then that what is needed, is not to ensure our continued influence and control over decision, but to make sure that many more people like Mrs. Hamer and Mrs. Devine emerge who are militant enough to command our confidence.~~ It is clear then that what is needed, is not to ensure our continued influence and control over decision, but to make sure that many more people like Mrs. Hamer and Mrs. Devine emerge who are militant enough to command our confidence.

SNCC must understand itself as a staff of organizers whose sole role is develop local political organization ~~with~~ with people in leadership roles who ~~can~~ can not be corrupted and whose militancy can not be undermined.

SNCC can not be everywhere, doing everything, We must build structures ~~with~~ with local leaders whom we can have sufficient confidence in so that we leave them and move on to other areas.