

In Mississippi, COFO has a newly formed Legal Committee consisting of attorneys: Ben Smith, Bill Kunstler, Arthur Kinoy, Melvin Wulf, Louis Lusky, Howard Moore, Eleanor Holmes, Gene Cotton, Morton Stavis, and Marian Wright. This group provides COFO these services: fund raises for COFO Legal Office providing about \$1,500 a month, obtains, at COFO approval, a resident Staff Counsel with law student and secretarial help, assists in recruiting volunteer attorneys both to the COFO office and in programs of various legal groups (LCDC, Guild, etc.); on the policy level, the Legal Committee advises on all suits as to whether we should bring them or not (this includes suits in connection with arrests), on overall legal developments and strategy such as in regard to the Justice Department. SNCC provides a Legal Coordinator who is responsible for making sure that the legal needs of the staff and program are met and who therefore controls the political decisions of case assignments. This development has given COFO independence in an area particularly fraught with organizational and political conflict. No longer are we totally dependant upon the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., with its ties to the Administration nor must we acquiesce to the American red-baiting tradition and "cleanse" ourselves of all members of the National Lawyers Guild. As some underdeveloped countries have played both sides in the cold war, so too, COFO has stimulated more interest and aid by accepting help from all who offer it under our policy. The COFO Legal Office provides one central location for all files on legal affairs so that we are constantly up to date, and offers facilities to supervise numerous volunteer lawyers. The main problems with this set-up have been political. The NAACP Inc Fund has always strongly urged elimination of all Guild people (such as Ben Smith), has forbidden any staff lawyer or local co-operating attorney to join his name with one of theirs, and has (through Inc. Fund staffer Marian Wright) fought against any meaningful role of the Legal Committee. After stating that she would not accept any directives from the committee, she joined it last Sat. Oct. 3. The Lawyers Constitutional Defense Committee and CORE also have indicated opposition to an independent COFO legal set up.

It is my suggestion that SNCC set up a similar committee. There will be less political fighting with SNCC since the NAACP and CORE will not have any say so. In addition, we have atty. Mike Standard. He has worked closely with us for some time now, demonstrating very clearly his affinity for our approach and values. He should be asked to help organize the SNCC Legal Committee, including such people as Howard Moore (paid by the NAACP Inc. Fund through Don Hollowell's office), Ben Smith, etc. One job would be to get offices set up for the various states and areas if the Black Belt project goes through, out of which the volunteer attorneys would work and for which there would be coordinating attorneys. Naturally, the aim would be for existing groups such as the National Lawyers Guild, Inc. Fund, LCDC, President's Committee, etc., to provide as much financing and as many volunteers as possible. However, it is just as important to control and supervise our legal affairs as it is to control our financial and publicity work. SNCC needs aggressive legal work and political suits which other groups strictly on their own do not provide. In addition, day to day legal work needs competent supervision so that the short term volunteer lawyers will always get the SNCC orientation as to what is important in the movement and that legal affairs must totally gear into our program. I suggest Mike Standard for the position of SNCC staff counsel. He might base himself in the Atlanta office to have access to the WATS line. In addition, SNCC should have a Legal Coordinator to make sure that staff needs are constantly met, and to have a staff person who can be held responsible for keeping up on legal affairs.

We owe it to all of our projects to bring in the best legal aid which is available. Our summer in Mississippi shows that much can be done with ones own set up.

R. Hunter Morey