

Civil Rights Strategy After the March



A FEW YEARS AGO, civil rights news was relegated to the maritime section of the *New York Times* where it occupied a few paragraphs. Today, page after page of the *Times* and some other papers are filled with civil rights news. Yet, civil rights is poorly, if extensively, reported. Some of this is simply the lag of reporters shifted from Cape Canaveral to Birmingham. The reporters don't know the players and they don't have a scorecard. It is only natural that they will overplay a suggestion for a Negro

political party which has no serious backing and ignore for months the brutality and denial of due process in Americus, Georgia.

But the civil rights movement must also bear some of the responsibility. The reporters don't know because there has been too little examination by informed people in the movement. There has been far too little analytical material on Albany, on Birmingham, on civil disobedience, on the implications of boycotts and "preferential hiring." This has confused the general public and the press; more important, it has also left many of the activists looking for direction.

The lack of analysis has two principle sources. Many of those engaged in the sit-ins, the picket lines, the Freedom Rides and the marches want to "make history, not write it." This is, in part, a reaction against a sterile academic background and should be understood as such. In part, it is the natural reaction of those caught up in the middle of a revolution and relegating all demands not of the moment to second place.

A more important reason, however, is the increased competition for funds and prestige. The emergence of new civil rights groups is another reason for the silence and it is far more important. I think that August Meier (*New Politics*, Vol. II, No. 3) is quite right in emphasizing that the competition between the groups

has stimulated all of them to more militant and more effective action. This competition has been on the whole positive. However, it runs in the face of the strong desire for unity. And it is this desire that makes organizational leaders hesitate to analyze lest criticism be mistaken for organizational in-fighting.

This has also tended to inhibit the publication of some of the self-criticism developed at staff meetings and seminars. These meetings thus affect only those present and a small circle of others but are soon lost as staffs grow and turnover. SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee) has only one person now actively working for it who goes as far back as the sit-ins of 1960. Since 1960, the CORE professional staff has grown from 4 to 47.

The analysis that is most needed is not of the sort that pours from the university presses. It helps some to have statistical verification for the fact that Negroes as a group have not advanced relative to whites since the war. It helps to know how much the national economy is losing because we fail to use the skills of Negroes. But what we most need is an analysis of our own programs, of where we have succeeded and where we have failed, of what might happen if some of our proposals were actually put into practice, and of what problems we will face in a year and in a decade.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT is in great flux today. Birmingham and the March on Washington have each symbolized currents in the struggle. Each has had a great impact on the civil rights community and upon the broader community.

The mass demonstrations in Birmingham this spring evoked a surge of thousands into the streets in scores of communities. In May, June and July there were over 12,500 arrests of civil rights demonstrators. The use of fire hoses and police dogs in Birmingham did not deter, but rather stimulated the protests. The use of cattle prods in Gadsden and Americus and of horses in Plaquemine had the same effect. The daily television and news reports of Birmingham helped to stimulate the mass marches in Greensboro and then in Durham, High Point, Goldsboro, Wilmington and Lexington, North Carolina. As many as 6,000 participated in a single CORE demonstration in Greensboro. At one point, 900 sat down in the street and blocked traffic. The mayor who had been hesitant finally called the recalcitrant owners into session and said in effect: "You have a right to make a private business decision to segregate, But how long do you expect the city to pay for the extra police needed to support that private decision? How long do you expect your fellow businessmen to suffer because of your private decision?" The owners integrated. The same kind of thing occurred in many of the cities of North Carolina and, on a smaller scale, elsewhere.

These demonstrations did bring about changes. The Department of Justice estimates that in a three-month period, 275 of the 574 communities of 10,000 population or larger in the South desegregated some facility. Many communities have changed from "southern" to "northern" in a few weeks. This is a massive change and should be recognized as such. No other period in our history can show such quick changes. And yet, the North is not free of discrimination and discrimination persists everywhere. The restaurants and movies of Greensboro may be open, but what of the jobs and the schools and housing?

For most Negroes, there has been no substantial change in the way of life. Nor is there likely to be one. When 13 Negroes entered the public schools of Atlanta "without incident" the mass media hailed it as a major change. Perhaps it was. Three years later, less than 200 Negroes are enrolled in formerly white schools. For the tens of thousands of Negro youngsters still enrolled in the same old Atlanta schools there is no greater educational opportunity.

Birmingham also symbolizes the mass involvement of Negroes from every walk of life in the current struggle. One of the beauties of non-violent direct action is that it permits the uneducated and the unskilled to join with the more highly trained and make a personal contribution. You don't have to be a doctor, or lawyer or minister to walk a picket line or to sit-in. For far too long civil rights activity has been the near monopoly of the educated and the skilled. Now, significant numbers of working class Negroes are participating in demonstrations and some are taking leadership positions. It is fascinating to watch white and Negro university of Syracuse faculty members taking orders from unemployed Negro picket captains in housing demonstrations.

This particular demonstration is interesting for another reason. It is probably the first major demonstration in the nation aimed at urban renewal rehousing policies. Use of civil disobedience has been widespread to halt, at least temporarily, demolition of slum housing until the Negro occupants could be decently rehoused in non-ghetto areas. The urban renewal act calls for this but it has been ignored all over the country. When the CORE demonstrators (some of whom are graduate school students at Maxwell School of Public Administration and who know the law far better than those who locally administer it) called for its enforcement they got nowhere in months of negotiations. When they took to the streets they were called "anarchists." Who are the anarchists? The demonstrators or the city officials who ignore laws they swore to uphold?

But the changing character of the civil rights movement has brought many problems which have not been analyzed. For the

college professors and the intellectuals and the ministers who may have to take a back seat to others of lesser status in the general community, there are painful personal readjustments. It is frequently as difficult for the working class person to learn that his opinion is valued even if not expressed in perfect English.

For many, the civil rights movement is a struggle to achieve recognition of the intrinsic value of the individual as a human being. From that point of view, the direct action organizations have held that they must express this in the internal organization and actions of the local groups. The individual member who pickets, serves on a negotiating team, and makes strategy decisions, is also asserting his own self respect. He is acting to achieve his own freedom within him. In this sense, the nonviolent demonstrations are more than means of achieving specific demands. They are also ends in being. President Kennedy and others who often ask that the courts and administrative agencies act so that street demonstrations will stop seem to be unaware of this element. Yet, it has great importance in a complex society where there seems to be so little the individual can do about the great issues that affect him. For the Negro, who has been deprived for generations of all opportunity to master his fate and to assert his manliness and humanity, the demonstrations are especially important.

The involvement of thousands of Negroes has also tended to change the character of the civil rights organizations in other ways. For decades the NAACP has been a Negro-led group with many white members and supporters. The SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) has been, since its founding in 1957, a grouping of Negro churchmen, churches and religious organizations. CORE, on the other hand, has appealed primarily to a limited secular, intellectual and politicized group. This was primarily white though chapters have always been interracial. Now, most CORE chapters have Negro chairman and most members are Negroes, though substantial numbers of whites are involved (except in the deep South). In many ghetto communities of the North it would be practically impossible to elect a white person as chairman of a group though many serve as chairmen of important action and program committees.

The new membership also brings new problems. Everyone is in favor of mass membership, of closeness to the needs and problems of the community, and of true militancy. Everyone is also for responsibility and carefully thought out programs. These are not antithetical objectives but to make them compatible takes thought, time and energy and money. And there are far too few of all of these. Those who ask for responsibility without providing its prerequisites are themselves guilty of the most profound irresponsibility. The new members are attracted by the militancy and ag-

gressiveness of CORE and SNCC. They are also brought to these organizations by the brutality or the hypocrisy of the white power structures. Each day the TV screens show new evidence of our shallow commitment to the American ideal. Those attracted in this way require a lot of training and discipline before they are truly ready to turn the other cheek.

There is a need to prepare simple instructional manuals that relate behavior to objectives. Too much of the material is of the "Do" and "Don't" variety and far too little emphasizes the "why." There is a need for a tremendous expansion of the number of membership workshops, leadership training conferences and staff seminars. These ought to be an essential part of the program and not just possible when the budget permits. Staff members ought to be forced to take vacations in order to have time to think. It is possible to direct and control demonstrations involving thousands of people. But these methods are not widely known. In a few months as mass demonstrations increase they will be essential.

The alliance between the civil rights movement and the labor and liberal movements will be under greater strain as we attract more and more previously unaffiliated people to the civil rights organizations. Often these are people with little previous background. They are not union members and their lives have been little touched by the liberal organizations or their philosophy. If the "natural alliances" are to be strengthened it will take much work at every level. Liberal organizations cannot place a few Negroes on their boards and rest content. Nor will resolutions of support be enough. Or even financial contributions. Rather it will take intensive day-to-day program support at the local level.

Present lobbying efforts for the civil rights bill have developed an impressive working coalition of civil rights, labor, church and liberal organizations in Washington. But there is still not much duplication of this in Des Moines, Milwaukee and San Francisco. Civil rights organizations cannot rest content with the knowledge that their cause is just and therefore expect others to rally to their support. It isn't reasonable to expect others to drop their main concerns and come rushing to our aid every time we blow the whistle. We have to know more about the operations of other groups, their concerns, their strengths, their weaknesses. Further, these alliances will not develop and flower in a few weeks. There has to be real action not only on ending school segregation but also on the quality of the entire educational system; not only on fair sharing of the available jobs but on greatly expanding the total number of jobs; not only ending discriminatory barriers in housing but also increasing the housing supply for all our people. There has to be enforcement of the housing codes against slumlords as well as new housing developments.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS organizations to the Kennedy Administration is a curious one of interdependence, lack of understanding and disillusion.

The Administration has undoubtedly done far more than any previous administration. Yet, it has been Kennedy judicial appointees such as Harold Cox of Mississippi, E. Gordon West of Louisiana, and Robert Elliott of Georgia who have allowed some of the most flagrant abuses of constitutional rights by local officials. Their decisions have been overturned by the Circuit Court of Appeals but only after needless delay and expense to the movement. The effect upon morale has been incalculable.

The attitude of the Attorney General himself has been ambivalent. In the Freedom Rides and in Birmingham the Attorney General has said to us that he did not have the power to intervene on our behalf. Yet, he has discovered that he did have the power a few days later when public opinion had time to assert itself. The attitude of the Administration to the civil rights legislation has been equivocal. It was the Administration that opposed basing the public accommodations section of the 14th Amendment as well as the Interstate Commerce Clause. This simple procedural change was supported by the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and would have gone far to meet some Republican objections. The attempt to water down the bill in the House Judiciary Committee can only be considered cynical. Before the Attorney General intervened there was a clear majority for the civil rights bill both in the full committee and in the rules committee.

It has been sadly true that the Administration has been counting votes while many of our members have been risking their lives. No amount of sophistication or understanding can explain to a Jerome Smith why it was that two agents of the F.B.I. watched while he was cruelly beaten by a mob.

How can you explain the failure of the Federal Government to intervene in Americus, Georgia where four young Americans have been imprisoned without bond since mid-August on an "insurrection" charge which carries a penalty of death in the electric chair? Why should anyone try to explain this failure of the American government to protect the rights of its citizens?

And yet the Administration has the power to help or cruelly hinder. It has done much and it will do more and so the cry of passion and outrage is muted.



THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON SEEMS ALREADY to have been expropriated. The 1,700 members of the working press present have given our country an impression of a huge gala with foot-dunking guys and strolling gals. The cause for which hundreds of thousands gave up a day's pay to demonstrate seems to have been lost in the self-congratulations of some that the whole thing was neat and orderly. Were Negroes really demonstrating that they were capable of organizing a mass action or that they could be orderly? A stereotype has been refuted but this was hardly the purpose of the March.

So the demands of the March for jobs and equal treatment have been pretty well lost in the shuffle. But other positive aspects of the March have made their point and been driven home. The success of the March as a major achievement of a united movement has intensified the demands for unity of action at the national and at the local levels. This has a basis in a very real and very strong desire in the Negro community itself. For too long the community has been divided by the efforts of some whites to develop and use "Uncle Toms" for their own advantage. Demands for unity also come from those individuals and organizations who want to support "civil rights" but don't want to take the time and energy to differentiate between the civil rights groups. There are also, of course, those who think that unity will be simpler and neater and reduce overlapping and confusion.

There is much to be said for all of these arguments. A united movement can be far more effective than one operating with the support of only a portion of the community. If civil rights legislation is achieved this year it will be because the civil rights, labor and religious groups were united in their lobbying efforts. We cannot really expect most individuals to make sober judgments as to the realistic contributions and claims for support of each of the four or five or six civil rights organizations. The facts are complex and not readily available and most people are busy and interested primarily in their own problems. So they wish to abdicate responsibility. And there are some examples of duplication of effort.

Yet, there is another side of the coin. And it is not simply that there are a lot of unity committees: Council for United Civil Rights Leadership, Joint Consultative Conference, Southern Interagency Conference, Leadership Council on Civil Rights, March On Washington Committee and Voter Education Project. Some of these have specialized functions and meet seldom but all require staff work. It sometimes seems that we spend more of our time coordinating than we do acting. A far more serious objection is the inevitable tendency for coordinated action to be on the basis of the least common denominator of the most acceptable and therefore the weakest action. When the March On Washington brought together the coalition of the groups that supported it it was inevitable that the

demand for jobs was downplayed. When the list of demands was promulgated there was a proviso that the 10 sponsoring organizations were not necessarily committed to these demands. Thus, at the very beginning the demands were weakened. Further, since there was no real agreement it was impossible to press them on other occasions.

The same kind of thing operates at the community level. When three or four of the civil rights groups get together to present common demands they increase their political power. But they often have disagreements upon tactics arising out of basic differences in ultimate objectives, methods, and even personality types. These tactical differences can quickly devastate a project. Before they begin a project, groups have to make hard decisions as to whether the advantages of united support will outweigh the difficulties. There is no easy formula to determine this in advance.

There are other difficulties as well. In any unity group there is a tendency to work on the basis of past patterns and associations. Thus the newer groups tend to find they have less influence than those longer established who can claim experience and personal contact and friendship. It's not easy for those who have provided much of the drive for the new civil rights climate to sit back and be considered poor relations or, at best, junior partners.

Then, too, some of the organizations operate in essentially different ways. Some can move in a day or two. Others require far more clearance and consultation. Action thus becomes a function of moving with the slowest. This is terribly discouraging at a time when every moment seems decisive.

The Voter Education Project is one of the best administered of the joint efforts. Wiley Branton and his staff know what they are doing and after some initial growing pains the project is increasing its effectiveness. But even here there are real difficulties. Each of the five participating organizations has a system of reports and accounting devised to meet its own requirements. The VEP has added a sixth system which all the others must use. This is perfectly justified in terms of the VEP's needs but it does establish a new bureaucratic element. Further, there has not been a meeting of the five participating organizations within a year to evaluate the program. Nor has there been a written report of the first year of functioning.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IS CHANGING in terms of its perspectives. If Birmingham meant anything it meant that tokenism is no longer acceptable. Wendell Phillips said of the Emancipation Proclamation: "It freed the slaves and ignored the Negro." Much of the civil rights activity of the past has been subject to similar criticism. The "first" Negro in an executive position has often been the only Negro in such a position. The "first" is important

as a symbolic achievement but all too often it did not mean any change for the Negro community as a whole. Less than 10% of the Negro school children of the South are in school systems which have formally desegregated. Far fewer are themselves enrolled in integrated schools.

A few years ago there was a rash of Fair Housing Committees in the suburban communities which ring our large cities. These committees carried on educational campaigns, distributed open occupancy pledges, supplied listings of available housing for Negroes. A large amount of effort was expended for discouragingly little result. A few Negro couples moved into a few suburban communities. Too often the housing which was available in this way was too high priced to interest significant numbers of Negroes. The existence of laws forbidding bias in housing has helped and President Kennedy's executive order on housing will also help. But it looks as if the ghetto will be with us for years. And now some of the civil rights groups are looking for ways to work within the ghetto—not in terms of accommodation to it but in terms of ultimately tearing it down.

Novel direct action methods have been devised to achieve this objective. One landlord had been convicted of more than 200 violations of the housing code. He was given a suspended sentence upon expressing contrition and promising to correct the situation. The situation has not been corrected. The CORE chapter entered into negotiations with the landlord, the city Department of Buildings and with the Sanitation Department. There was little to show. Then, the group rented a truck and shoveled some of the trash into it and dumped it near City Hall. Eight people were arrested. The two Puerto Rican residents of the slum (one was on welfare and the other had recently moved from another area) and the CORE chapter chairman were given 10 day sentences and five others received five days each. They were given a lecture about law and order by the judge as he sentenced them. If they had expressed contrition they would probably have received suspended sentences. If they had simply rented the truck and taken the trash to a rubbish heap they would probably have received the approbation of the community. But the problem of insufficient sanitation pick-ups would have remained. This is a simple example of the kind of work that will soon be going on to make our large cities more liveable.

The work of the Northern Student Movement in tutorials also points in one of the newer directions. The possibility of paternalism is obvious but so is the possibility of meeting a real need in a human non-bureaucratic way.

In employment there is increasing emphasis on ending discriminatory barriers for jobs where the skill level is low and where hundreds can secure jobs. Recently, CORE won a campaign at the

White Castle Restaurant chain in the Bronx. Two months after the agreement was reached more than 50 Negroes were working at new jobs. By most standards they weren't "good" jobs but they beat unemployment compensation. Traditionally, Negroes have not been bellboys at the New York City hotels. The prestige of the jobs isn't high and neither is the skill level but the income is excellent. And under pressure Negroes will soon have some of these jobs. But here again there is need for some real examination. In industry after industry our negotiators are receiving the answer: "Yes, we have discriminated in the past and we'd like to change now but we're constantly reducing our workforce because of automation." Of course there are answers—in every industry *some* new employees are hired. But it would be better if we could know in advance what are the expanding industries and areas.

The increasing interest of the civil rights organization in police brutality is another indication of concern with the problems of the great majority of Negroes. Police brutality is not a problem for the middle class Negro nor is it exclusively a problem of Negroes. In the more traditional view it is therefore not a civil rights problem. But the evidence is clear that Negroes, whatever the reasons, face far more brutality by the law than do whites. And so the civil rights groups are working to establish citizen review boards and other techniques to alleviate a shocking condition. There have already been two sit-ins at police stations in New Orleans and Rochester to protest police action.

These last few paragraphs are not to suggest that the old concerns are wrong in themselves. After all, America is a middle class country and if we succeed at all more Negroes will become middle class. It is important that some Negroes move into the suburbs which are now a white noose around increasingly black cities. It is important that Negroes get jobs as engineers and as stock salesmen. However, the new direction will be in terms of increasing the level of aspirations and particularly by Negroes in all aspects of American life.

In the South, greater emphasis will be on basic literacy and training programs, use of the ARA (Area Redevelopment Administration) and the manpower training, but on a truly non-discriminatory basis. The Voter Education Project will increase in scope and effectiveness as well as demonstrations for equal access to places of public accommodations. In the North, there will be greater concern with the reality behind the pledges of "equal opportunity in jobs and housing." The pace of demonstrations will accelerate and the demonstrations will take new forms as the civil rights movement uses the energies of working class Negroes and whites.

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Hannah Arendt Against the Facts



HANNAH ARENDT'S CONCEPTION of Adolf Eichmann¹ is presented as a paradox: the triviality of the man is set against the enormity of his deeds. In Miss Arendt's view, the man in charge of transporting Jews to death camps was "neither perverted nor sadistic" but an "average" man "terribly and terrifyingly normal." Eichmann "was not a 'monster', but it was difficult indeed not to suspect that he was a clown." His empty, irrelevant and "self-elating" clichés, displayed "the

undeniable ludicrousness of the man." Eichmann's vices of the everyday variety—bragging, careerism and social climbing, pose Miss Arendt's paradox most sharply.

This paradox is, of course, a challenge to common sense. One does not usually judge a man apart from his deeds. But as Miss Arendt has it, in this case, customary ways of thinking are inadequate. The Jerusalem Court, following ordinary standards, could not see what was displayed in the person of the accused: the banality of evil. To her Eichmann paradox Miss Arendt adds another, also ignored by the court: the readiness of Jewish leaders to co-operate with Eichmann, to assist in the murder of their own people.

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THOSE WHO ARE FAMILIAR with Miss Arendt's earlier work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* will recognize the outlines of her Eichmann portrait. In that book she argued that at a later stage of the totalitarian movement, normal men replaced the "armed bohemians" of the early period. The normal philistines were capable of even greater crimes than the so-called criminals. While Miss Arendt's theory of the totalitarian mentality presumably inspired her portrait of Eichmann, this of course does not prove that her image of Eichmann is a true one. Quite the contrary, if Miss Arendt's theory is contradicted by the facts about Eichmann, one may suspect that it will not hold up in other instances either.

1. *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Hannah Arendt, The Viking Press, N.Y. 1963.