Recommendations to the SCLC Executive Committee

[30 September 1959]
[Columbia, S.C.]

Postponed one day by Hurricane Gracie, SCLC convened its fall meeting on 30 September at First Calvary Baptist Church in Columbia. The executive committee approved each of these eight recommendations from King but referred the proposal to hire a new executive director to the administrative committee. The following day, the SCLC delegates accepted the executive committee's recommendations and adopted ten resolutions, one of which called on King to "seriously consider giving the maximum of his time and energies to the work" of SCLC.

Recommendations

1. I recommend that the conference will hold one annual meeting instead of two meetings annually. This will provide the opportunity for more effective response on the part of potential delegates and more long range, detailed planning on the part of the staff. This will mean revising Article II, section 4 of the Constitution dealing with the annual meeting, Article IV, section 3 concerning meetings of executive board, and Article IV, section 9 concerning the Nominating Committee. There will be only two meetings of the executive board annually instead of three, one in conjunction with the annual meeting of the conference and one in Atlanta during another period of the year. If it is the consensus that the annual meeting be held in May, then the Atlanta board meeting will continue to meet after the first Sunday in December. If it is the consensus that the conference should be held in October, the Atlanta board meeting shall be held in May.

2. Since one of the basic concerns of SCLC at the present time is that of increasing the number of Negro registered voters, we must seek to use every resource at our disposal to make this possible. Honesty impels us to admit that we have not really scratched the surface in this area. One of the reasons for this lack of success is that there has never been any genuine cooperation and coordination between national and local organizations working to increase the vote. I, therefore, recommend that the

1. The executive committee also recommended that the next annual meeting be held in Shreveport, Louisiana (SCLC, Recommendations adopted by the executive committee and delegates at Fall Session, 1 October 1959). An additional resolution urged King to join other national efforts to develop "an appropriate mass action program" aimed at affecting the 1960 political conventions (Wyatt Tee Walker and Fred L. Shuttlesworth, “Resolutions adopted at Fall Session,” 1 October 1959; see also SCLC, Program, “Fall Session,” 29 September–1 October 1959). For more details on King’s move to Atlanta, see King, Draft, Resignation from Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, 29 November 1959, pp. 328–329 in this volume.

2. The committee’s decisions on these recommendations were written by an unknown person. Next to this recommendation was written: “1—accepted—time left to administrative committee.”

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SCLC call a meeting of persons directing voting campaigns in southern communities and seek to work out some clearly defined areas of work. As we all know, the job is too big to be carried out by any one organization. Every All organizations must work creatively together to prevent needless overlapping.  

3. There can be no gainsaying of the fact that the SCLC has not been publicized through the press or otherwise. The aims and purposes of the Conference have not been gotten over to a large number of people, north and south. I therefore recommend that a person be employed on a part time basis (possibly six months) to carry out the all important task of placing the organization before the public through intelligent publicity. We should seek to secure for this job a person who already has good contact with the press and who has real ability as a writer. This person would work under the supervision of the president and the executive secretary. No writings would be released without their approval. One of the obvious gains that would come to the organization as a result of hiring such a part time worker is that of leaving the executives free to give full time to the larger job of implementing the total program of the organization. We must not overlook the fact that, in the final analysis, the greatest channel of publicity for the organization is the existence of a positive, dynamic, and dramatic program.  

4. In order to keep a sense of direction and meet the many challenges ahead, a committee shall be appointed to sit down with the executive secretary in the next three weeks and work out the program for the next year. This committee shall consist of: Samuel W. Williams, L. D. Reddick, Ralph Abernathy, Fred Shuttlesworth, J. E. Lowery.  

5. In order to meet the demands and needs for a dynamic program, the personal committee shall immediately seek to employ a second executive to replace Rev. Tilley.  

6. One of the shameful tragedies of the south is the continued existence of segregated waiting rooms, restaurants, and rest rooms in airport terminals. This, as we know, is far behind the railroads, for at least in interstate travel segregation has the once existent signs have been removed. I feel certain that segregation can be removed from our Airport terminal without any great emotional reaction from the white community. Therefore, I recommend that a committee from the SCLC go to Washington and lay this issue squarely before the civil Aearonautics Board. This board has the  

3. This recommendation was "approved."  
4. This recommendation was "approved."  
5. Williams was King's philosophy teacher at Morehouse College and pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta. Lowery was the pastor of Mobile's Warren Street Methodist Church. This recommendation was "approved."  
6. For an account of the deliberations of the personnel committee, see note 5 to Recommendations to SCLC Committee on Future Program, 27 October 1959, p. 318 in this volume. For more on John Tilley's resignation, see Tilley to King, 13 April 1959, pp. 182-184 in this volume. This recommendation was referred to the administrative committee.
power to hand down a ruling, similar to that of the interstate commerce commission, and thereby bring an end to segregation in airport terminals. While the legal [phase?] of this problem must be left to the NAACP, this is one of those extra-legal things that we can do. Maybe through the power of moral persuasion, we will be able to save many dollars which would be necessary to fight this battle out in the courts.7

7. In order to express our deep sympathy for our African brothers in the struggle for freedom and human dignity, and in order to reveal the awareness of the oneness of our struggle, I recommend that we give a scholarship of at least 500.00 per year to assist in the education of some African student. This will do a great deal to develop a sense self respect within African students, and contribute in some little way toward the developing of persons to take over leadership responsibilities in that great continent.8

8. A few months ago several organizations joined in the sponsoring of the youth march for integrated schools in Washington D.C. This event was a great success, and I am sure it did a great deal to arouse the conscience of the nation on this important issue. Like all undertakings of this kind, there was need for real financial resources. After checking up on the expense involved, it was revealed that there was a deficit of some $2000.00. Since the SCLC had some part in the sponsorship of the March and since we have not made any financial contribution to it, I recommend that we give 200.00 in order to assist the committee in meeting its obligations.9

AHD. MLKP-MBU: Box 48.

7. The executive board modified this proposal to include a similar approach to the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC). Shortly after the Columbia conference, King requested the meeting with the Civil Aeronautics Board but was informed that the agency lacked jurisdiction over airports (James R. Durfee to King, 29 October 1959; for King’s letter to the ICC, see King to Kenneth H. Tuggle, 19 October 1959, pp. 309–310 in this volume). Next to this recommendation was written: “Amended to include approach ICC as well as CAB—for all [word illegible].”

8. SCLC made its first contribution to Kenyan student Nicholas Rahalla, who also received a contribution from Dexter Church. For more on Rahalla, see King to Tom Mboya, 8 July 1959, pp. 242–243 in this volume; see also S. F. Yette, “M. L. King Supports African Student,” News of Tuskegee Institute, December 1959. This recommendation was “approved.”

9. A request for funds from A. Philip Randolph prompted this recommendation (Randolph et al. to All Youth March supporters, April 1959). This recommendation was “approved.”