[MS-0087.005.004.031]

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COMMITTEE FOR ONE SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

The United States is a racist country. Many whites feel it is better to be white than to be black. Whites are hostile and antagonistic toward black people; by words, facial expressions, and deeds they convey the message of rejection of black people. This is what we call attitudinal racism.

Everyone, some of the time, and many, a good deal of the time, initiate or participate in actions that disadvantage black people, because they are black. Whites refuse to show, rent and sell housing, they discriminate against black people in hiring and promotion, in admission into membership in churches and clubs, in loaning money and insuring property, in granting credit, and in the quality of service provided. This is conscious behavioral racism. It could be an individual or it may be an institutional policy that is involved.

Many times, black people are disadvantaged without intent, simply by the operation of the institutions of our society. For example, a black person can expect to die at a younger age than a white person; black children are more likely to die of serious diseases; automobile insurance automatically discriminates against black people; black people are forced by real estate policies to live in crowded ghettos. Such racism is sometimes labeled unconscious institutional racism. But whether it is conscious, or unconscious, is not the issue. Both types work to the advantage of whites.

Blacks are disadvantaged when there is either inequality of opportunity or inequality of results. Inequality of opportunity is said to be an adequate

standard. But when are opportunities equal? Does it not require special recruitment in firms with largely white employees in order to equalize opportunity, especially since recruitment is chiefly by employees? In order to have an equitable standard for human justice in view of the results of hundreds of years of injustice, we use equality of results as the standard. By itself however, this doesn't provide a neat formula. From one point of view equality of opportunity and equality of results requires more than participation in the present white owned and controlled institutions, it requires the development of black owned and black controlled interprise - economic, educational and political institutions. The economic enterprise may be conceived of either as a serious effort to provide economic opportunity or as a basis for independence, a base for economic independence and ultimately for political independence.

CLOSING REMARK

My conception of the Committee for One Society is whites and blacks have different insights and different directions. Black communities having been in the movement for the past ten years have different needs and are far clearer in their self-definition than the white group.

I look at the Committee for One Society as being constructive and understanding, that we deal no longer on attitudinal changes, but are concerned with institutional racism.

In the past two years working as Community Organization Specialist, I have seen a great need for the Committee for One Society, but I feel first that whites must find their own identity in order to be able to identify and work with the problems facing blacks, their needs and desires in this society.

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Committee for One Society would primarily be a white organization working to overcome the racism in the white controlled institutions. The primary focus of COS is to organize white people to change the white dominated institutions. In line with that purpose, COS is working to support black organizations in the achievement of similar goals and to program white people in assisting in the development of black owned and controlled institutions.

This purpose assumes that the existing institutions can be changed. It would also assume that it is worthwhile to support and develop the participation of black people in American society. Another understanding of the American situation which calls for a fundamental change in the substance of American life points toward revolution rather than reform, and consequently an undermining of the present institutions. The first stage in that revolution is the exposure of the hollowness, emptiness, and repressive nature of existing institutions. For the present the sole purpose is to expose the cancer, through confrontation and education, groups of disenchanted persons are developed. No program to take over, to reorganize, or to change the purposes and goals of the institutions has been espoused. Except for a few blacks who view the revolution as a change from white control to black control, neither blacks nor whites have a substitute program. One can hear a great big NO being said to what is and almost no yeas to something that ought to be.

The Committee for One Society would work to change the fundamentals, and the substance and quality of our present society, but postulates that for the present such changes are as likely to occur through an organized effort to change institutions, as through organized efforts to destroy institutions which have no clear organized program with which to replace them. Moreover,

in the process of seeking to bring about institutional change, the question of content for both individual and corporate life is necessarily raised. The opportunity for dealing with the nature of society is intimately interviewed with the process of reform as well as revolution.

It is difficult for many white liberals who have been fighting the battle for civil rights for years to believe that it is possible to change institutions to any meaningful extent. Black people may achieve a little power but many are even skeptical about that. Let's take an example - In Chicago, Operation Breadbasket has been able to organize the consumer power for black people to change the policies of food stores that sell in the ghetto. The power of black consumer dollars could also be used to change a number of other merchandising institutions. The organization of blacks who constitute a good portion of the labor force in any institution, might be organized to change the policies of that institution.

The Committee for One Society would take as its first responsibility to prepare a program for institutional change based on a thorough understanding of how racism expresses itself, not in general but in specific institutions. An inventory of institutional racism, therefore, includes an examination of employment policies, use of black suppliers and services, investment policies, policies of white suppliers, advertising, constitution of boards of directors and offices, credit policies, policies of unions, contribution to community life, supervision for the implementation of non-racist policies, and the image created by the company throughout its whole operation.

When all data is gathered and analyzed and a program is drawn up for change, then the next step would be to present the program to the institution, with or without the collaboration of black organizations. The role of COS would be to provide the research on the basis that we can cooperate with some black

organization to negotiate for change. Exposure of the situation may be sufficient to bring about change, especially when the image the organization wishes to or must sustain in the community is of paramount importance institutional leadership may change itself. In many cases the power to force change will depend upon cooperation with black organizations.

The Committee for One Society is aware that its actions may take away from the black community its opportunity to achieve change and to develop its image of a successful operation. COS will proceed with careful consideration of targets and in consultation with black organizations. Out of this will rise all the old and new problems in black-white relations. COS proceeds on the assumption it will be an ideal partner, no more no less. Blacks and whites have a great stake in bringing about justice rapidly.

The Committee for One Society will probe in a number of directions with a number of people seeking to discover the institutions that might be targets and the individuals who might help to bring about change. The COS will relate with the transit workers and to the movement of black high school students. In each case they will see how white persons might be of service, or organize and coordinate actions. The COS should explore agencies, hospitals, merchandising firms, schools, universities, professional schools, public utility, social welfare institutions. This wide range of involvement will prove to be educational and will analyze what immediate direction may be most fruitful.

The resources and time available seem minute compared to the crisis confronting the nation. Somehow a way must be found to develop a community of predominately white people who can share in the task and gather strength and purpose from each other and from coalitions with whites and blacks joining in a common enterprise.