

National Coalition for Social Change

NCSC : AN INTRODUCTION

The National Coalition for Social Change (NCSC) is an outgrowth of Young World Development (YWD), which was closed down in June, 1973. People involved in the northeastern region (of the U.S.) considered the work they were doing to be sufficiently important, and unique, that they decided to form an organization which would continue the work already begun. In spite of serious financial obstacles (we have had no regular income ^{since} our inception), we have maintained an office and small full-time staff.

Starting with a strong base of active and committed groups in the northeast, we are beginning to develop a national network of individuals and local groups who are dedicated to developing and using their resources to further the struggle for social justice and equality.

NCSC focuses on both domestic and international problems, because the root causes of poverty, powerlessness and inequality - no matter where these are found - can be traced to the same sources; and it is finally those sources, not the symptoms, that we are trying to attack.

We know that most people, especially the comfortable, have only scant knowledge of such things; which means there is alot of "educating" to do. However, our real effort is to help people develop consciousness through a process of which they themselves are an integral part, so that the result is also an awareness of their own involvement in the problems they are beginning to learn about, as well as an understanding of how they can become involved in solutions.

Our true goal is to move people who are becoming aware, into action. Thus, we read our effectiveness not in how many people intellectually "agree" that the world needs changing, but in how much active support we give those grass-roots struggles, generally led by Third World people themselves, which appear to be effective, humanistic, and truly developing alternatives to the systems and institutions which lie at the heart of social injustice.

One of our earliest thrusts was to inform people about the famine in West Africa, and to encourage them to do something significant to help alleviate some of the suffering. Fundraising was not enough, since the famine is not simply the result of a natural disaster, but the result of generations of deliberate neglect, a long colonial history of exploitation, and a cynical political approach by which we "help" only those who will give us the most in return.

Threrefore, we organized a campaign to change our government's policy, and to request greater financial response to the tragedy than the blatantly tokenistic response which Nixon and Kissinger professed to be sufficient.

We are also trying to assist the people of Southern Africa who are struggling against Portuguese colonialism, white minority rule (apartheid), and foreign exploitation. We have held educational seminars, and are helping groups around the country begin support activities, such as participation in a boycott of Gulf products (Gulf being the largest source of revenue for Portugal's continued military control of Angola), organizing against the illegal importation of chrome and asbestos from Rhodesia, and so on.

Domestically, we are helping the United Farmworkers to inform Americans about their attempts to represent West Coast migrants in the fields, and helping supply volunteers for boycott activities, educating people to the conditions of field workers, the brutal activities of the Teamsters Union (with government support), and spreading the word about products being boycotted.

We are working directly with Puerto Rican and Chicano groups who are engaged in a prolonged process of mobilizing their communities - migrant workers, factory workers, unemployed, women, students, drop-outs, etc. - to analyze the sources of their problems; and to work collectively to change hopelessness into community movement through a wide variety of indigenously created efforts that we support, but do not direct.

We are launching another major effort, as we did with the West African famine, to generate support for what is known as "prison reform". Just as starvation was the focal point, but only the "tip of the iceberg" in the famine issue, reform of an immoral and illegal prison system is only part of the struggle to challenge a whole judicial system. It is an institution which is being used systematically to stifle dissent, imprison effective organizers who challenge the status-quo, and maintain poor people and minorities in second-class, inferior, dependent, helpless status.

Finally, we have developed a project to question, and change, the U.S.'s role in Latin America. Using Puerto Rico as a case in point, we hope to demonstrate that the traditional colonial relationship (outlawed by international law) which our government and corporations maintain with that nation is symbolic of our manipulation and exploitation of the rest of the hemisphere. We have begun by informing people about the real effects of "Operation Bootstrap", of the proposed "Superport" of the oil industry, the Puerto Rican (colonial) government's contracts with American farm owners to supply them with cheap migrant labor during harvest on the east coast, and finally, the moves for independence from U.S. control.

We have developed various training programs (on poverty, migrant workers, organizing skills, community evaluation, and more) to help increase people's effectiveness as they begin to grasp the issues. Now, we are organizing seminars to pinpoint problems people face as they start to organize - especially to help people confront their own tendencies toward racism, paternalism, cultural insensitivity, and so forth.

Once these educational processes have begun, we try to involve people in meaningful activity (meaningful to Third World people, not just to middle-class supporters) which will lead to making indigenous efforts more effective. We believe that only broad, deep changes in society - in institutions, relationships, and structures - can be sufficient to lead to the kind of new, humane society we seek.

In actuality, our programs are as diverse as the people and groups involved with us. We sincerely try to support all people who share our goals and who are capable of sensitive, effective action. Our effort is not to convince people to "our" line of thought, not to persuade them to "join" a structure. Rather, we exist to help increase the critical analysis and knowledge of people, increase their activism, and improve their effectiveness - supporting you in what you want to do, and strengthening your ability to do it. Viva la Lucha!