

SRC-24

Jean Chalmers

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Pages 1-6: Jean Chalmers served one term as president of the Southern Regional Council (SRC). Chalmers discusses the most pressing issues the Council faced as she assumed the presidency. During Chalmers's term, the SRC began to accept government grants for research and require program directors to raise their own funds, both significant departures from the Council's previous operations. Chalmers describes the transition from board members in the 1980s who were all active in the civil rights movement to the younger, more professional people who replaced them. Chalmers discusses the contrasting expertise and management-styles of the board members with whom she interacted. Chalmers says that by the 1990s the SRC was no longer the prominent spokes-organization for the civil rights movement. Chalmers sees the loss of visibility and prominence as a result of image over substance, and describes why the SRC was not able to successfully transition into a lasting organization.

Pages 7-12: Chalmers compares the perception of the SRC as being overwhelmingly composed of white males to the Council's actual composition of poor members and a real effort to not have income determine one's involvement in the SRC. Chalmers analyzes how the composition of the Council has changed over the years and the reasons behind those changes. Chalmers gives an account of her personal transition from a multi-cultural life in New York City to a racist society in Gainesville, FL. Chalmers describes how this obvious and stark contrast prompted her to become involved with the Council on Human Relations and then the SRC. Chalmers discusses how the male domination of the SRC led women in Gainesville to form the Gainesville Women for Equal Rights (GWER). Chalmers describes the level of student interest and student involvement in Gainesville civil rights. Chalmers details her transition from a local civil rights leader to a member and then president of the SRC.

Pages 13-18: Chalmers describes the types of projects in which the local Gainesville affiliate relied on the SRC for research and reports. Chalmers goes on to discuss the levels of tension and points of friction that arose in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the rise of the Black Power movement. Chalmers remembers the state government as being fairly receptive and progressive regarding issues such as voting and public-health. Chalmers recounts how the passion among African-Americans for expressing pride in their culture sparked in liberal whites the realization that there was a real black culture and black institutions worth fighting for. Chalmers analyzes the "Southernness" of the SRC and the role that played in the organization's operations and management.

Pages 19-24: Chalmers discusses the Southern tendency towards a slow, methodical thought process and incremental change, and the influence that had on the SRC. Chalmers points to the ways in which this process both helped and hurt the SRC. Chalmers describes the role religion played in the SRC and the civil rights movement as a whole. Chalmers talks about the level of success the SRC had in developing ties to the people in power in the South. She points to the SRC's success in getting black people, as well as the SRC's failure to maintain good

relationships with the white elected community. Chalmers discusses the SRC's publications and the role those documents will play in furthering the SRC's cause in the future. Chalmers explains that the SRC today is focused on multi-culturalism and youth, so the publications and communication methods will have to evolve to meet the demands of those new constituencies. Chalmers points to the Voter Education Project and related efforts as the high point of the SRC's contribution. Chalmers concludes that the SRC was the moderating force of the civil rights movement in the South.