

WHY WE PROTEST

On January 21, 1964 the Atlanta Constitution made a historic turnabout and urged quick passage of a federal public accommodations law. We insist that this move was the result of the courageous actions of those students that have dramatized the present situation with militant nonviolent direct action. Attempts at voluntary integration or voluntary compliance with the law have failed. We are convinced that this change in attitude was due entirely to continued pressure by demonstrations which have shown Atlanta and this nation that this city has failed to live up to its image as a progressive city "too busy to hate."

We welcome the United Nations Subcommittee on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to Atlanta, although a visit to southwest Georgia might have proved more revealing. Nevertheless, there is much to be seen in Atlanta. In the downtown area the Little Italy Restaurant has a side window advertising: "Colored Served Here." The Heart of Atlanta Motel will lock its gates at so much as the approach of a Negro customer. If the Rev. Martin Luther King, Senator Leroy Johnson, or John Lewis wanted a driver's license, they would first pass through a door marked "Colored Driving Tests." More harmful than public signs are the semi-segregated schools and the impressions scarred deep in children's minds by inadequate and restricted education. It is no wonder that in a city where public schools do not celebrate the birthday of the Great Emancipator, there are those who would beat demonstrators or don the archaic cloth of the Ku Klux Klan. Atlanta has now assigned Negro policemen to supervise demonstrations and arrest demonstrators -- but why is it only to watch over and arrest his brother that a Negro officer of the law is assigned downtown.

We are committed to the ideal of an "open city," but to us it must be a city that is truly concerned with all its citizens, and not primarily with an image created by the business community. We have no shame in showing the world the truth, for we are acting out of the strongest belief in American Democracy and the knowledge that Justice and Freedom are real and can be for all people.