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530 South Union Street  
 M. L. King, Jr., President

March 8, 1957

Montgomery, Alabama  
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### RECENT HAPPENINGS

On Tuesday, November 13, 1956, the U. S. Supreme Court affirmed the ruling of a three-judge federal district court, which was made some time ago, that segregation on public transportation in Montgomery and Alabama was unconstitutional. When this affirmation was promulgated, Negroes who had boycotted city busses for eleven months, voted to ride public transportation carriers again, this time on a non-segregated basis. The thirteenth month of the boycott was well-underway before actual integration on busses took place, because the Court gave the contesting groups the city and state time to file petitions requesting "reconsideration of the ruling."

Such petitions were filed by both city and state officials, but the Court refused to act upon the petitions. When the mandate was received by the federal district court on Thursday, December 21, and filed, segregation laws affecting public transportation were officially dead and Negroes boarded city carriers on Friday, December 22, for the first time in thirteen months.

For a few days integration worked smoothly without incident. Both races appeared indifferent and seemingly accepted the inevitable. Bus drivers, who had been "furloughed without pay" for months, were noticeably happy.

### CITY AUTHORITIES SPEAK

Then the city officials spoke. They announced publicly that they had no alternative but to "bow to the court's decision," however, they pledged to continue their fight for segregation on busses. They warned Negroes that there would be bloodshed if they attempted to integrate and advised them to "conduct themselves in such a way that would not embarrass the race and lead to bloodshed."

Negroes requested the authorities to use precautionary measures for the first few days by putting a police escort on certain busses after dark, as had been done when the boycott started thirteen months earlier. To this request the city officials refused.

There was repeated prediction from officials that trouble would start. The prediction, along with public announcement that "busses were not protected," seemed to invite violence, for after a few days of operation, December 26, two busses were fired upon. Two days later a bus was fired upon twice in the same evening. By December 29, five city busses had been hit by gun pellets, coming either from passing motorists, or from a deserted park, or some obscure place.

As a result of the shootings, the City Commission imposed a 5:00 o'clock bus curfew, ordering city busses to halt their service after five o'clock, in order "to curb violence stemming from racial integration." However, numerous requests from both races were acknowledged by city officials asking that "busses be put back into operation during the rush hours until down-town stores closed."

Service was restored, but two days later another shooting occurred, this time striking one person—a Negro expectant mother—in both legs. City officials imposed the five o'clock curfew again and extended it from eight to eleven days. When the curfew was lifted the city officials made a public announcement, (Advertiser, January 9, 1957) that "no extra ordinary measures were being taken to prevent a repetition of violence." People complained that the announcement was an invitation to more violence. That same night another bus was shot into. The Commission promptly halted all bus service for the night.

### HOMES AND CHURCHES BOMBED

On early Thursday morning, January 10, "bombs fell on Alabama" when four Negro churches and the homes of two ministers of Negro congregations were bombed, almost within minutes of each other. One of the churches—Mount Clive Baptist, a

newly-built, brick structure, was totally without insurance and was completely demolished. Only parts of the walls still stand. A new building must replace the bombed one. Another church badly damaged and condemned as being "unsafe for use," is the Bell Street Baptist Church. It had only a small amount of insurance, insufficient to rebuild.

The services for the Mount Olive Church are being held out-of-doors by the pastor, Reverend E. D. Bell. The Bell Street Baptist, of which Reverend Uriah J. Fields is pastor, holds its services in the basement of another church.

Reverend Fields accused the City of being responsible for the bombings, because it "failed to provide proper police protection to prevent the attacks." He requested the city to "pay for the damage to his church." He also accused "some of those in responsible positions of contributing to violence by advocating opposition to integration." The city refused to assume financial responsibility for the bombed property. The other churches bombed were covered by insurance and are being repaired.

The homes of Reverend Robert Graetz and Reverend Ralph D. Abernathy were also badly damaged. Repairs and rebuilding of the bombed property will extend into the thousands of dollars. Solicitations are being made for funds to rebuild that property that was uninsured.

#### SECOND BOMBING ATTACKS

In addition to the bombings of the churches and ministers' homes, a Negro cab company and an adjoining filling station and home of a Negro laborer were bombed the following Saturday night, causing considerable damage. On this same night twelve sticks of smouldering dynamite were found on the porch of Reverend M. L. King, Jr.'s home in time to prevent the second bombing on the MIA president.

On this same night highway patrol men guarded the homes and churches of boycott leaders all over the city to prevent repetition of the numerous attacks.

#### TWO MEN ARRESTED

Two Negro men were arrested at the scene of the filling-station-bombing for "freely expressing open opinion" that the police force was not making earnest effort to apprehend the guilty. When they were warned by the investigating police to cease their loud accusations, to which the men failed to comply, they were arrested and fined. One, a soldier, was fined fifty dollars and costs; the other was fined \$100 and costs and given sixty days at hard labor.

#### BUS SERVICE HALTED

The bombings influenced the city authorities to halt all bus service in Montgomery and both whites and Negroes suffered the consequences. They walked, rode taxis, or "thumbed" rides.

#### CITY REFUSES OUTSIDE HELP

Following the first bombings of the homes and churches, the city authorities refused outside help in apprehending the guilty persons. They felt that they could handle the situation.

But when the second on-slaught of bombs started, the Department of Public Safety and the highway patrol joined forces with city police to investigate. Governor Folsom, who deplored the violence, labeled the acts "anarchical" and told citizens of Montgomery that "no one was safe as long as men who would stoop low enough to bomb churches were around." He offered a \$2,000 reward for "information leading to the arrest and convictions of the hoodlums." After the second bombing attack, the city also posted a \$2,000 reward.

#### SEVEN WHITE MEN ARRESTED

Following the second series of bombing attacks, seven white men were arrested in the case. Three of them were charged with misdemeanors for having thrown the bombs that failed to ignite. Four were charged with felonies for having bombed occupied homes and churches, and one for shooting into the busses.

These men were turned over to the County Grand Jury for investigation. That body, lashing out at "the cowardly stealth and violence under cover of darkness," but at the same time reaffirming the "determination of the people of Montgomery to preserve their segregated institutions openly and honestly," indicted the four men charged with felonies, and their cases have been set for a May hearing. The three charged with misdemeanors have been set free.

Since the arrests there has been no further violence. Four hundred whites, alleged members of WCC and KKK organizations, have been conducting a "water-bucket, street campaign" to solicit \$60,000 for the men's legal defense.

#### BUS SERVICE RESTORED

The City of Montgomery of approximately 130,000 people went without bus service for a solid week before city officials consented to re-instate partial daylight service, this time with police escort on the last twilight run. On Tuesday, February nineteenth, the curfew was lifted completely and city busses now run their regular schedules. Police escort was also removed. The busses have since been operating normally on an integrated bases and both Negro and white passengers are riding now without trouble.

#### FEW INCIDENTS RECORDED

There were a few incidents at first on the busses when integration first began. A Negro woman was slapped by a white man as she alighted from the bus. A Negro man was "roughed-up" by two white men as he descended from the carrier. A white woman, evidently a plant, slapped a Negro man as he sat down behind her, accusing him of "winking at her." When she discovered the man's wife was behind him, she got off the bus and got into one of the parked cars that were waiting at the bus-stop.

In each of the flare-ups the Negroes refused to fight back. The doctrine of non-violence and passive resistance was religiously adhered to. Negroes just refused to strike back.

#### "ALL-WHITE" BUS SERVICE PLANNED

In the meantime two city attorneys and a third lawyer conferred with U.S. District Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr. on the possibility of operating a new all-white bus system. According to published reports the system would be operated by a club plan and only "white members" would be permitted to ride.

The City Commission petitioned Federal District Court to learn if a "club" bus-line could operate legally here. The officials asked for "an advisory opinion" on three legal points: 1. Can the city hold a hearing on an application of the Rebel Club for a franchise? 2. Can the city legally issue a franchise? 3. Will the city have to enforce racial integration on this new line? The Federal Court requested written arguments on the proposed system. Negro attorneys and bus company attorneys have filed briefs protesting the move.

It will be remembered that during the peak of the boycott Negroes asked the City for a franchise to operate a similar service for Negroes and were refused the franchise on the grounds that "sufficient and adequate bus service was already provided." What the whites' chances are for securing such a franchise and operating on a segregated "club" plan, the people can only speculate.

#### OFF TO AFRICA

Upon receipt of an invitation to Dr. King from government officials of Ghana, Gold Coast, in Africa, he and Mrs. M. L. King, Jr. were sent by the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church which he pastors, as special representatives from "Montgomery to witness the independence celebration of that nation from Great Britain. They left the country by plane on Saturday, March 2. The coronation is March 6. They, along with other American representatives, will visit Nigeria, Switzerland, France, Italy, England, and other countries before returning to this country a month hence.

#### THE TIME MAGAZINE TRIBUTE

Did you read the very fine tribute paid to Dr. M. L. King, Jr. and to Montgomery, Alabama in the February 18, 1957 issue of Time Magazine? Dr. King's picture decorated the front page and was a tribute to the race. Don't miss reading it.