

MIA

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THE CIVIL RIGHTS HEARING

During the Civil Rights Hearing, the nation got a clear look at one among the many injustices experienced by Negro citizens. It was good for the people of this nation to know the kind of people that must be encountered by Negroes in their strides toward freedom. Once the commission succeeds in getting behind the curtain of fear that limits its finding, the truth will be more astounding. The individuals who had the courage to testify must be commended. But they left behind them many others whose testimonies would have been as strong if not stronger than those heard.

A hard core of resistance has been confronting Negroes in the area of registering and voting for a long time. The Montgomery Improvement Association, the Women's Political Council and the Labor Organizations have spent many thousands of dollars as well as many man-hours of labor in an effort to break through this resistance. Such persons as Mrs. Jo Ann Robinson and Mr. Rufus Lewis have led this fight. The county board of Registrars of Montgomery remains determined and elusive in their restrictive tactics. The Civil Rights investigation offers some hope.

THE INSTITUTE

The Montgomery Improvement Association conducted the Third Institute on Non-Violence. The program was opened with a musical recital by Mrs. Coretta Scott King, the wife of Dr. Martin Luther King. This was a benefit recital. The entire proceeds went to the Montgomery Improvement Association. Mrs. King has given a number of recitals in Montgomery, nevertheless, the Holt Street Baptist Church was packed. The people of Montgomery will always remember Mrs. King for her devotion to the cause of freedom, to her family and the ministerial profession.

The educational features of the Institute dealt with the following aspects of the struggle for freedom: (1) Freedom Through Economic Security, (2) Freedom Through Political Action and (3) The Responsibility of the Rural Church in the Struggle For Freedom. Some of the leaders were: Reverend Glenn Smiley, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Dr. Frederick Routh, Executive Director of the Southern Regional Council of Human Relations, Mr. W. C. Patton, President of the Alabama Coordinating Committee, Mr. Theodore Brown, Representative of the AFL-CIO, Washington, D. C., Mr. A. G. Gaston, President of the Saving and Loan Association, Birmingham, Alabama, Reverend V. A. Edwards, Extension Service, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, and Reverend J. E. Lowery, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Mobile, Alabama. Dr. Arthur D. Gray, President of Talladega College, was guest speaker at the Executive Board Luncheon.

PARKS CLOSED

On August 25, 1958, forty-eight Negro citizens petitioned the city Park and Recreation Board to open all city parks to their group. The City Commission issued a statement that it has "no intention of opening these parks to Negroes." On August 30, "KKK" signs were stenciled at the entrances of Oak Park during the night. On September 16, 1958, a petition was filed by one hundred twenty (120) Negroes with the City Commissioners, requesting a hearing on the subject of desegregating parks. The request was denied and the commissioners vowed again to "close all parks if necessary in order to prevent race mixing." On December 22, 1958, eight Negroes filed complaint in the U. S. District Court asking an order ending segregation in city parks. The plaintiffs are represented by Attorney Solomon S. Seay, Jr. On December 30, 1958, the city commission ordered all parks closed.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CONCERN

The Fellowship of the Concern was an organization of White and Negro women here in Montgomery, Alabama. It held its regular meetings in a semi-private manner. It had functioned for some time unmolested. One of its meetings held at the St. Jude's Hospital was exposed to the newspapers. The white women were criticized and ostracized by their neighbors. Some of them were intimidated and threatened with reprisals. They were forced to disband the organization. One of the Negro women in the organization was Mrs. Jo Ann Robinson, an instructor at the Alabama State College. In the newspaper report carried in the Montgomery Home News, Mrs. Robinson's name received special emphasis. Her name and the position which she holds were set out in a single paragraph with black embossed lettering. Mrs. Robinson is a highly respected citizen of Montgomery. She not only teaches the prescribed courses given her at the college, but she leads young people in a life of education to social responsibilities as citizens of the community and nation. Thus far, she has not experienced any reprisals.

THE CHURCH - A COMMUNICATION CENTER

At the beginning of the bus protest, the people were reached through night-clubs, poolrooms, theatres, churches and street corners. The words were quietly passed around in the schools. This was an abnormal time and circumstance. Time is moving the heat of the battle away from the days of that protest. Many of these institutions have returned to their routines. But the Negro church is left to bear the responsibility for the guidance of thought patterns in a struggle for social control. This is a great opportunity for the preacher. As a shepherd, he can feed the sheep or shear them. As a hireling overcome with fear, he can leave them to the howling wolves. Or as a good shepherd, he can lead them over the way to still waters of freedom.

Friends of the cause of freedom the nation over can be assured that the churches in Montgomery still stand as effective media of communication. Most of the ministers are battle-scarred, but they are steadied by courage rarely equaled during recent times. With the power of the church thrown against it the walls of segregation can not stand. Here is the mass power that is essential in this struggle.

The power of the church as a factor of social control cannot be properly evaluated without the recognition of dedicated laymen. Any local church that participates in the current struggle has outstanding laymen whose activities can be easily cited in the vanguard of the masses that have kept things in motion during the struggle.

DR. KING AND SEGREGATION

Among the advocates of desegregation is Martin Luther King, Jr. The segregationists consider him one of their most formidable foes. Here in the heart of Dixie they measure every move he makes. They interpret to their liking every word he says. It is as safe to predict that if and when integration really takes roots in the South it will be brought about by the leadership of men like Martin L. King. It will not be done by remote control. The battle must be joined where the transition is to take place. He has some followers who will not turn back. It is the prayer of many that nothing will happen to break his spirit or cause him to move out of the South.

REVERENDS HUBBARD, SEAY AND WILSON ARRESTED

Reverend Shuttlesworth was in jail. Reverends A. W. Wilson, pastor of the Holt Street Baptist Church, H. H. Hubbard, Pastor of the Bethel Baptist Church and S. S. Seay, Executive Secretary of the Montgomery Improvement Association went to visit Reverend Shuttlesworth's family. While sitting in Reverend Shuttlesworth's home in Birmingham, Alabama an officer of the law came up and entered, uninvited. After ascertaining the whereabouts of every one, the three of us were declared under arrest. We were charged with vagrancy, and placed in jail with the same procedures used in managing common criminals. We were finally released without charges.

REVEREND RALPH D. ABERNATHY AND FAMILY

This couple was born and reared in joining counties - Marongo and Hale. These are black-belt counties of Alabama. By personal experience, they understand the real meaning of discrimination and the devastating effects of segregation. The courage they have shown in the struggle for freedom in Montgomery and throughout the nation transcends the education acquired at Alabama State College and Atlanta University. The full story of their suffering in this present struggle may never be known. But no amount of suffering shakes Mrs. Abernathy. As one of the foremost leaders in the thick of the fight here in the deep South, nothing deters Ralph Abernathy. He enjoys the full confidence of the membership of his church. He is loved by the community and respected by those who oppose him among the other race.

TUSKEGEE'S BAND - NOT INVITED

One of the colorful features at the inauguration of each Governor of Alabama has been the participation of Tuskegee's band. Governor-elect John Patterson has publicly announced that Tuskegee's Band has no place in the parade during his inauguration. Governor Folsom, the out-going governor, in his comment on Patterson's action, said that if he were Governor-elect, he would invite Tuskegee as he has always done. He further stated that he expects the Klan to take over in Alabama and that blood will be shed.

PREDICTIONS CONCERNING SCHOOL INTEGRATION

It is ten o'clock p.m. here in Montgomery. A local news analyst is on. One of his high-lights is a public statement reported to have been made by a klansman, who said that any attempt at integrating the schools will be met with blood shed, and that the klan will take any steps necessary to prevent integration. The statement ended with the following sentence: "we mean business." The time element in the move to integrate the schools has not been fixed. But the prediction is: WHEN THE TIMES COMES THERE WILL BE NO TURNING BACK BY THOSE WHO SEEK HUMAN DECENCY IN ALL AREAS IN THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY.

WHITE COMMUNITY SHOCKED

A white youth was shot to death at one of the night clubs on the outskirts of the city of Montgomery. It was reported that two high school fraternities met at the club to test their prowess. One of their number was slain. This shocking incident set off an investigation. It was discovered that these young people were riding around town with sawed-off shotguns, dangerous switchblade knives, chains and clubs. The white community was shocked. How many of these young men are sons of klansmen may not be known. It is still true that the iniquities of the fathers will be visited upon their children.

THE KINGS PLAN TRIP ABROAD

Dr. and Mrs. King will be leaving on February 3 for a two months tour of India and Russia. The trip is being sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Montgomery Improvement Association and the American Baptist Convention. The Kings will be accompanied on this trip by Dr. L. D. Raddick, Chairman of the Department of History, Alabama State College, who will assist Dr. King in public relations and keeping an account of the entire trip.

The American Baptist are particular glad to have a Baptist leader, such as Dr. King, confer with the numerous religious leaders and congregations of that Faith in Russia. Dr. King is delighted to get a chance to visit the homeland of Mahatma Ghandi who has been the great inspiration of the philosophy of Non-Violence Social Change that Reverend King demonstrated so successful in the famous Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-56.