

AID THE ALBANY, GEORGIA MOVEMENT

THIS IS ONE of those classic moments in history when a movement for Freedom must save itself from its "friends in high places."

The indictment against the leaders of the Albany, Georgia Movement, which was originally announced by the office of Attorney General Robert Kennedy, is one of the crudest cases of injustice and sheer racism ever to be attempted by an agency of the Federal Government. The full particulars of this legal travesty was documented in an article in the "All Southern" issue of FREEDOMWAYS magazine, by Mr. Slater King, President of the Albany Movement, and one of the defendants. The "crime" with which these defendants are charged arises out of a selective buying campaign by the Negroes of Albany, Georgia, to secure an end to discrimination in employment. Many of our readers no doubt will remember that only a short time ago the Albany Movement was in the headlines of the world press, praised for the courage and nobility shown in nonviolent protest against segregation. Today evidence points to the fact that efforts by the Justice Department to send these heroic leaders to jail seems to be part of a political deal between the Administration and the powerful Russell-Talmadge machine in Georgia. Judging from the record, if these peaceful pickets had put on white sheets and hoods, undoubtedly they never would have been arrested by the Justice Department.

Indeed, this particular case, to be fully understood, must be viewed within the context of other current developments of real significance in the South. This includes the State military buildup in Mississippi, directed against the Freedom Movement there; the growth of the KKK activity in St. Augustine, Florida, and other parts of the South; the establishment of Alabama Governor Wallace's reported network of police information-gathering centers; as well as the general police surveillance of the Movement in Atlanta; the sprouting of the Birch Society in Savannah and the fact that the FBI hasn't solved any bombings in Birmingham.

Apparently the office of the Attorney General has become a sort of

clearinghouse through which a policy of accommodation between the Administration and the southern segregationists is being worked out. This is always considered "good politics." In a real sense, the policy of accommodation began during the Albany crisis, in the summer of 1962, during which the Federal Government consistently refused to give any real aid to the Negro citizens of Albany in their battle, not only against segregation, but to secure the First Amendment rights to freedom of assembly and to petition the local government for a redress of grievances. These rights were flagrantly violated by the police chief, Laurie Pritchett, in the arrest of hundreds of Negro and white citizens for simply attempting to assemble on the steps of the city hall. So this crime against the Constitution has now come full circle, with the indictment of the various leaders who led that heroic Movement, two years ago. The office of the Attorney General of the United States is *fully* responsible for this situation, and *indirectly* responsible for the context in which it takes place.

Fortunately two of the major civil rights organizations in the South have come to the defense of the Albany leadership. This unity increases the chances and opportunity for securing a reversal of this infamy. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee is petitioning Attorney General Robert Kennedy to drop the case and charges that "instead of guaranteeing equal administration of justice in the Federal courts, you have adopted the racist practices of the southern states." Dr. Martin Luther King, in a nationwide appeal to all Americans of good will, states, "I believe that we must stand with the leaders of the Albany Movement today in their hour of travail. If these indictments and convictions are permitted to stand it will be not only a gross miscarriage of justice but would also serve as a green light to the KKK and other violent elements to step up their terror against the entire Negro community in southwest Georgia."

FREEDOMWAYS urges all of our readers to send letters and telegrams to Attorney General Robert Kennedy asking that the convictions be set aside and the indictments dropped.

THE EDITORS