



AROUND THE U. S. A.

"We Will All Stand Together"

Montgomery, Alabama
AFTER they had been arraigned by the court in wholesale fashion, the eighty-nine indicted boycott leaders and their friends walked to the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church for a special prayer service. (And all over Montgomery other Negroes were shunning vehicles and walking in a pilgrimage of protest against the arrests.) With the spirit and ingenuity that has characterized the leadership of this historic movement, Reverend M. L. King offered a new hymn for the occasion, set to the tune of *Old-Time Religion*. The stanzas went like this:

We are moving on to victory
We are moving on to victory
We are moving on to victory
With hope and dignity.

We will all stand together . . .
Until we all are free.

Black and white both are brothers...
To live in harmony.

Indeed, the blending of "old-time religion" with a new determination to achieve racial equity is the essence of the boycott. The grand jury report accused the Negro Interdenominational Alliance of creating it; ministers became spokesmen for the avowed reason that it was harder to put "pressure" on them. But the role of the church has deeper roots than that. In the Deep South the church—the "colored" church, that is—is literally the Negro's only sanctuary. Only here can rare interracial gatherings be held; only here are mass meetings safe from police raids. The only language of protest that does not bring harsh reprisal from the white community is protest couched in Christian terminology, so here the Negro must come to air his grievances.

After the singing of the hymn, the meeting was thrown open to "Quaker-style" prayer, and those who responded also indicated in their speech and manner the blend of the old and the new. Said one

man with great gestures and rhythmic intonation:

I am brought to recollection of that plantation in Monroe County, where the sun never shined, where we were driven by hard taskmasters. I walked away from there to go to school. I walked to school for seven, eight years and nobody ever gave me a dime. Now I have walked from the jail house to the house of the Lord. I believe Jesus has led me in my travel and I believe he will lead me to that great river where the tide of segregation doesn't reach.

Reverend King, who is president of the organization coordinating boycott strategy and who has suffered the bombing of his home besides the present indictment, also contributed a prayer. He is a young man—only twenty-seven—and his dress is nattily collegiate. But he speaks with a dignity and articulateness that command instant respect. He said: "We have been exploited economically, excluded socially and dominated politically. But we are funny. The Negro is funny. He can endure. He can smile. He can keep hoping and striving." He then asked that the meeting close by singing *Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen*.

But before the hymn was started, another boycott leader rose to tell of a young minister and his pregnant wife who were stranded in Montgomery on their way to Pensacola, Florida. He asked for each person present to contribute a dime toward their bus fare. Dollar bills were immediately flashed. He then declared that any money over the amount needed would be placed in the boycott fund. But, out of the generosity of a people in trouble toward someone else in worse trouble, the cry went up: "Give it all to them, give it all."

As the group left the church, a magazine photographer led them to the state capitol building a block away to have them pose for a group shot on the lily-white steps. They obliged readily: ministers, doctors, dentists, insurance executives, clubwomen, postal employees, truck drivers, college professors and students, seamstresses, porters, cafe operators, air force sergeants—all standing unabashed and unvanquished in the shadow of Jefferson Davis' statue.

IN A prominent spot on the front page of the *Montgomery Advertiser* of February 24, the day of the ar-

raignments, the following story appeared:

Federal Bureau of Investigation agents are known to have secured a complete list of Negroes indicted and arrested on charges of boycotting the Montgomery City Lines.

FBI agents had no comment on the securing of the list.

It was understood, however, that the list was to be sent to the Washington FBI office for informational use.

I telephoned the FBI office to ask if this were true, and if it were, what was the bureau's interest in a state matter. I pointed out that the item seemed designed to intimidate people and that national concern over events here called for some clarification.

The agent I talked to said he couldn't tell me anything over the phone. When I offered to meet him at his office, he said he couldn't tell me anything more there than he could over the phone. Finally, after many expressions of regret, he declared: "No comment."

The possibility therefore exists that the FBI is screening the boycotters the way it scrutinizes political dissenters. Then again, perhaps the Department of Justice is pondering civil-rights action against those who drew up the indictments against the boycotters. Such a move would be a political masterstroke in this election year. ALFRED MAUND

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