

3/29/1956

YOU, MONTGOMERY (ALA.), THE SOUTH
and
HUMAN DIGNITY

". . . We have known humiliation, we have known abusive language, we have been plunged into the abyss of oppression, and we decided to rise up only with the weapon of protest. It is one of the greatest glories of America that we have the right of protest.

"If we are arrested every day, if we are exploited every day, if we are trampled over every day, don't ever let anyone pull you so low as to hate them. We must have compassion and understanding for those who hate us. We must realize so many people are taught to hate us that they are not totally responsible for their hate. But we stand in life at midnight; we are always on the threshold of a new dawn."

So spoke the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., in Montgomery, Alabama, a few hours after his arrest as a leader of the passive resistance movement against discrimination and segregation on the buses of the city. He reflects the attitude of thousands of Negroes and whites in the South who believe in desegregation and equal opportunity and are paying for their belief in suffering reprisals or -- as the people of Montgomery, Alabama -- making sacrifices.

The American Friends Service Committee has been asked what individuals might do to help. Those named below have constituted themselves as an informal and non-official (from an AFSC point of view) committee to channel these concerns. We offer our services, temporarily, to Friends and members of the AFSC "family." We are heavily committed in terms of time and work and would urge non-AFSC related persons to set up similar channels of expression. Specifically, we urge that you:

(1) PRAY. Though we had hoped to recommend participation in a single, nation-wide Day of Prayer, many spontaneous movements make a single day impossible. We urge that you join in any such devotions as you see fit. AFSC related persons are also urged to undertake an hour of prayer and meditation on May 17. This anniversary of the Supreme Court school decision has great symbolic value. This date has been chosen by some other groups.

(2) CONTRIBUTE, if you desire, to the support of the movement in Montgomery. We will be glad to receive and forward your contribution. Some have discussed the idea of "an hour's pay." We leave to you the questions of whether you can contribute and to what extent. If you wish to share in this, your check should be sent to:

Richard K. Bennett, Treasurer
20 South 12th Street
Philadelphia 7, Pennsylvania

Should you wish to contribute directly, your contribution can be sent to Rev. Martin Luther King, Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama. Non-AFSC related persons especially might be so advised. We are certain that the recipients will use the funds wisely and well.

This ad hoc committee reserves the right periodically to measure the comparative

relief need in Montgomery and elsewhere in the South and make appropriations accordingly. There is widespread financial support for the movement in Montgomery. Only time will tell whether the support will be sufficient and if the need will continue. In the meantime, people elsewhere are being fired from jobs, denied credit, driven from communities, and suffering various sanctions for their belief in democracy. We would like to have the freedom to aid these largely forgotten southerners.

Funds for these purposes are not tax deductible. In order to limit the activities of this committee to its purposes, we plan to end this project no later than June 30, 1956.

(3) ACT in your personal life in ways which help create the kind of religious, social and economic society which makes impossible segregation and unfair discrimination. Know your community and help it live up to our finest heritage of religion and democracy. Support organizations working continuously on these and related problems.

The people in the Montgomery movement are wise, honest and brave. They do not need leadership -- for they have it in highest calibre. They do need our prayers, our support, and our demonstrated brotherhood.

THE COMMITTEE

(for identification only)

Richard K. Bennett
Stephen G. Cary
Earle Edwards
Lewis M. Hoskins
Grace Powers
Louis Schneider

Secretary, Community Relations
American Section Secretary
Regional Office Secretary
Executive Secretary
Chairman, Staff Representatives
Foreign Service Secretary