

Dr. King's Death

Members of organized labor in general—and members of SCME in particular—are in debt to the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Dr. King met his death while on a mission to Memphis to help our union gain recognition. The mission was successful—but at the tremendous cost known to all.

Dr. King was in Memphis because it was the fact that our union was seeking to better the lot of poor people.

Martin Luther King Jr. was committed to fight not only for the civil rights of the black man, but for the economic and social betterment of the poorly paid of all races.

HE BELIEVED that the civil rights movement and trade unionism needed each other. He believed that they should work together to achieve both rights and economic gains.

Dr. King is on record many times on this stand. In his first book, "Stride Toward Freedom," Dr. King wrote: "... The Negro, then, has the right to expect the resources of the American trade union movement to be used in assuring him—like all the rest of its members—a proper place in American society. . . .

"... Strong ties must be made between those whites and Negroes who have problems in common. White and Negro workers have mutual aspirations for a fairer share of the products of industries and farms. Both seek job security, old age security, health and welfare protection."

DR. KING'S position was well known to organized labor. In December, 1961, he received a standing ovation at the AFL-CIO convention when he drew a parallel between the civil rights movement at that time and the labor movement in the 1930's.

"... We are confronted by powerful forces telling us to rely on the good will and understanding of those who profit by exploiting us. . . . They are shocked that action organizations, sit-ins, civil disobedience and protests are becoming our everyday tools, just as strikes, demonstrations and union organization became yours to insure that bargaining power genuinely existed on both sides of the bargaining table. . . .

"This unity of purpose is not a historical coincidence. Negroes are almost entirely a working people. Our needs are identical with labor's needs. That is why Negroes support labor's demands and fight laws which curb labor. . . . The identity of interests of labor and Negroes makes any crisis which lacerates you, a crisis in which we bleed."

Dr. King practiced what he preached when he went to Memphis and literally shed his lifeblood for our union's cause.

THERE WAS dramatic evidence of labor's solidarity with the civil rights movement when more than 40,000 persons, black and white, marched silently through Memphis streets in tribute to Dr. King.

It was the march that he had come to Memphis to lead. Leading it, instead, was his widow—carrying on for Dr. King, backing our members.

Mrs. King had some words that day which all Americans should take to heart:

"But then, I ask the question—How many men must die before we can really have a free and true and peaceful society? How long will it take?"

"If we can catch his spirit, which I believe we can, and the true meaning of this experience, I believe that this nation can be transformed into a society of love, of justice, peace and brotherhood where all men can be brothers."



NOTES and QUOTES

"... It is true that some strikes by public employees can cause havoc. It is also true that no pat solutions to the problems created by such strikes have yet been developed. It may be that short-cut answers will be difficult to come by.

"Binding arbitration may look good, but so does the poison ivy plant. We had better continue to search for more innovative solutions to the problems of negotiating with public employee groups."

Editorial in *The Municipality*, publication of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities

"Too many public agencies, and admittedly, Sacramento County is one of them, have failed to recognize that as the size of their work force grows, the old, undefined informal relationship between employee representatives and management can become completely inadequate to deal with the numerous problems and requests that arise in the areas of wages, hours and terms and conditions of employments."

M. D. Tarshes, County executive of Sacramento County, Calif., in an article in *American County Government*

"Our experience teaches us that money is needed as much after as during a strike."

A letter from the American Newspaper Guild, noting that a settlement in Memphis appeared imminent and enclosing a check for \$750

"... any such law as the Taylor Law making strikes illegal is bound to be ineffectual. History has shown that laws which are not solidly based on economic and social realities do not receive the respect which laws must get to be workable."

John R. Wolf, director, Schenectady, N.Y. Dept. of City Development and Property Management, in a letter to the *N.Y. Times*

"This is no longer a day of mourning. It is a day of redemption. Because of this meeting here today on the banks of the Mississippi brings together thousands and thousands of people, black and white, dedicated to a new America."

AFL-CIO President George Meany, in a message read by Don Slaiman, following the Memphis march

THE Public Employee

International Vice Presidents

North Central
The Rev. Albert Blatz
St. Peter State Hospital
St. Peter, Minnesota 56082

Northern New England
James A. Broyer
6 Beacon St., Suite 720
Boston, Mass. 02108

Central
Earl S. Burklund
5313—12th Ave.
Moline, Illinois 61265

Michigan
William Charron
2345 Cass Ave., E.
Detroit, Michigan 48201

Wisconsin
Steve Clark
604 Insurance Building
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

Northwest
Neville B. Crippen
Box 236
Gig Harbor, Washington 98335

Southern New England
William Czuckrey
24 Woodward Ave., Apt. 31
New Haven, Conn. 06512

New York
Harry Gray
71 Worth St.
New York, New York 10013

Midwestern
Arthur Hamm
121 East High St.
Jefferson City, Mo. 65102

Rocky Mountain
George L. Hammond
121 Burlington Ave.
Missoula, Montana 59801

Mideastern
Ethelrie Harper
22 Glen Este Place
Cincinnati, Ohio 45217

Caribbean
Saturnin Mauge
Box 2425
Cristobal, Canal Zone

Southwest
Don McCullar
2608 Sutherland
Houston, Texas 77023

Eastern
William J. McEntee
1320 Arch St.
Philadelphia, Pa. 19107

Southeastern
Lee A. Tafel
1461 N.W. 17th Avenue
Miami, Florida 33125

Western
Ruby Wicker
1572 N. Waterman, Suite 5
San Bernardino, Calif. 92404

John G. Blair
Director of Publications

Tom Moore McBride
Editor

Official Publication of the American Federation of State,
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JERRY WURF International President
JOSEPH L. AMES International Secretary-Treasurer

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