



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

Memphis, Tennessee  
April 10, 1968

Re: SANITATION WORKERS STRIKE,  
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE  
RACIAL MATTERS

The "Commercial Appeal" newspaper, Memphis, Tennessee, issue of April 9, 1968, in a page one story reported that representatives of the City of Memphis, including Mayor Henry Loeb and the striking sanitation workers, represented by Jerry Wurf, International President of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO, met throughout the night of April 7 and morning of April 8, 1968, in an effort to settle the strike which has existed since February 12, 1968. The talks were mediated by James Reynolds, United States Undersecretary of Labor, and Frank Miles, Personnel Director, E. L. Bruce Company, and former United States Labor Conciliator. The negotiations terminated due to exhaustion and out of deference for the memorial service for the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., scheduled for the afternoon of April 8, 1968, at City Hall.

The story reported that all parties to the negotiations were heartened at the progress. Some members of both sides planned to attend Dr. King's funeral in Atlanta, Georgia, April 9, 1968. These mediation talks which had earlier been broken off by the Union on March 27, 1968, are to resume, according to the paper, at 8 p.m., April 9, 1968.

The April 8, 1968, issue of the Memphis "Commercial Appeal," a local daily newspaper, reflected an article on page one that a memorial march was to be held at Memphis, Tennessee, beginning at 11 a.m., April 8, 1968, in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). This article continued that the line of march for this parade would be from Clayborn Temple located at the intersection of Hernando Street and Pontotoc Avenue, north on Hernando Street to Linden

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Avenue, west on Linden Avenue to Main Street, north on Main Street to City Hall Plaza where the march would stop for a period of prayer and speeches about Dr. King. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the march would continue north on Main Street to Poplar Avenue, east on Poplar Avenue to Second Street, south on Second Street to Linden Avenue, east on Linden Avenue to Hernando Street, and south on Hernando Street to Clayborn Temple, the original starting point for this march.

At 10 a.m., April 8, 1968, Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation observed individuals converging on Clayborn Temple, 280 Hernando, Memphis, and by 11 a.m. an estimated 10,000 marchers were gathered in the immediate vicinity of Clayborn Temple. This group was comprised of approximately 80 per cent Negroes, both male and female, and 20 per cent whites.

The Reverend James Morris Lawson, Jr., pastor of Centenary Methodist Church, Memphis, Tennessee, who is the Coordinating Director of the Community on the Move for Equality (COME), an organization formed by the Memphis Ministerial Alliance to assist the sanitation workers strike which commenced in Memphis, Tennessee, on February 12, 1968, and other Negro ministers associated with Reverend Lawson were observed forming this crowd into an orderly line of march.

Between 10:30 and 11 a.m., Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation observed the following individuals arrive at Clayborn Temple and take a place at the head of the line of march: Walter Reuther, President of the United Auto Workers; Bayard Rustin, Director of A. Philip Randolph Institute, New York City; Harry Belafonte, Bill Cosby, and Robert Culp, well-known entertainers; Percy Sutton, President, Borough of Manhattan, New York; Dr. Benjamin Spock; and various executive officers of SCLC and COME.

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A few minutes after 11 a.m., marchers departed Clayborn Temple, headed by the above individuals, eight abreast, and in an orderly manner proceeded north on Hernando Street. The march proceeded in an orderly fashion to Linden Avenue, west on Linden Avenue to Main Street, and north on Main Street to Beale Street where at 11:41 a.m. the march was temporarily halted.

At 11:54 a.m., Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr., along with the Reverend Ralph D. Abernathy and the Reverend Andrew Young, President and Vice President, respectively, of the SCLC, joined this march and at 12 noon the march continued north on Main Street and proceeded to City Hall Plaza.

At City Hall Plaza, the leaders of the parade took seats on a raised platform which was set up immediately in front of Memphis City Hall and the marchers began taking positions in the street in front of City Hall and filling the Plaza at City Hall. At 12:56 p.m., the last of the marchers arrived at City Hall Plaza and the planned program began.

Short speeches were delivered to the assembled marchers by the Reverend Ralph Abernathy; Walter Reuther; Dr. Benjamin Spock; Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr.; the Reverend James Morris Lawson, Jr.; Harry Belafonte; Jerry Wurf, President of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees of Washington, D. C.; The Most Reverend Joseph A. Durick, Administrator of Nashville Diocese of the Catholic Church; and Dr. Ralph Jackson, Director, Minimum Salary Board, AME Church, and member of COME.

In the speech made by the Reverend James Morris Lawson, Jr., he made the statement, "If the curfew isn't lifted in the colored sections of Memphis, it will be broken."

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Inspector G. P. Tines, Inspectional Bureau, Memphis Police Department, advised on April 9, 1968, that a 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew was imposed by Memphis Mayor Henry Loeb the evening of April 4, 1968, and that this curfew has been in effect during these hours up to 5 a.m., April 9, 1968. This curfew restricts all street traffic during these hours except by persons involved in providing essential or emergency services. Inspector Tines added that all sales of liquor, beer and firearms in Shelby County, Tennessee, which includes the city of Memphis, have been prohibited since the institution of this curfew. In addition, Inspector Tines stated that all city, county and parochial schools were closed for the day of April 8, 1968, along with Memphis State University (MSU), Southwestern College at Memphis, Owen College, and LeMoyne College.

At 3:04 p.m., Mrs. King was observed to leave the speakers' platform and depart by car from City Hall Plaza.

Inspector Tines advised that Mrs. King proceeded to Memphis Municipal Airport and departed Memphis en route to Atlanta.

At 3:34 p.m., the planned program at City Hall Plaza was completed and the march proceeded in an orderly manner from City Hall Plaza north on Main Street to Poplar Avenue, east on Poplar Avenue to Second Street, south on Second Street to Clayborn Temple.

At 4:15 p.m., the last of the marchers arrived at Clayborn Temple and the crowd dispersed in an orderly manner.

Inspector Tines advised that no incidents or disturbances were reported to the Memphis Police Department along the entire line of march. He stated that during the time the march was in progress, the following incidents were reported to the Memphis Police Department:

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At 12:39 p.m., a window was broken in the 900 block of Manassas Street. At 12:46 p.m., a liquor store located at the intersection of Florida Avenue and DeSoto Street was looted. At 1:05 p.m., a Negro male was reported shooting a shotgun into a deserted street from a residence located at 3055 Calvert. At 1:28 p.m., a Tennessee National Guardsman accidentally dropped his rifle which discharged wounding him in the leg. The wound was not serious and he was taken to Methodist Hospital for treatment. At 2:10 p.m., the Memphis Police Department received a report of four white males in a blue Buick shooting at a firehouse located at Summer Avenue and National Street. Investigation by the Memphis Police Department failed to verify this alleged shooting. At 2:52 p.m., a report was received by the Memphis Police Department of looting by juveniles at 1811 Farrington. Investigation by the Memphis Police Department failed to disclose that any looting took place at this address.

Inspector Tines added that with the exception of the accidental wounding of the Tennessee National Guardsman, all of the above incidents occurred at locations far removed from the line of march of the Memorial March for Dr. King. He stated that the accidental discharge of the rifle belonging to the Tennessee National Guardsman occurred approximately one block from the route of the Memorial March and caused no disturbance of any nature.

Captain Jewell Ray, Inspectional Bureau, Memphis Police Department, advised on April 9, 1968, that from 4 p.m. until midnight on April 8, 1968, the following incidents occurred at Memphis, Tennessee: 8 lootings of businesses; 5 incidents of throwing of bricks, rocks, and bottles; 5 gunshots; 2 minor fires, one caused as a result of a firebomb; and one complaint regarding shooting at a prowler. Captain Ray stated that there was less crime in Memphis, Tennessee, on the evening of April 8, 1968, than normal. There were no disturbances considered by the Police Department of a racial nature, such as roving bands of youths, and that in his opinion the general situation in Memphis, Tennessee, subsequent to the memorial march was calm.

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Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation who observed this march in its entirety advised that the entire march was peaceful and orderly. No incidents or disturbances were observed.

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