



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Memphis, Tennessee

March 19, 1968

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

RE: SANITATION WORKERS STRIKE,  
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE  
RACIAL MATTERS

Reference is made to communication dated March 18, 1968, made at Memphis, Tennessee.

On the afternoon of March 18, 1968, Capt. Jewell G. Ray, Inspectional Bureau, Memphis, Tennessee, Police Department, advised that there was little strike support activity during the day of March 18, 1968, and that some of the strikers and some of their adult supporters sponsored by a group of Negro Memphis ministers connected with the Memphis Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance and who have adopted the name of Community on the Move for Equality (COME) held a downtown march peacefully on the sidewalks, single file, around 3:00 p.m. March 18, 1968. He advised that at about 4:30 p.m. a small group of teenagers marched the same route without incident.

Capt. Ray stated that the big excitement in Memphis on March 18, 1968, was the scheduled appearance of Martin Luther King Jr. of Atlanta, Georgia, President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, who had been scheduled to address a strike support rally sponsored by COME at Mason Temple, Mason Avenue, Memphis, this being a Church of God in Christ institution. He stated that outside of the Mid-South Coliseum, it is the largest indoor arena in Memphis and can seat some 10,000 people.

On the late night of March 18, 1968, Capt. Ray advised that King had appeared, arriving late, after 9:00 p.m., and he was accompanied on the platform by Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, who is reported to be Vice-President at Large of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).

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*[Handwritten signature]*

SANITATION WORKERS STRIKE,  
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

~~In the presence~~ accompanying King to Memphis were Andrew J. Young, Executive Director of SCLC, and James Bevel, a member of the executive staff of SCLC.

Rev. James Morris Lawson Jr., Pastor, Centenary Methodist Church, Memphis, according to Ray, is understood to also be on the executive staff of SCLC and was the person purportedly responsible for bringing King and his group to Memphis to stimulate support of the sanitation strike. *TENN. CZECH.*

Ray stated that he had been reliably informed that at the meeting on the night of March 18, 1968, King made an impassioned speech to an estimated crowd of 9,000 to 12,000 people, predominantly Negroes, who showed up to hear him. King called for an escalation of the strike and for support thereof. King made a series of demagogic appeals to the baser emotions of the predominantly Negro audience and pointed out they had to acquire more economic goods now possessed by the white man and that they had to obtain power. He kept emphasizing power without becoming specific as to how they could obtain power. Ray stated that the audience was emotionally moved by King's speech, and King concluded by calling for a unified effort on the part of all Negroes in Memphis, some 250,000, to oppose the Memphis city administration headed by Mayor Henry Loeb who heretofore has refused to accept a union dues checkoff which is the big bottleneck in the settlement of the sanitation strike, which has been in progress since February 12, 1968. King called on all Negroes in Memphis to utilize Friday, March 22, 1968, as a protest day in which all Negroes would refuse to show up for work and all Negro students would refuse to go to school and that all Negroes would thereby be urged to come into downtown Memphis for what King described as a massive downtown march. *NY; BELGIUM GERMANY PRAGUE*

King indicated that he would be in Mississippi for the next several days stimulating support for his forthcoming April 22, 1968, "Poor People's Camp-In" in Washington, D. C., and would probably return to Memphis in time to participate in the scheduled massive march on March 22, 1968.

Ray stated that Ralph D. Abernathy made a talk in which he urged strike supporters and strike sympathizers to physically place their bodies in front of the some 60-odd Memphis Sanitation Department pick-up trucks which are currently collecting garbage in Memphis during the strike, even



SANITATION WORKERS STRIKE,  
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

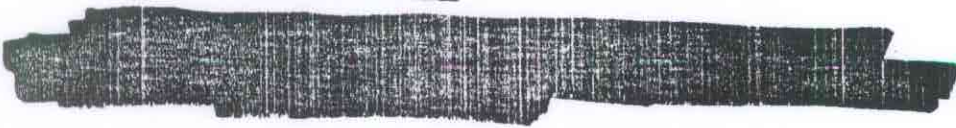
if this provoked arrest.

On March 19, 1968, Lt. E. H. Arkin, Inspectional Bureau, Memphis Police Department, and Inspector G. P. Tines, Inspectional Bureau, Memphis Police Department, advised that there had been no known arrests on the part of people throwing themselves in front of sanitation trucks, and there was considerable activity scheduled for March 19, 1968, namely, a mass march on the part of strikers and strike sympathizers to the Memphis City Hall to attend the weekly meeting of the Memphis City Council which begins at 2:30 p.m.

Lt. Arkin stated that the strikers who have daily meetings at the Firestone union hall plan to arrive early in order to obtain some of the 407 spectator seats in the City Council chambers, and another group of sympathizers will march from Clayborn AME Temple, 280 Hernando, to the City Hall single file on the sidewalks.

Lt. Arkin stated that King and his group stayed at the Lorraine Motel, 406 Mulberry Street, a predominantly Negro motel, during the night of March 18, 1968, and shortly before noon, King left, ostensibly to go to the state of Mississippi in connection with his "Poor People's Camp-in." Arkin stated that Ralph D. Abernathy remained in Memphis and was conferring with some of the ministerial leaders who are supporting the strike, namely, James Morris Lawson Jr., Dr. H. Ralph Jackson, and others.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



JAMES BEVEL

Bevel, in early March 1966, was observed to be present at the offices of the West Side W. E. B. DuBois Club in Chicago (DCA). Discussion took place at this time centering around reaction to a recent notification that the Attorney General of the United States intended to label the DuBois Clubs as a Communist front. Bevel, in conversation, stated that he would have ignored this notification and kept about