

SOUTHERN NEGRO LEADERS CONFERENCE ON TRANSPORTATION AND NON-VIOLENT
INTEGRATION

Ebenezzer Baptist Church
407 Auburn Avenue
Atlanta, Georgia

January 10 - 11, 1957

WORKING
PAPERS

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W O R K I N G P A P E R # 1

THE MEANING OF THE BUS PROTEST
in the
SOUTHERN STRUGGLE FOR TOTAL INTEGRATION

In analyzing the Bus Protest certain factors emerge:

1. These protests are directly related to economic survival, since the masses of people use busses to reach their work. The people are therefore interested in what happens in busses.
2. The people know that in bus segregation they have a just grievance. No one had to arouse their social anger.
3. In refusing to ride the busses the people pledge a daily rededication. This daily act becomes a matter of group pride.
4. Unlike many problems, such as integrated education, there is no administrative machinery and legal maneuvering that stand between the people and the act of staying off the busses, or sitting in front seats. The situation permits direct action.
5. The campaign is based on the most stable social institution in Negro culture - the church.
6. The protest requires community sharing through mass meetings, contributions, economic assistance, hitchhiking etc.
7. The situation permits and requires a unified leadership.
8. The method of non-violence - Christian love, makes humble folk noble and turns fear into courage.
9. The exigencies of the struggle create a community spirit through community sacrifice.

N O T E :

The underlined words are 9 qualities required for mass movement. When a group of people have developed them in one area, these qualities can be transferred to any other constructive one through education by action, the final quality.

It is important that Bus Protests action arise in other areas of the South for the following reasons:

1. There is a real question as to whether any of the present can succeed if Montgomery, which has become a symbol, is defeated. But there is a question as to whether Montgomery or any other campaign can succeed unless many more areas of protest spring up.
2. Those who use violence believe that their tactics will cause us to retreat. When we, in the face of violence, delve deeper into the struggle, and when other areas of protest emerge, then, and perhaps only then, will reactionary forces see the futility of their violence.
3. The masses of white people are perhaps prepared to accept integration in transportation. The Supreme Court decision enabled them to move farther in the direction of acceptance. If additional communities join the struggle, they will no doubt move even closer to acceptance. If the present protests fail, it is likely they will move towards reaction.
4. More bus protests will encourage the Negro people who are on the move to become more self-respecting, more determined to act in areas other than the busses.
5. Additional protests involving direct action will frustrate both "the century of litigation" tactic and the kind of legal subterfuge now being experienced in Atlanta and Tallahassee.
6. They will also create the kind of situation in the eyes of the world that may cause a more responsible attitude in the executive branch of the government.

THIS PAPER IS DESIGNED TO RAISE TWO QUESTIONS.

In a sense, the most important part of our entire discussion. These questions are:

- I Do we need a coordinating group for advice and council among the present protest groups?
- II Should such a council try to stimulate bus protests in other areas of the South?

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WORKING PAPER # 2

THE NEXT STEP FOR MASS ACTION IN THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

If one examines carefully the three branches of our government, - legislative, judicial and executive, one sees the following: The legislative branch for 80 years has been imotent: Congress has not passed any civil rights legislation since reconstruction days. With the exception of such Executive Orders as the wartime measure on FEPC, we have not been able to look to the executive branch; and today, that branch is confused and woefully inactive. Progress in the past thirty years has sprung mainly from Judicial decision.

The industrialization of the south now emerges as a new factor, effecting the political structure of the south. The one party system is breaking up. Republicanism is coming south with new industrialization. This before long may lead to a two party south, competing for Negro votes. Negro voting in such a situation can also hasten the decline of the one party system which has been able to exist primarily because of the Negro's enforced economic and social position.

In any event, the time has come to broaden the struggle for Negroes to register and to vote, For the simple reason that until this happens, we can not really influence the legislative branch of the government. In addition, until the Negro votes on a large scale, we shall have to rely more and more on mass direct action as the one realistic political weapon.

This raises some interesting problems:

1. How can we utilize the bus protest to stimulate interest in voting?
2. Should voting clinics become a major part of the constructive program of the bus campaign?
3. If so, how do the voting clinics operate? Are they to discuss merely the technique for registering and voting, or should political issues also be discussed?
4. How are test cases on voting to be carried in the courts in those areas where the NAACP has been outlawed. Should bus protest groups back such cases until the NAACP is free again?
5. What broad campaign in the south should be carried on to stimulate interest in and educate Negroes to see the basic significance of voting?
6. Should all churches, able to do so, become centers of voting education.

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W O R K I N G P A P E R # 3

UNIFIED PLANNING FOR BUS INTEGRATION

The first mass assault on the busses occurred in Baton Rouge, La. Montgomery followed and because of its long and sustained nature, its world wide publicity and the mass arrests of its leaders, it has become the symbol of the struggle. For Negroes, it must succeed. For defenders of segregation it must fail.

However, there is a question as to whether bus integration can succeed in the south, unless it succeeds in Montgomery. On the other hand, can it really succeed in Montgomery unless and until there are protests in many states and cities of the south.

It is therefore imperative that we examine the following problems:

1. Broadening and strengthening specific bus protests throughout the south.
2. Mutually supporting one another in the protest movement.
3. Creating the machinery for stimulating new protests and coordinating the bus protests into a single movement.

To help us examine these problems, the following questions are submitted

1. Where and how new areas of protest can grow?
2. How can financial burdens be shared?
3. How can white persons of goodwill be drawn into the protest?
4. What is the best way to encourage and support victims of and reprisals?
5. How can mass morale be maintained in periods of set-back?
6. How can the unavoidable suffering be made a badge of honor?
7. How can leaders identify with the people at every stage of the struggle?
8. What constructive program is essential for daily commitment, and eventual success?

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W O R K I N G P A P E R # 4

THE RELATIONSHIP OF COMMUNITY ECONOMIC POWER GROUPS TO THE STRUGGLE

In the past we have given all too little attention to the economic power groups in the struggle for equality. However, the bus protests have clearly revealed certain economic facts.

1. The Negro's dollar is a factor in the economic organization of the community.
2. His refusal to ride had a catastrophic effect on the economics of the bus companies.
3. The unintended but non-the-less direct effect of the protest on down town merchants is real, indeed.

These very real economic facts have at certain stages caused bus companies, formerly unsympathetic to our cause, to see that they need the revenue of Negro riders. Add to this the legal "subterfuge" and the "century of litigation" tactics and it is clear to see that the bus companies are not prepared to lose money to save segregation. At this point two things occur:

1. The political leadership and the bus officials part company. The opposition is divided.
2. The bus companies may be prepared to make common cause with protest leaders.

If this analysis is correct, the following questions are worthy of discussion.

1. When can protest leaders approach bus officials to devise common strategy?
2. How can we foster that period in the struggle?
3. Should Southern Negro leaders arrange conference with the home offices of the companies working in more than one city of the south?
4. Can some approach be made to local businessmen in terms of the economic consequences in the present transportation confusion?

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WORKING PAPER #5

How to Deal with Violence and Maintain a Non-violent Discipline.

One of the problems that will plague the movement is that of maintaining a non violent discipline in the face of violence.

In one area the following means were employed

1. Continuous active daily involvement.
2. Leaders refusing to carry arms
3. Mass meeting non-violent education
4. Assigning important non-violent duties to the more militant.
5. Distribution of educational materials.

Other ideas proposed from time to time about which questions can be raised are these:

1. The need for a small discipline group of non-violent volunteers. These persons should receive intense training in spirit technique. They would serve as "non-violent shock troops in time of danger and accent the consequences. They would be prepared to go to jail if necessary. Their courage would inspire the community and show those who might resort to violence.

Is the development of such a group feasible or desirable? Can the movement proceed through the next stages without such a group?

2. It has been suggested that the protest movement gives a public award to each person who suffers physical or loss of property in the campaign. It was further suggested that an appropriate award might be a Bible inscribed by the protest chairman.

Would such procedure build morals?

3. The final suggestion approached the problem from the other extreme and grew out of the question, "How can the White community be reached directly to see that the Negro community has a positive social affection for it? " If such methods were found, would they reduce the violence toward the Negro community?

As an example of what was suggested, the following proposal grew out of that question.

Suppose the buses in a given City are being fired upon and Negroes were threatened or hurt. Everyone in the Negro community would naturally rally around the victim.

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But it is possible that White bus drivers innocent of any wrong might also be harmed.

Would it be sound to collect a small token fund to give assistance to any White driver or rider who innocently is injured as buses transporting Negroes not seated in the rear are shot at?

Is such an act of identification feasible and emotionally sound?

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WORKING PAPER # 6

THE RELATION OF STATE POWER TO A NON VIOLENT CAMPAIGN

The basic aim of a non-violent campaign is to win freedom and to change the opponents' attitude at the same time. In the south some violence is to be anticipated during this period of great social change. Negro leaders therefore must be clear in regard to their attitudes toward F. B. I. investigations, state police, national guard, and army units if and when they are called into a community to maintain order.

While views may differ, we should explore some major questions for clarification. Before posing these questions it might be well to state a view held by some persons who recently discussed the matter.

They made the following points:

1. Since finally a reconciliation within the community is sought, it is best if outside agencies are not required to maintain order.
2. If disorder and violence are such that local agencies won't act or are powerless to do so, it is better if White people can be convinced to call upon such agencies.
3. If they won't do so, it is the moral duty of Negro leaders to call upon agencies of government to protect the persons of all citizens.

In regard to the functions of these agencies, the following points were made.

1. There is a difference between police power and the power of armies.
2. The differences are these (a) police power is the power to arrest individuals who break laws. There police power ends. Such persons are then brought before courts established under law. They are given a chance to testify, and tried by a jury of their peers. The sentence they receive is established by law and they can appeal. (b) army power may be indiscriminately directed toward groups of people who are not involved in wrong doing in a situation where the army become judge, jury and executioner. (c) the police power should and can respect the individual; the latter cannot.

3. When the state police, National guard or army units are called into a community, they function in a police power capacity. They arrest individual violators and turn them over to civil courts, judges, juries.
4. Therefore, leaders of non-violent campaigns may cooperate with such agencies to the degree that they cooperate with the police.

This is one view.

QUESTIONS

1. Should a part of our strategy be to discover in each community a group of White people who will now call for the maintenance of law and order?
2. Or should we try to get a statement on this from outstanding White people from across the South?
3. Should such a group be developed in each community on a stand by basis to call for national guard or other outside units if law and order break down?
4. Should we be prepared as a group to cooperate in calling upon the president to send F.B.I. into the next community where anarchy, bombing, shooting, etc occurs?
5. Should we send a delegation of Southern Negro leaders to confer with the Attorney General?
6. Should we return to our home states to call upon all Negro leaders to prepare a statement to the governor on the protection of persons?

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W O R K I N G P A P E R # 7

THE ROLE OF LAW IN OUR STRUGGLE: Its ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS

Historically, the major emphasis in our struggle to obtain civil rights has been legal and legislative. For forty-six years the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has brilliantly and successfully represented Negro Americans before the courts of the land. From time to time, widespread campaigns to enact favorable legislation have been waged. However, since the Supreme Court decision of May 17, 1954, a new stage has been set.

While there is still much legal work to be done, there is ample and convincing evidence that the center of gravity has shifted from the courts to community action. It is on the community level that court decisions must be implemented. The job before us now is to demonstrate that our cause is basic to the welfare of the community; and we must challenge our white fellow citizens:-to win them to believe in and to practice democracy. Law will be very important in this process, but something new must be added.

In other words, we must determine when pursuing a legal course is helpful and when it will merely strengthen the tactics of the White Citizens Councils, such as the "century of litigation" threat. An example of this is seen in Birmingham where the bus protesters were first arrested and charged with disorderly conduct rather than violation of jim crow bus laws. Another example is the new seating arrangement proposed for the busses in Tallahassee.

We must recognize in this new period that direct action is our most potent political weapon. We must understand that our refusal to accept jim crow in specific areas challenges the entire social, political and economic order that has kept us second class citizens since 1876. Those who oppose us, understand this, and that is why they resist our every effort with every instrument at their command, including violence.

Should we refuse at any point to reject the legal interpretations of the south, or should we challenge custom, we will not be engaged in civil disobedience, but we will be exercising civil obedience to the highest law of the land. Our job is to reenforce the process of persuasion_____ the basis for law and order. We must not be afraid to explore new ways. We must not be timid, and must be prepared to pay the price involved in making this new approach to the solution of our problems.

This thinking leads to certain questions:

1. What new problems are posed by the "century of litigation" tactic? To what extent does this tactic require extra-legal mass action?
2. Under what circumstances are mass arrests strategically desirable or necessary? For example, could the people Tallahassee adopt this tactic now?
3. Can we develop in our communities a core of people who are disciplined to face and accept going to jail? What steps have been taken in this direction?
4. Are we prepared to fully support such people wherever arrests occur?
5. When "states of emergency" are proclaimed by state and local officials, in for the purpose of frustrating our struggle, what can we do to hold the initiative?
6. How do we educate the Negro masses and the leaders on the significance of such tactics?
7. What is behind the current attack on the NAACP?
 - a) What is its significance to our struggle?
 - b) How do we meet the challenge?