

Dec. 17, 1963

REPORT OF ICM ACTIVITIES (II)
 - SELECTED FROM THE MINUTES OF MEMBERSHIP
 AND STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Interracial Council of Methodists, meeting several times a month, has participated in many activities. The first Report of Activities (issued Sept. 10 - copies available from ICM) and the ICM Statement of Purposes give a description of the structure, leadership, and concern areas of the organization. This second report will be limited to a discussion of the ICM's major areas of interest since September 10, 1963.

A. Jackson Campaign

BACKGROUND: On October 8 three Tougaloo college girls, two from the Chicago area, were arrested in Jackson, Mississippi, when they attempted to attend a "whites only" Methodist church. The following week a Chicago Methodist minister went to Jackson, at the request of Tougaloo Chaplain Rev. Ed. King, to attend church with the girls. But they were turned away at the church door. The next week five ministers and one layman from Chicago went to Jackson, again to attend church with the girls. Four were arrested, two of them inside a Methodist church, and the students were again arrested. Since that time, under the joint direction of Rev. King in Jackson and a steering committee in Chicago, ministers have gone each week to Jackson. They have been from Wisconsin, Detroit, Cleveland, New York, and other areas, besides Chicago. Some weeks the ministers have been arrested, and some they have not. Wide concern among Methodists was expressed over two facets of this case: (1) the opposition of Methodist church leaders in Mississippi to the admission of Negroes into their churches in spite of the official policy of the Methodist Church, and (2) the question of whether a church is the private property of its members or the House of God, open to all worshippers. The action of the Jackson Methodist churches has also seriously threatened the proposed Methodist-Evangelical United Brethren merger, for a group of E.U.B. ministers have since issued a statement saying that they do not want to join a segregated church. On November 13, Bishops meeting in Detroit issued a strong statement on the policy of the church being open to all, regardless of race. They called upon all Methodist institutions "to bring their racial policies and practices in line with the Christian principles of racial inclusiveness to which we are committed". A week later a group of Methodist ministers meeting in Cleveland set up a national organization to work for the renewal of the church. Both these actions were taken because of the serious events in Jackson. (For further information: see The Christian Century of Nov. 27, 1963; Chicago Daily News, Oct. 9, Oct. 26, Oct. 28; mimeographed statement by Chicago Inner-City Methodist Minister's Fellowship titled "Christian Unity, The Methodist Church and Jackson, Mississippi"; and December issue of Behold. Copies of all these are available, while they last, from the ICM.)

ICM ENGAGEMENT IN CAMPAIGN: Almost all the Chicago ministers who were arrested, or went to Jackson, were members of ICM, and the entire membership was active in raising bail money following the arrests. ICM was represented on the committee that met with Bishop Brashares to discuss the matter. The steering committee sent telegrams to the president of each Methodist Jurisdictional Council, asking that they send representatives to Jackson; and the ICM membership voted support for Rev. King and the students in Jackson. When the Chicago strategy committee was established, ICM was represented on it by its two co-chairmen. Following the Detroit Bishop's meeting, when more ministers were arrested in Jackson, the steering committee wired the Bishops, stating that the arrest violated the very position that the Bishops had taken, and the Bishop's statement should be immediately implemented, or withdrawn. After the first group of Chicago ministers returned to Chicago, ICM, in cooperation with the Inner-City Methodist Minister's

Fellowship, held a report-back meeting at the Chicago Temple. Under the auspices of ICM, the ministers have told their story at other churches throughout the Chicago area. ICM became a member of and contributed finances to the newly formed national organization Methodists for Church Renewal.

B. Operation Witness

BACKGROUND: At a meeting of the Inner-City Methodist Minister's Fellowship, Oct. 25, the suggestion was made that the Chicago-land area could become more intimately involved in the local problems in human relations through a visitation of Methodist churches in the largely white areas by Negro members, as well as Negro churches by white members. It was felt that several conditions might be achieved: (1) sincere Christians would be given the opportunity to express themselves, both to the visitors and their own church members; (2) visitors could give a genuine invitation for the "host" church members to return the visit to their home church; (3) this would be an opportunity for local Negro Methodists to further the cause for "oneness" in our witness and for non-Negro Methodists to witness their oneness in Christ by being part of an interracial team; (4) a gathering could be made of reports to reveal those areas of progress in race relations. From the beginning it was agreed that the participants would not seek invitations before visiting the churches, since some churches that most needed such visitations might never issue an invitation, and also such a structured Sunday, when everyone was prepared to welcome a Negro, was anything but the normal relationship for a healthy interracial, interchurch exchange. Further, it was pointed out, that if it is thought a church needs to be "warned", then this would be a case of prejudging the church involved. To date more than 100 persons have participated in the program and about 50 churches have been visited. For the most part the response has been healthy, with only a couple of unfortunate experiences. (For further information see two mimeographed letters from Operation Witness Committee to church members. (Copies available, while they last, from ICM.)

ICM ENGAGEMENT IN PROGRAM: The committee to direct Operation Witness was set up jointly by the ICM and the Inner-City Methodist Minister's Fellowship. Four members of ICM were appointed to that committee, and since it is for the most part a lay campaign, ICM has been instrumental in providing the participants. A committee from ICM met with the Bishop to explain the campaign and urge his support.

C. Selective Patronage Program

BACKGROUND: At the present time, in Chicago, Negro unemployment is at the high rate of 18%. This is higher than the national rate (both Negro and white) during the worst part of the Great Depression. For this reason many approaches have been made to gain employment for qualified Negroes both in Chicago and throughout the nation. A campaign of Selective Patronage that was implemented in Philadelphia in 1960 proved so highly successful that Chicago ministers of all faiths gathered to study the feasibility of applying such a program locally. They called themselves the Clergy Alliance. During the summer they decided to call for a boycott, or selective patronage program, against Bowman Dairy because of its notorious discriminatory hiring policy. The ministers announced from their pulpits that they were refusing to buy any Bowman products until the company hired a specified number of Negroes in both the office and wholesale departments of the company. They put on no other pressure, but apparently many members of the churches followed suit, because within two months Bowman had completely changed its policy and had hired more Negro employees than the ministerial group had requested that it should. It can also be added that no former employees of Bowman Dairy lost their jobs as a result of the new hiring policy. Some smaller dairy companies were also influenced by Bowman's change of policy. (For further information: see Reporter Magazine, May 11, 1961; New Republic, July 9, 1962. These are not available from ICM.)

ICM PARTICIPATION IN CAMPAIGN: Since only ministers could directly give leadership to the campaign, ICM took a supportive role. The reports of the campaign were given at each meeting, during the period in which it was in effect, and most of the Methodist ministers who were directly involved in the planning of the campaign were active ICM members. At a September meeting, the ICM membership voted to commend the Clergy Alliance and support their program. It is the understanding of the ICM steering committee that a new program, directed at another major Chicago company, will soon be in effect, and our membership will be notified of the fact at the first membership meeting after the company has been announced.

D. Chicago School Problem

BACKGROUND: The long-time record of defacto segregation in the Chicago school system, which has apparently involved a gerrymandering of school districts and a refusal by the School Board to declare a policy of integration, forced residents of several school districts to embark on a program of non-violent demonstrations during the summer. The proposed student transfer plan was opposed by Superintendent Willis, but the courts ruled that it must be put in effect. Over this question the Superintendent resigned. Downtown businessmen and a group of parents from an all-white school pressured the board to rescind its transfer order and call Willis back to the post of Superintendent. The board capitulated, and Willis returned. Within a few days a boycott of the Chicago schools was called by civil rights organizations. More than 200,000 students, half the school children of Chicago, stayed home or attended "Freedom Schools" to dramatize their demand that the schools be integrated. This was, incidentally, the largest single demonstration in the history of the modern civil rights movement. Negotiations between the School Board and the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (representing the Chicago civil rights organizations) broke down in early December. Now a boycott of the downtown stores has been called by these same civil rights groups in an attempt to alter the stand of the downtown businessmen, who were instrumental in the return of Willis. (For further information: See prepared 40-page testimony and statistics on Chicago school segregation by the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations available from the office of the Urban League, and "Questions and Answers About the 'Stop! Don't Shop Downtown' Campaign" prepared by Boycott Committee and available, while they last, from the ICM.)

ICM PARTICIPATION: In September the ICM membership drafted a letter to the Chicago School Board requesting that Willis be replaced as Superintendent. An ICM Schools Committee was appointed to prepare testimony for School Board hearings that were later called off. ICM is also a participating member of the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations, and as such participated in the one-day school boycott. Several "Freedom Schools" on that day were held at Methodist churches, and ICM provided some of the teachers for these schools. ICM was represented on the negotiating committee that met with the School Board. ICM supported the school transfer plan, and publicly criticized Board President Roddewig when he attacked the churches on the breakdown of the negotiations. We are listed among the organizations supporting the downtown boycott.

Other Actions of ICM That Should be Noted

Following the historic March on Washington (see first report) a mass demonstration was called by civil rights organizations to urge Senator Dirksen to vote for President Kennedy's Civil Rights Bill. It took place on September 12, and ICM was well represented.

A telephone committee was set up by the steering committee to achieve quick notification of the membership on any necessary action. The committee has functioned well.

A speaker's bureau was established, and the names of the speakers that ICM will make available was mailed to a wide list of Methodist and E.U.B. ministers.

Rev. Elmer Dickson replaced Rev. Stimson Smalley on the steering committee.

Rev. Maceo Pembroke and Rev. William White were appointed co-chairmen of Project Confrontation, a plan to meet with Methodist businessmen to end discrimination in Chicago industries.

Rev. Charles Peterson was named chairman of a committee to develop plans for a pilgrimage to General Conference, to be held in Pittsburgh.

A statement on the purposes and policies of the ICM was prepared by steering committee member Daniel Raines for publication in the official organs of the Lexington and Rock River Conferences.

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