You have probably received a statement release from Commissioner Clyde Sellers stating that the Montgomery bus protest is nearing an end as a result of a meeting with a group of Negro ministers, city bus line officials, and the city Commission. If this release gives the impression that an agreement has been reached, it is totally erroneous. The city has If there were any ministers in a meeting with the city Commission on Saturday, I assure you that they do not represent even a modicum of the Negro bus riders. (More than 99 percent of the) The Negro citizens of Mont have stated their position and it remains the same. The bus protest is still on and it will last until our proposals are given sympathetic consideration through our appointed leaders.

The Montgomery Improvement Ass.
Rev. M. L. King Jr., Pres.
Rev. U. J. Fields, Secr

ALdS. MLKP-MBU: Box 6.

hired Rowan in 1948 as its first black reporter. Three years later Rowan won the first of many awards for a series of eighteen articles entitled “How Far from Slavery?” His first profile of the boycott appeared as “Jim Crow Rides on Buses, So 60,000 Walk” in the Minneapolis Tribune on 22 January 1956. In 1961, Rowan became deputy assistant secretary of state for public affairs and was named ambassador to Finland in 1963. In 1964 he was appointed head of the United States Information Agency. The following year Rowan became the first black syndicated columnist, writing for the Chicago Daily News. Rowan discussed his involvement in the Montgomery movement in his memoir, Breaking Ground (1991).


Notes on MIA Executive Board Meeting,
by Donald T. Ferron

23 January 1956
Montgomery, Ala.

Two days after the reported settlement of the bus boycott, King gives a full account of the weekend’s events, including his conversation with one of the pastors who met with city officials, to an MIA executive board meeting. He then shifts to a discussion of the boycott’s goals in light of earlier negotiations with city officials. To avoid a “split within the ranks,” the MIA president refutes several accusations that had appeared in a recent Advertiser profile, after which the board members give him a “unanimous rising vote of confidence.”

of Fisk University researchers that was conducting a study of the bus boycott in its early months. (Errors in the typed version have been corrected according to Ferron's handwritten draft.)

In the section of the notes not included here, the board listened to committee reports and recommended filing an application for the MIA to operate its own transportation franchise. "If our franchise is not granted," they resolved, "the MIA will get a court injunction and attack the segregation law itself." The board empowered King, but no other officer, to release press statements without prior approval. It also decided to hold simultaneous mass meetings and to appoint a membership card committee.

DATE: Monday, January 23, 1956
TIME: 11:00 a.m.–2:45 p.m.
PLACE: Baptist Center

Meeting of the Executive Board

Rev. King describing his first knowledge that the protest had "ended". Carl Rowan is doing a series of articles for the "Minneapolis Tribune" on the protest here. His first article was to have appeared on Sunday morning, January 22. Mr. Rowan in the interim before publishing his article received an Association Press dispatch stating that the protest had ended. He immediately phoned (Rev. King) because he was disturbed over this, for he didn't want a compromise. He was told that this was the first that he (Rev. King) had known about it, and that none of the members of the M.I.A. had been to any meeting with the City Commissioners. Rowan called Commissioner Sellers, and while Sellers wouldn't give the names of the men, he did say that they were three Negro Ministers and gave their denominations. In the mean time, Rev. King called Mr. Brennan of the A. P. to have the release modified by stating that none of the members of the M.I.A. were present at the meeting. This was done in order that the public wouldn't get the impression that the protest had ended, so that money contributions wouldn't be blocked. Rowan called Rev. King and gave him the information that he had received from Sellers. Att. Gray, through a process of elimination found the men to have been Rev. Mosely, Bishop Rice, and Rev. Kynes.

2. Led by sociologist Preston Valien, this biracial research team, including Ferron, Willie Mae Lee, and Anna Holden, produced dozens of eyewitness reports of executive board meetings and mass meetings and conducted interviews with boycott participants and leaders from both the white and the black communities. See Valien’s report “The Montgomery Bus Protest as a Social Movement,” in Race Relations: Problems and Theory, ed. Jitsuichi Masuoka and Preston Valien (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), pp. 112–127; and several boxes of archival material in Valien’s collection at Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

3. King apparently succeeded. The Associated Press story, “Alabama City Asks End of Bus Boycott,” as published in the New York Times on 22 January, reported that “Mr. King said tonight that his group had not been reached. He added that he did not believe the Negroes were ready ‘to go back on the buses.’”

4. Benjamin F. Mosely was pastor of First Presbyterian Church. He released a statement denying his complicity in any agreement to end the boycott (“Mayor Stops Boycott Talk,” Montgomery Advertiser, 24 January 1956). Doc C. Rice and William K. Kinds were pastors of Oak Street Holiness Church and Jackson Street Baptist Church, respectively.
In giving the possible reasons for the newspaper article, Rev. King suggested that the Mayor wanted it to appear that there are two factions within the Negro community; that we’re split up, divided, to confuse the people into thinking that the leader did this.

Rev. King describes a talk with later with Rev. Kynes:

Kynes said that the Mayor called (Phoned—at least the person said he was the mayor) him to come to the Chamber of Commerce Building to discuss an insurance plan that was trying to be adopted in the city. When he entered the room the only person he recognized was Bishop Rice. The group talked for about three minutes, about insurance, and then the Mayor said that they couldn’t arrive at suitable arrangements until the bus situation is straightened out first. Where upon Rev. Kynes asked why the members of the M.I.A. weren’t called. The Mayor answered by saying that they wouldn’t compromise, and the Commissioners just couldn’t work with them; wanted people with sense. The meeting ended with no agreement. Rev. Kynes said he didn’t know why the Mayor called him. (Rev. King told the Executive Board that he didn’t know how true Rev. Kynes’ statement was).

(At this point there resulted general disorder for about two minutes, with on the other hand, most if not all of those present (there were approximately 22 members there) voicing disapproval and resentment over the fact that the three ministers had even attended the meeting, and, on the other hand, the President trying to achieve order) He said, in effect, that there are some violent Negroes (smiling) who would like nothing better than to get their hands on those ministers (their names had not officially been made known to the public), and he stated further that at one of the night clubs where it was announced that the newspapers on the following day would carry the story that a compromise had been reached, while in reality the protest was still on, someone shouted: “Just let us know who they were, we’ll hang ’em”. Rev. King smiled as he said it. Then quickly, changing to a serious, solemn, and determined attitude, he said that we cannot over estimate the importance of non-violence. We must be and unemotional. We must not be accused of intimidation. “We can’t hurt Uncle Tom’s by violence, but only by mass action.”

All agreed that this must be the policy.

Rev. King at this point turned to a brief discussion of the goals in which he stated that on last Monday there was a meeting with some whites with Rev. Bennett, Rev. Abernathy, Rev. Hubbard, and Rev. King present. When the meeting was over, he said, without detail, they felt the M.I.A. would compromise, although representatives of the M.I.A. made no definite commitments. (the nature of the arrangement for the meeting was not given) Someone (my vision was blocked) raised the question if the Executive Board would “relinquish Number 3 goal (Negro drivers) if No. 2. (seating) is accepted. The discussion ranged from the suggestion that if any goal is given up it should be number three, to the suggestion that the M.I.A. should hold out for number three at the loss of the others if there should be a compromise on the goals. Rev. Young5 stated that firmly if we com-
promise on any, it should be on the first two rather than number three, otherwise I'm not for it; I'm sticking for the whole!" Because bus drivers have police powers we can as a result get the other two, he said. Atty. Gray suggested that perhaps the best strategy would be to give the impression that concession might be made on goal number 3 if the first two goals are accepted, but without making a definite commitment. In this way the M.I.A. would not be committing itself first, so that in reality the whites would be making the first commitment and the M.I.A. can then commit itself on the white's commitment. Before any definite compromise is reached the conditions of it should be presented first to the Negroes in a mass meeting for their decision which would be final.

The truth of the editorial by Johnson in the “Montgomery Advertiser” concerning Rev. King was then refuted. This was in the form of what amounted to a “pep talk”, aimed at preventing a “split within the ranks”. It was denied that there was any discussion of Deacons in his church, or that his was a “professional church”. It was further denied that he knew anything about transferal of $5,017 to the Citizens Trust Bank of Atlanta, as he was out of the city at the time (at conference of Baptist Ministers in Hot Springs, Arkansas) It was verified that the transferal was made without his consent or knowledge, that it (the money) was drawn in a check made to “cash”, Rev Hubbard suggestion and sent in form of money orders to the Atlanta bank; it was denied that he has a cadillac car and his wife a new station wagon.\(^6\) Rev. King had been interviewed by Johnson but when he was asked about the policy of the NAACP, Rev. King said that all he said was that “the policy of the NAACP doesn't allow compromise on segregation”, and that if he wanted more information to see the President of the local branch, Mr. Matthews. All of the above statements were printed in order that there would be a split in the ranks. Rev. King emphasized the importance of unity, that he was made president of the M.I.A. by unanimous vote. Rev. Young asked for a vote of confidence—there was loud approval and a unanimous rising vote of confidence.

TD. PV-ARC-LNT.

---

\(^6\) Later in the meeting several board members noted that the decision to transfer funds out of state was taken on the advice of the MIA's attorneys, who were worried about legal proceedings against the organization and the boycott.