

On Thursday, March 28, 1968, thousands of Memphians witnessed the most historic march in the city's history. It was organized on behalf of the thousand sanitation workers who had been on strike for more than seven weeks because Mayor Loeb refused to grant them a dues check-off. In addition, a one-day work stoppage was called among all Negro employees and a half-day stoppage was called among all Negro businesses. Many high schools, college students, grown-ups, and various religious denominations participated.

The march was led by Dr. Martin Luther King and was scheduled to start from Clayborne Temple and cover Beale St., Main St., Poplar, and back the same route, but unfortunately it was broken up less than a half-hour after it began. No one would have expected it to turn out the way it did, because it seemed so peaceful at first and everything looked just like a carnival.

Citizens even began to assemble the area as early as 8:00 am and as late as 11:00 am. They were still pouring in Atlanta

2. Dr. King

for a while and when ~~he~~ finally arrived, some of the students crammed and jostled him a bit and I managed to squeeze and squirm a way through them to shake his hand, but nevertheless everything got off so well. People began to wave their signs and students broke out with soul- sounds. Then seconds later, a group of about thirty high school students started to tear up a bedstead that was in front of a house until they all had an iron pipe. By this time, the march had progressed on to Beale St. and some of the by-standers began to shatter windows of department stores and looting. Further down the street, more windows were broken and the policemen were trying the best they could to stop it. Then the march circled on around to Main St. where the policemen ordered the marchers to turn back around and start back to the temple because they didn't want the same kind of damage to occur on Main, but despite their order, the march did

reach as far as York Arms and then Dr. King abandoned the crowd and the police took over. The crowd got out of control and Main St. ~~for~~ turned into a battle between policemen and marchers. About two-hundred negro youngsters started on the east side of Main and began to break everything in sight that was breakable and then other policemen rushed in with tear gas and mace to force them back. I was able to find a safe spot and while I was standing there I saw about fifteen cops beat a man unconscious with their blacksticks and dragged him over to a squad car and threw him in the car. Then the same cops turned around and jumped a minister. They ruffed him up a little and sprayed him with mace. The fighting continued for a while but the policemen were able to form a wedge and clear everybody off the sidewalks, out of restaurants,

pool halls, and lounges. Many of the people were allowed to walk out unharmed, but in many cases the policemen broke in and sent them out bodily. Looting continued in the six-area block of Beale and valuable merchandise was taken especially from Pape's and Paul's clothing stores and then more violence broke out at Fourth and Vance. Koeb's Crin-up Cleaner was bombed and looters cleaned out the liquor store next door and took all the liquor they could and that they couldn't take, they just took and broke it. Then the policemen were rushed back to the temple to disperse the crowd inside and swirl around in all sections of the city.

National guards were called to insert order and Koeb immediately reshored a seven to five ~~a.m.~~ <sup>a.m.</sup> curfew for the next four days.

From looking at statistics, liquor stores were reported the favorite target

after Loeb imposed a ban on the sale of alcohol beverages. Riots then turned to force and stole their loozes. Fire was the second largest problem. There were some hundred and fifty fires to two-hundred reported in one night. Some business were even hit twice and some sixty persons were reported injured and one fatality resulted and damages totaled over \$400,000 excluding fires.