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LeMoyne Reflections on Sanitation Strike March pp. 329-331 -- G.H.

Item Type	Text
Download date	2026-04-13 04:58:27
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10267/34103

On March 28, 1968, the entire city of Memphis was asked to participate in an active demonstration dedicated to the cause of the sanitation department strike, which mainly include all Negro workers. This demonstration supposedly non-violence erupted into a violent movement on the part of its participants. This demonstration was led by the honorable Dr. Martin Luther King. In this paper I will give my opinions, as well as, several people giving their opinion on the riot and the present conditions. These are the topics to be dealt with: ⁽¹⁾ the cause of the march which turn-out into a small riot, ⁽²⁾ the peoples idea about why it was done ⁽³⁾ and the effect it had on Memphis as a whole.

On this date, March 28, 1968, the honorable Dr. Martin Luther King had planned a march on Memphis. This demonstration was to begin at 10 a.m. Memphis time but it seemed to be delayed until 11:38 a.m. One reason that could have caused the riot was the delay.

This delay enable march participants to obtain means of intoxications. While receiving these means of intoxications, the ideal thing about a riot was in discussion. This ideas rashed through the mind of the participants and this become the talk of the hour.

Another important factor was the incident at Hamilton High School, before the march had started. The word

had reached the members of the march that students were being force not to participate in this march. This led to rock-throwing and police brutality among students and police officers. Several students were injured with belly-dab by the police officers, this made the tension build even higher among the marchers.

The finally reason, that really brought about confusion and frustration was the halting of the march by the police officers on Main street. Tension had reached its peak at this moment and the riot was well under-way.

When the riot was over, most people had the same idea, and this was very amazing. Many said, "This is what should have been done long ago," was the opinion of the great majority of participants. One person, not calling any name, said, "Memphis needs to be burned, if not bombed, then get all of those criminals out of office, namely mayor Laeb." One fellow said "Laeb is just a backwards 'dam' nigger with only one intension, to lead Memphis like Boss Crump and gain all of the power necessary to do so." I found these people to be serious about the honorable statements they had made concern Laeb.

I personally attended this march on similar grounds about the city officials of Memphis, the person or persons chiefly responsible for the riot. In listening to the news reports about the strike and reading the newspapers, I got the impression that Laeb had his old southern conservative attitude about ways negroes could be treated. I formed the idea that Laeb had an old southern slogan "huc a nigger, fire a nigger," type of thing. Well! this really

Made me angry, for a person to think in this manner. Especially a person in his position, making a blundering statement that could cost him his job as well as his life.

In observing the news-report I find that many business-suffered greatly from the riot. Thousands of dollars in material and merchandise was report stolen or miss-placed. From their reports. I interviewed some of the people that took part in the riot. One young man, whom I will refer to as Mr. X, had this to say, "the riot was started when they stopped the march, because it was stopped somebody had to complete the demonstration, so we just single called upon the business-men. This is why I broke windows, this is why I did a little stealing." Not only was this individual standing along on this idea or issue but about 79% of the people I interviewed shared the same common feeling.

The Negro communities felt this was only the beginning. If the law seemed unfair in its effort to serve the communities in the surrounding Memphis area, and if its necessary that rioting is the solution to a long stream of unfair laws and law-makers, then this is what the Negro Communities will have to do, in order to preserve peace, justice and to obtain a democratic way of life