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LeMoyne Reflections on Sanitation Strike March pp. 167-173 -- I.J.S.

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My paper is an interview taken from persons who were on the scene of the march when the riot erupted. I will use no names so as to avoid incriminating anyone.

The first person interviewed I will call, Mrs. Jane Doe. Mrs. Doe is a teacher with the Memphis City School System.

The second was Mr. John Doe a prominent Memphis Retired Man.

The following are their accounts and reason why they felt it necessary to march in the first place.

Mrs. Jane Doe's Interview
She states:

As the march began everything was peaceful, the people were in high spirit and very glad to see persons that they knew.

As far as seeing him was concerned, but the persons in the front were all leading cheers and yelling as though there was a pep rally which gave us to know he was there.

As the march continued along we sighted people standing on the sidewalk. The march marshalls asked them to get off the sidewalks and into the streets but some of them insisted on being spectators.

While continuing to march you could see policemen blocking intersections so that traffic could not enter. They seemed very jolly as they stood conversing with each other.

By the time my section almost reached Main and Beale Streets, the people in front started running and hollering go back to the church. He stood still for awhile for the marshalls had given us no signal. When it seemed almost like a stampede, he heard a window break and saw a group of boys running toward us. He began running too as we ran we heard

~~windows~~ breaks ~~in~~ ~~the~~ windows were
 broken before we reached Main and
 Beale. The windows that were broken
 were done so while running back to
 the church. The boys were running
 and breaking windows as they went.
 The looting cleared after the windows
 were broken for when the police
 chased the boys who broke them and
 passed by the businesses other boys
 went in and looted them.

When we arrived back at the
 church we all went in and sat down.
 After a length of time more of the
 marchers returned and the church
 became crowded.

The people were naturally scared
 and there was quite a bit of noise.
 The police began to shoot tear gas
 into the church as more marchers
 would arrive and the door would
 be opened to let them in the police
 would shoot in more tear gas.

Rev. Lawson tried to get the

people to go to sleep but women were
 looking for their children from whom
 they had been separated and groups of
 people they had arrived with were
 power shouts of hysteria and much
 crying but you couldn't possibly
 know whether the people were crying
 from being frightened or from tear gas.

After awhile Rev. Lawson went to
 call Police Chief Hallman and ask him
 to call off his men.

While we were still at the Clay-
 born Temple and the ministers were
 meeting with us, a group of people
 called "The Invaders" tried to take over
 the meeting by at intervals hollering
 out such things as "Black Power, Guns
 and Bullets are what you need not
 peace."

One even went far enough to
 say "These ministers are going to cause
 you people to go straight to Hell" be-
 cause they aren't telling you the truth."

These persons called the Invaders wore "naturals", ~~black~~ power emblems around their necks, and what appeared to be Army fatigue jackets with either "Invader" or "Black Power" on the back. These young men appeared to be between 19-22 years of age rather than high school students as was thought.

Mr. John Doe's Interview

Mr. Doe states that after the people were headed back to the church and windows were being broken and looting started, the policemen began to ask no questions only to hit the first person he came upon. It mattered not if you just happened to be hit. You had to run to get away without any injury. You weren't running from them because you had done something but because whether you did or not you knew the policemen would beat you as though you had.

The policemen were beating little boys like the negroes and anyone who was caught was arrested.

Both Mrs. Jane Doe and Mr. John Doe felt that along with helping the Sanitation Workers, the march was for "Negro Rights." They stated that there were thousands of signs carried stating "I am a Man". They both felt that this was ridiculous to have to tell someone what they should already be able to see.

Mrs. Doe said, "Young people have read the Declaration of Independence that they are not free. The white man has set the stage for this play and the Negro's are just playing their parts. The white man could never understand what the Negro has had to confront, the only way he could understand is to be a Negro."