

Ala. Leader Heard At Hampton

"There's A New Negro In US" - Martin L. King

HAMPTON, Va.—The Montgomery, Alabama story is the drama of a little town, often referred to as the cradle of the Confederacy; it is the story of a Negro community using a new approach in grappling with the crises of race relations." So said Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist church and president of the Montgomery Improvement association, in a moving speech before a capacity audience Thursday night at Hampton Institute's Ogden Hall.

Despite a delay of one hour, caused by flight trouble, Dr. King delivered his address, which marked the opening of the 1956-57 season of assembly-lectures for III, with incisive language, explaining the causes leading up to the Montgomery bus boycott by Negroes, clarifying the purpose of the "non-cooperation with abuse," and delineating the underlying philosophy of the movement, which is now in its tenth month.

REFERRING TO the history of the American Negro from slave days, when he was but a thing to be used and not a person to be respected, Dr. King traced the gradual emergence of the Negro's new evaluation of himself, especially

when faced with the rationalization of the obvious wrong in the "false garments of righteousness." For continued physical slavery had led to a "mental paralysis—a negative peace accepted in lack of self-confidence." But today, Dr. King stated, "there is a new Negro in the South, who has regained his self-respect, his dignity and his value as human being, and who is tired of being trampled by the iron feet of oppression."

Dr. King then enumerated the long-standing grievances of Negro passengers on Montgomery buses, such as oral abuse by drivers, fare cheating, reserved seats, and compulsory standing. Since the initial one-day protest against the bus company on the day of the famed trial of Mrs. Rosa Parks the whole world has learned of the facts, he continued, and called the boycott 99 per cent effective. Shortly thereafter the Montgomery Improvement association under ministerial guidance was organized, and since then has guided and directed the protest. "And 50,000 Negroes," stated Dr. King, "have substituted tired feet for tired souls." A well functioning carpool is now serving the Negro community.

VARIOUS ATTEMPTS were made to block the movement, beginning with noncompromising negotiations, attempted conquest by division in the Negro leadership, a "get tough" policy involving arrests with finger-printing and incarceration for minor or imaginary traffic rule violations, and ending in physical violence, which included the bombing of Dr. King's home, and mass indictments under an old law of dubious constitutionality.

"But," declared Dr. King, "we are freed from crippling fear: no more cooperation with injustice." The basic philosophy at Montgomery has been and will be, stated Dr. King, "non-violent resistance—with neither hatred nor bitterness; not to defeat the white man, and not to attain victory over the white community, but rather to defeat and win a victory over injustice, for injustice is wrong whoever is practicing it."

THE MONTGOMERY Negro, Dr. King assured his audience, "does not believe in either aggressive or retaliatory violence, for violence is impractical as it is immoral." The emphasis is on Christian love as a regulating idea, for all men are of intrinsic worth.

The other new self-evaluation of the Negro in the South is based upon his deep faith in the future, and thus, said Dr. King, "the movement has become a spiritual one, dependent upon moral forces, which are on the side of justice, freedom and equality." Dr. King advocated the moderation of reason but not moderation in the march forward to equalization, for he stated his conviction that the "love of America and democracy demands equality as a moral compulsion rather than as a political expedient."

IN CLOSING, Dr. King reminded the students and guests that the Negro must assume full responsibility for the final achievement of equality by all legal means, including legislation, the ballot, and the goodwill of all people everywhere. He spoke strongly against the blatant and conspicuous segregation and disfranchisement of Negroes in the South and also against the hidden and more subtle forms in the North, calling segregation "a cancer in the body politic." Dr. King asked for continued support to efforts to secure the right of full citizenship and "to refuse to cooperate with injustice, even at the cost of deprivation, sacrifice and death itself."

Dr. King was given a standing ovation. President Alonzo G. Moron of III introduced the speaker as an old, personal friend, whose leadership "offered a lasting example of the use of intelligence and self-sacrifice in the solution of our problems."