

ALABAMA BOYCOTT FIGURE GIVES TALK

Group Here Is Told Of New Negro Race Pride

Negroes boycotting busses in Montgomery, Ala., are for the first time "proud we are Negroes," a principal figure in the Deep South dispute told a Baltimore group yesterday.

Fred D. Gray, chief counsel for the Montgomery branch, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said: "The old, fearful, trembling Negro has grown up. Fear has given way to courage."

The assertion prompted hearty applause from a crowd of about 350 Negroes gathered for a
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"Civil Rights Day" program sponsored by the Baltimore branch, N.A.A.C.P., in the Sharp Street Memorial Methodist Church.

The crowd contributed \$200 for the civil-rights drive of the Montgomery Improvement Association, which retains Mr. Gray as chief counsel and is sponsoring the 138-day-old bus boycott.

A member of the audience announced that Baltimore Negroes in the post office have raised another \$700 for the fund.

Mr. Gray's speech, delivered in tones that ranged from those of emotion to others of determination, highlighted a 2½-hour program.

He asserted, "We are marching on to freedom together" and claimed the Negroes in Montgomery will maintain the boycott until their three demands are met by the transportation company.

Cites Demands

The demands, he said, are that "drivers be courteous to us," that a new seating arrangement be adopted so Negroes don't have to give up seats in the middle of the bus for standing white persons and that Negro drivers be employed in areas where most patrons are Negroes.

The company, he said, offered a promise of courtesy but rejected the other requests.

"The Negro in Montgomery has decided he is tired of being pushed around . . . tired of paying bus drivers to mistreat us," Mr. Gray declared.

He said the boycott began when "a very fine lady of our community" was arrested on a bus, after "everybody (was) already fed up" because of the earlier arrests of two young Negro girls who wouldn't surrender seats that were not in the section reserved for white riders.

Leaflets Distributed

Several thousand leaflets were distributed after the woman's arrest, urging Negroes not to ride busses on December 5, but to meet that night for a rally, he said.

Since then, Mr. Gray declared, white leaders of Montgomery "have tried every trick in the book to get us back on the busses, but it didn't work."

He said Negro car owners were given tickets and, for a time, were imprisoned in lieu of being ticketed, "for minor traffic violations."

Mr. Gray declared that on January 24 a radio newscaster had quoted Montgomery's Mayor on a "new, get-tough policy" toward Negroes.

"Our Social Fabric"

The Mayor was quoted, Mr. Gray said, as urging white employers to stop giving rides to their Negro cooks and maids who are "fighting to destroy our social fabric."

On the same program, Mr. Gray asserted, the city police commissioner was quoted as laying out a new program to break the boycott.

The program, according to Mr. Gray, embraced "periodic checks" of Negro taxis, frequent stops of Negro motorists carrying boycott passengers, and checks for "chauffeurs' licenses."

One of the greatest results of the boycott, Mr. Gray said, is that "within our own group, we've destroyed all class distinctions."

Most Co-Operate, He Says

Almost every Negro is co-operating, although "when a big yellow bus stops in front of you, it takes a great deal to refrain from getting on," he said.

On the national significance of the boycott, Mr. Gray said: "I hope (after listening to this talk) you will decide things aren't so rosy here in Baltimore . . . that you haven't arrived in the land of milk and honey yet."

The program was dedicated to the late Charles Hamilton Houston, Negro civil-rights specialist, in whose honor a high school at Calhoun and Baker streets has been renamed.