

A "Why Come South"

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The white Methodist leaders of Jackson especially represented the appearance of Methodist ministers from other parts of the country at their churches. The Southern men said this was hypocritical and that these outsiders had no business in Mississippi. The fact that the Tougaloo Movement had asked them to come ~~was~~ was of no importance to the local white clergy. But once the crisis was so publicized and once we asked for help the outside ministers had to say "no" to the local white ministers in order to say "yes" to the Movement. Or vice versa.

A prominent Methodist minister, in Detroit issued a statement supporting a group of ministers from that city who had been arrested in Jackson. There were Black and white ministers in this delegation to Mississippi. Dr Laird said:

Some might raise the question as to the propriety of ministers from the North carrying on a crusade for justice in the South. This is a legitimate question and deserves an answer.

...

Whatever goes on in one part of the (American) union ~~is~~ is of concern to the whole nation. Any American's concern about what takes place in another section of the country is a justifiable concern.

Sickness in one part of the country can spread through the rest of the land. The denial of freedom anywhere is a threat to freedom elsewhere.

The power of white citizen's councils in Mississippi gives aid and comfort to the purveyors of prejudice in Detroit and its suburbs.

Evil that goes unchallenged only multiplies. So now in Mississippi not only is the Negro denied access to the white church, but the white man who would worship with a Negro is also arrested.

The ultimate absurdity was reached recently when a white member was arrested at his own local church because he was accompanied by a Negro friend.

In addition to their democratic right of freedom to worship, Christians have a religious right ~~of free~~ to worship in any church of God. The Detroit ministers were properly concerned about the flagrant violation of this right.

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The ministers could be rightly criticized if they were disturbed about segregated churches in Mississippi but were unconcerned about exclusive churches in Michigan.

This is not the case. They are well aware of the pressures to segregate our own churches and they oppose them.

...

The ministers who went South are not blind to this prejudice in the North. They knew, however, that this mental aberration is found in its extreme when a man is denied the right to worship because of his complexion.

They knew a dramatic assault on this arrogant nonsense in the South might illuminate the stupidity of prejudice in the North. For that they deserve our thanks.¹³