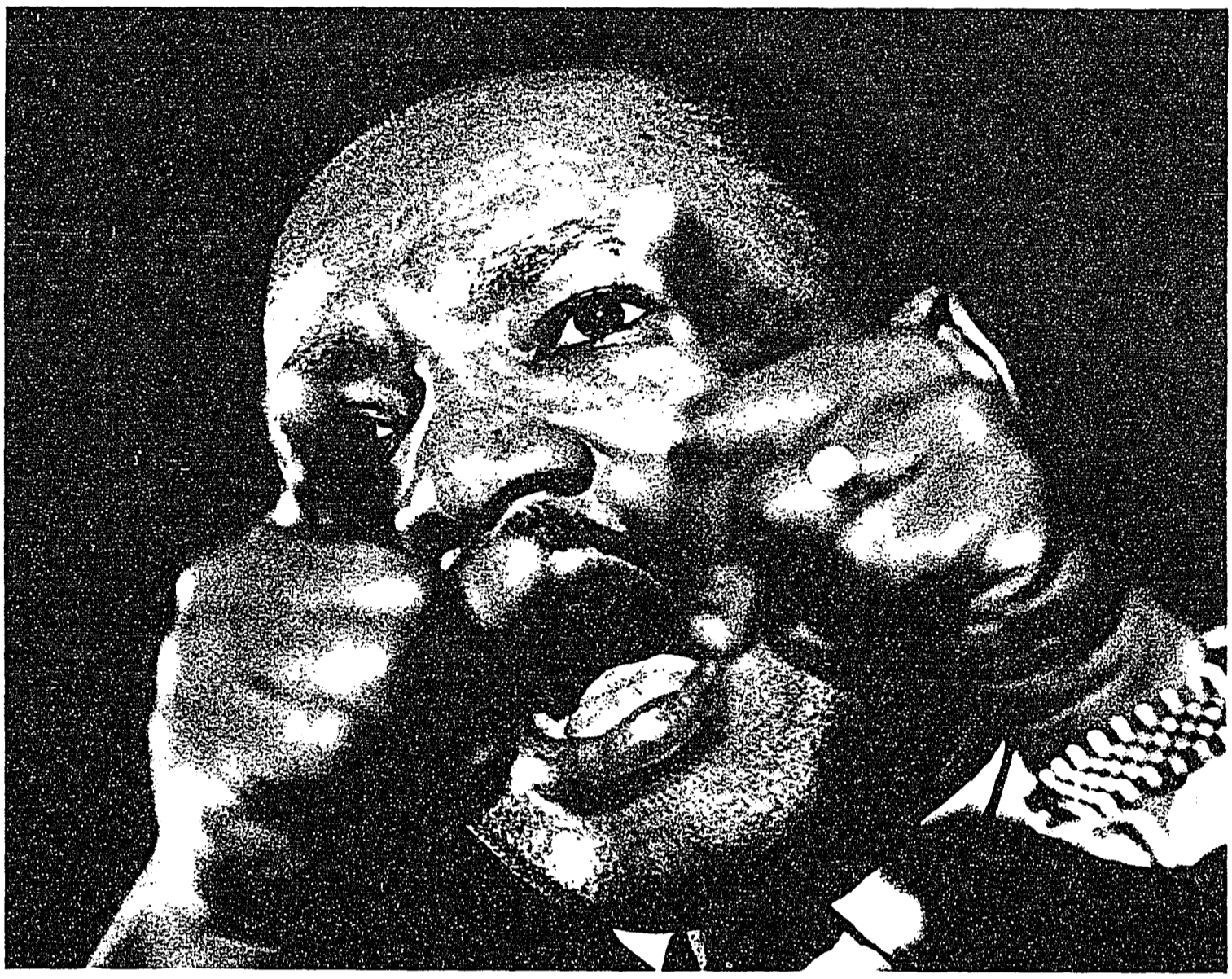
It may be a long, hot spring in the capital

Dr. King's March on Washington, Part II

By JOSE YGLESIAS



THE day after Lincoln's Birthday none of the leaders in the Atlanta headquarters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference had read President Johnson's speech, at the Lincoln Memorial, likening himself to the Civil War President. Johnson had said that, like Lincoln, he, too, was "sad and steady." Martin Luther King Jr. simply laughed when he heard this and guessed the President was looking for some sympathy for the mess he had gotten himself into in Vietnam. On Lincoln's Birthday, Dr. King and his staff had spent the entire day in a planning meeting on the Poor People's Campaign to begin in April in Washington, and for this reason, no doubt, had little attention or sympathy to spare for the President. In fact, their plans are calculated to disturb whatever peace of mind the President enjoys these days.

Not all of the campaign plans are known — nor will be, since prior knowledge might allow the Administration to upstage them in the dramatic confrontations that may become necessary—but the original announcement last December was disquieting enough. President Johnson replied that he hoped the 3,000 followers Dr. King expects to bring to Washington will be acting constructively, not disruptively. Dr. King had warned that they might tie up transportation in Washington, jam the hospitals, boycott schools and sit-in at Government offices in "a last desperate demand to avoid the worst chaos, hatred and violence any nation has ever encountered."

The President does not have the consolation that the demonstrations will confine themselves to the domestic situation. The Administration will be scored on the issue of the war, too. Dr. King for a long time now has been prominent in the peace movement, and although at first he attacked the war on the basis of national priorities—that we were mistakenly making it the first order of business—he has since made clear that his opposition is also a moral one, one which he would maintain were there no other problems at home to tackle. His thinking permeates the entire staff of S.C.L.C., as I found after a day of speaking to those in the Atlanta office. "This war is being used by the American establishment," says the literature of the campaign, "against the poverty-stricken people of Vietnam and the poor people here at home."

I HAD, in fact, heard that during the original discussions last fall on the Poor People's Campaign, one member had held out for a long time for concentrating their activities on bringing the Vietnam war to an end. When I saw King on my second day in Atlanta, I asked him how S.C.L.C. had finally unanimously decided on a Poor People's Campaign — how, specifically, the advocate of peace demonstrations had been won over. King explained that although the cost to the nation of wiping out poverty had not been reduced to a dollar figure, the war in Vietnam—"this unjust and immoral war," as he always characterizes it—cannot be waged if the campaign's demands are met. "That is what convinced those who wanted a peace demonstration."

King and his colleagues have come to believe that war and poverty are inseparable issues and, in another context, he has said that it may well be the job of the American Negro "to reform the structure of racist imperialism from within." Consequently, to demand that the country use, in their words, "the $70-billion it spends annually for war" to create jobs and wipe out the ghettos seems to him the best way to end the war. ($70-billion was the total defense outlay for 1967, according to Federal budget figures submitted to Congress in January; of this sum, $20.5-billion was for Vietnam. Estimates for fiscal 1968 put the defense total at $76.5-billion.) In any case, the black audiences in Alabama to whom he spoke during the next two days caught the message, for his denunciation of the Vietnam war always brought one of the most enthusiastic responses.

Besides the twin issues of the war

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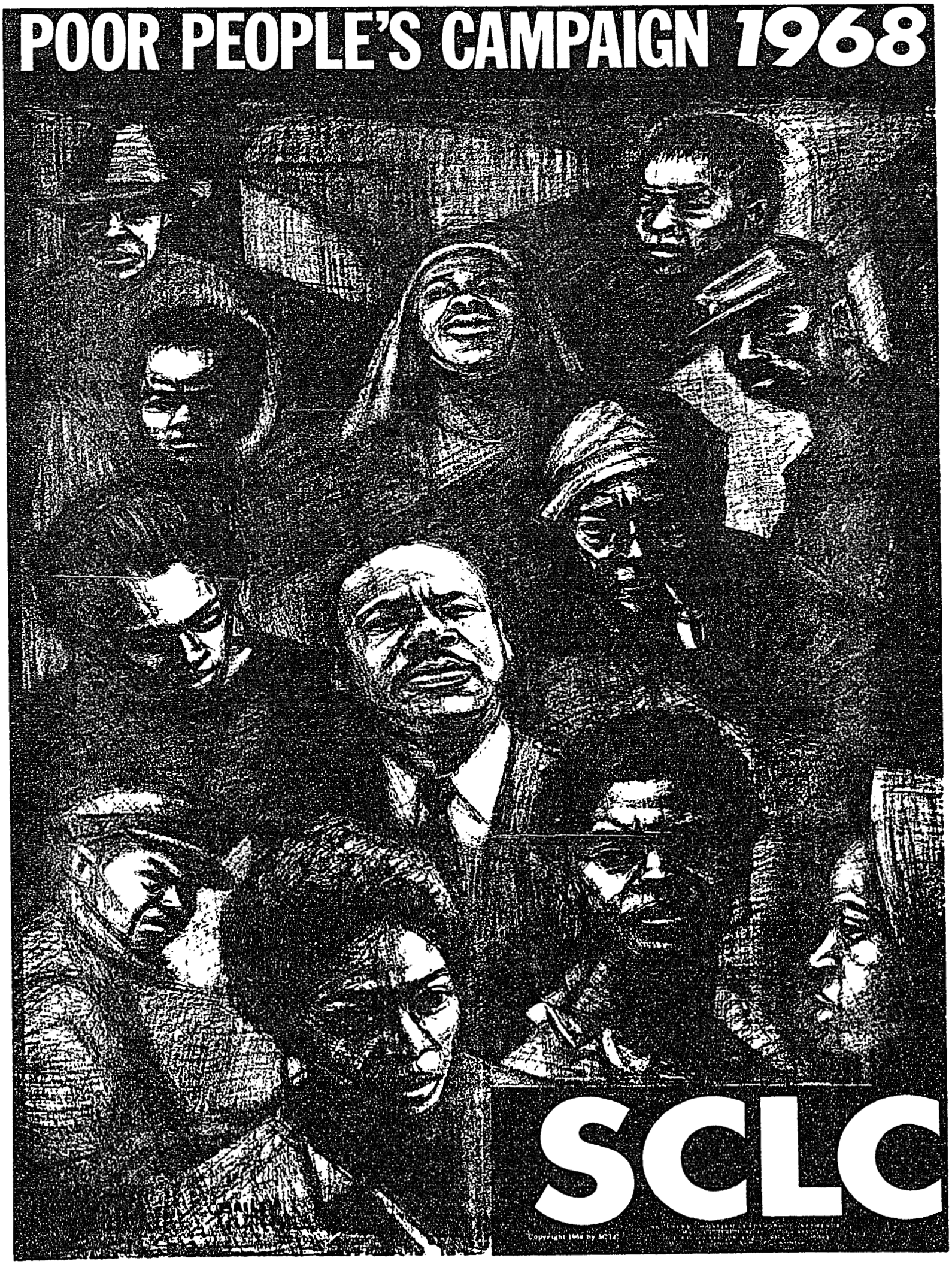

At left, Martin Luther King Jr.; right, a poster for the forthcoming campaign of his Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

and poverty, one other fact had become clear about the demonstrations by mid-February: they were not to be a weekend affair. Sitting in the Rev. Andrew Young's office — he's Andy to everyone, though executive director of S.C.L.C. and perhaps as important as Dr. King in formulating policy—I heard Mr. Young say to an inquirer on the phone, "Listen, we don't have a cutoff date, but I figure that by the end of June we will have gotten some response or all of us will be in jail." All 3,000 recruits, for whom workshops in nonviolent techniques were to begin this month, will be committed to the probability

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of jail sentences. Not just for one offense but for the many they may feel morally compelled to commit to force Congress to act.

That they are willing to go to jail is nothing new for civil-rights demonstrators, nor even that they are willing to disrupt the normal activities of a city. This is what they did in Montgomery and Birmingham and Selma. But in the past they demonstrated, almost without exception, for the implementation on behalf of the Negroes of rights promised to all Americans. Now the nature and content of the demonstrations has changed: they are not going to Washington, as in 1963, to support proposed legislation; they are not speaking for blacks alone but for all poor people, and they will not be following a line of march benevolently set out for them and protected by a generally approving Administration.

Faced with the general demands of the campaign — everything from jobs and a guaranteed income to medical care and decent homes and quality education for all—a Rip Van Winkle from the thirties might well come up with the old rhetorical question: "Do you think the world owes you a living?" From King's followers he would get for reply a resounding yes. As he puts it, they are out to get an Economic Bill of Rights. The tactics are nonviolent and the tone of the language in S.C.L.C. literature is moral, but the substance of the demands is revolutionary for America: class demands dramatically expressed through other than the orderly democratic process.

In a question-and-answer form the Atlanta headquarters has prepared for its campaign workers, the question is asked: "Why would you disrupt or dislocate Washington, D. C.?" The answer is militant: "Poor people's lives are disrupted and dislocated every day, and we want to put a stop to this."

WHEN Young put the phone down, I asked if S.C.L.C. wasn't getting into radical, working-class politics. He looked puzzled. "I don't know about that. I am doing what I joined the ministry to do," he said, and quoted Jesus about preaching the gospel to the poor.

He admitted that until now the main objectives of the civil-rights movement had been ones that most benefited middle-class Negroes. "The people who marched in the demonstrations and got beaten to desegregate restaurants and hotels can't take advantage of those gains," he said. "They can't afford them. Now these people are saying, 'What about us?' " And Young was the first of those I was to meet in the next few days to paraphrase Gandhi to describe one motive for the Poor People's Campaign: "There go my people — I must hurry and catch up with them, for I am their leader."

A few minutes later, in Dr. King's office on the other side of a thin partition, an office no larger than Young's and much more cluttered, I asked King also if he hadn't abandoned moral issues for the class struggle. He was in shirt sleeves and had leaned back in his chair, one arm raised, tapping his head lightly with his hand, a favorite position with him. Now he leaned forward and spoke directly, a manner I was to find customary with him, so that interviewers seldom have to rephrase questions; he responds to the tone and level of the question but also, as if fulfilling a personal need, to implications that at first do not seem implicit in the question: an intellectual curiosity that gives the effect of total sincerity.

"In a sense, you could say we are engaged in the class struggle, yes," he said. He explained that the gains for which the civil-rights movement had fought had not cost anyone a penny, whereas now —"It will be a long and diffi-

CALL TO ACTION—*"When King spoke, they called out their agreement in words—'Oh yes!,' 'Yessir!,' 'That's the truth!'—or with murmurs and sighs. His humor is varied, and their responding phrases and laughter always caught his tone." Dr. King explaining his Poor People's Campaign to a gathering in a Selma, Ala., church.*

cult struggle, for our program calls for a redistribution of economic power. Yet this isn't a purely materialistic or class concern. I feel that this movement in behalf of the poor is the most moral thing—it is saying that every man is an heir to a legacy of dignity and worth."

Although we went on to talk of other things, this question remained with him, and I heard him the next night, at a church in Birmingham, expand on it. There he continued with a discussion of the parable of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus. Lazarus had not gone to heaven simply because he was poor, King argued, nor the rich man to hell because he was rich. "No, the rich man was punished because he passed Lazarus every day and did not see him. . . . And I tell you if this country does not see its poor —if it lets them remain in their poverty and misery—it will surely go to hell!"

IN his office, however, I quoted to him a New York radical who had said that Dr. King's political problems derive from the fact that his present support comes from middle-class Negro churches and organizations: they would oppose his new tack. Has there been opposition?

He shook his head. "When we began discussing this thing last fall, we expected there would be opposition — from the timid supplicants and from the ultramilitants." He shook his head again. "In a sense, you could say we are waging a consensus fight. The Harris Poll recently showed that 68 per cent want a program to supply jobs to everyone who wants to work, and 64 per cent want slums eradicated and rebuilt by the people of the community—which means a great many new jobs."

Just as in 1963 the majority desired action on civil rights for the Negro, he said, so did most people now agree that poverty has to be wiped out. I pointed out that the 1963 March on Washington had the cooperation of the Kennedy Administration, whereas President Johnson's reaction to the Poor People's Campaign was negative. Most people do not know, he replied, that the initial reaction of the Kennedy Administration was also negative; it was only after Kennedy had his aides talk to them and find out their plans that the Administration's attitude changed.

A few minutes earlier, I had told Young that everyone was saying that King, after the December announcement, could surely no longer get an appointment at the White House, and Young had answered, "He has never looked for one." Propped on a shelf in King's office, in so unfavored a position that it had to compete with every object in the room for attention, was a copy of the famous photograph of King and President Johnson talking privately. Had the Johnson Administration made any overture? Like Young, King said no.

NEGROES prominent in one of the Washington Government departments had made inquiries about plans for the campaign. King did not know whether these were feelers—an attempt on the part of the Administration to learn their plans—or simply interest on the part of individuals who in the past have supported the civil-rights movement. "I can assure you and them that we will never destroy life or property and if the demonstrations become violent, if the people who come to Washington do not abide by nonviolence, we shall call them off. We may be greeted by violence—I cannot guarantee you that we won't—but we will never respond with violence," King said.

66"The goal of this campaign,' King said, 'will be to expose Congress. We will escalate the campaign on the basis of the response we get.'99

After a pause, he added, "Nevertheless, we may have to break perfectly reasonable and just laws to call attention to the situation."

What reasonable and just laws?

"Well, I think a law that doesn't allow 15 people to come into this office and camp here is just and reasonable," he said with a smile. (Fifteen people in King's office would not have room to sit.) "But we may have to break such laws."

The demonstration will be low-keyed at first, he ex-

"Williams wasn't frightened: 'I'm a Presbyterian!' King, a Baptist, enjoyed that"

plained. The core of recruits —those 3,000 who will act as marshals for the thousands they hope will come to Washington for the weeks of demonstrations — will attempt to present to Congressional committees and Government departments general demands to meet the crises of the cities and rural communities. Only at this stage will the campaign outwardly resemble orderly civil-rights demonstrations, though the arrival in Washington of the demonstrators was still being discussed in February—a dramatic act is what they were looking for. Since they are not going to Washington in support of some particular bill they themselves will have drawn up, the presentation of demands may be symbolic in themselves, such as the announced jamming of hospitals with people seeking medical care.

The reasons for not presenting detailed legislation are tactical. They believe that if the campaign is tied to specific bills they may, in Andy Young's words, be building in failure. Their job is to mount a massive, militant demonstration of poor people's needs—the wiping out of slums, the creation of jobs through government spending on, say, the rebuilding of cities, immediate guaranteed incomes, the extension of medical services and quality education for everyone; in effect, to spend the annual $70-billion allotted "for war" to insure that the poor break out of the cycle of poverty and discrimination they believe the system now imposes on them. Finding legislative solutions is the job of the Administration and Congress.

King shows a certain impatience with those who want them, at every turn, to come up with specific programs. In his last book he pointed out that there is no dearth of programs—from his own of 1964 entitled a "Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged" to those of many agencies, organizations and individual social scientists. "Underneath the invitation to prepare programs," he said, "is the premise that the Government is inherently benevolent — it only awaits presentation of imaginative ideas."

One lesson from past civil-rights demonstrations the Conference people consider applicable is that of the Selma march in 1965. The voting-rights act, they were told, could not be passed. It was not a practical measure to demand. Yet a massive, militant demonstration persuaded the Administration and Congress to find a solution. The apocalyptic tone of this spring's demands is justified: beyond these demonstrations looms a summer of violence in the cities. The Conference does not promise to head it off—or to provide a safety valve—and it is almost as if, the need being so large, it cannot risk talking specific legislation without being accused of either.

"I am not optimistic about the immediate response of Congress," King said. "But you can say that the goal of this campaign will be to expose Congress. We will escalate the campaign on the basis of the response we get."

ONE plan that everyone, including King, is very taken with is that of building a shanty town in Washington, a symbolic picture of how the poor live in many areas but also a historic reminder of the bonus marchers of the thirties. They will first build it on public property, expecting that they will be run off from a succession of sites until they end on private property belonging to a sympathizer. King hopes the demonstrations will end with a march in Washington similar to 1963's but lasting for at least three days.

I had been discussing projected actions with Young earlier, trying to learn how they were specifically organizing each, and it had seemed to me that they were in flux and largely unorganized. "What, for example," I asked, "will you do if the hospitals to which you take people do accept them and give them all a medical checkup?" Young said that in that case they would call for people everywhere needing medical treatment to come to the hospitals; as things happen they will improvise their responses.

King confirmed this and, to overcome my misgivings, pointed out that during the Selma march they had never planned their actions more than one day in advance. They simply met every night and decided about the following day. "We're aware that to a

degree we're riding on the forces of history and not totally shaping things."

"For two years we have been discussing philosophy," King said, a favorite diagnosis of his for what he considers the inaction lately of black organizations. In speeches I was to hear him give, he put it differently: "We have been bogged down in the paralysis of analysis." In his office, he nodded to himself and said, "I believe that this action will create new alliances, wake new forces."

KING doesn't initiate criticism of the Black Power movement. I asked him if he still would say, as he did in his book, "Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?", published last year, that Black Power is a slogan without a program. He nodded, and I asked him if he'd read the book by Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, "Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America." Each time he had taken it with him on a plane, he said, someone had talked to him at such length he had not been able to read it, but a colleague had informed him that the book proved his point that the Black Power people have no program of action.

The 10 per cent of whites in S.C.L.C.'s staff of 100 were, in the main, hired when the issue of black separatism was raised, but King is in sympathy with many of the points that Black Power leaders make. In the hive of tiny offices in the Atlanta headquarters, there are still posters advertising its recent cultural evening entitled "Black Is Beautiful." The organization's newspaper then in the planning stage was to be called Soul Force. In one office there are even posters of Che Guevara. All staff members become wary when one asks whether they believe the Black Power people will join them in Washington.

King believes that they will, once the action begins, for Black Power leaders do not want senseless riots either, he says, and he only criticizes them because they do not have a program to channel the anger of the black people into positive actions. "I tell you, many more riots of the kind we had last summer," he said, "and we shall be in danger of a right-wing takeover of the fascist type!"

This was something of a passionate outburst with him, and he added, more calmly, a statement he again made during the next two days: "Riots increase the fears of the whites and relieve them of their guilt." He usually expands this statement to explain that the Conference program is militant if only because it allows the whites—or, in the case of the Poor People's Campaign, the privileged—no out. The recruits are going to Washington to bear witness and by their presence to make ugly facts of American life visible in the capital.

Some of the new alliances he hopes for were only tentative in February. But they were hopeful signs. S.C.L.C. was a month late with plans but had already made contact with the poor in Appalachia, the New York Puerto Rican community, and with Mexican-Americans and Indians. King took pride in this. I said, "You can't say that you're in civil rights any longer."

He smiled. "But you can say I am in human rights."

His secretary, Dora McDonald, cut our interview short; it had already run a half hour beyond schedule and had followed on the heels of a formal interview, with photographers shooting all the while for a mass-circulation magazine. King had arrived at the office three hours late because each time he tried to leave home a long-distance call delayed him. I told him I'd read several years ago that his wife had declared that five years from then there would be a big change and their lives could go back to normal. "She wouldn't put a date on it now," he said.

Outside his office, in an alcove of the narrow corridor, where King's unflappable secretary tries to tighten his expanding schedule, her phone seldom showing less than two blinking lights, we listened to Andy Young report on a call from a friend in Washington. The Black United Front, "a S.N.C.C. operation," had discussed the Poor People's Campaign and decided to support it. A break that was hard to believe because the King organization made only one unnegotiable demand of the campaign's supporters: nonviolent response to any action of the authorities.

THAT night I walked about the campus of a Negro college in Atlanta with a black intellectual committed to the Black Power movement. "Well, did you talk to De Lawd?" he asked. "Did you talk to De King?"

I told him King was persuasive and impressive, and informed him about the reported decision of the Black United Front. The latter puz-

zled him, as it did me, but not the observation that King was persuasive. "I'm sure he is," he said, with a touch of dismay, "I'm sure he is."

We looked in at a meeting protesting the killing last February of three Negro students on the campus of State College at Orangeburg, S. C., and he led me out because the attendance was so disappointing. To make him feel better, though not solely for that reason, I told him I suspected that some of the people in King's Atlanta office only went along with nonviolence as a tactic and that others more likely were Black Power advocates. "Oh, sure, they are," he said. "They make a point of hiring ex-S.N.C.C. kids. It's some kind of paternalism."

Most young people are attracted to Black Power, he said (a point S.C.L.C. leaders had also made), but they have not had any real experience of struggle. "They haven't paid their dues to the movement," he said. He couldn't blame them if they didn't turn out to every meeting—he was sick of meetings himself—for what could you do, for example, about the Orangeburg murders? What the hell could you do?

We had walked into a new restaurant and there were many whites there, though it was in a black neighborhood, a phenomenon that was unthinkable in the South I had known. "The jazz club I go to often has more whites than blacks," he said, restively. "It's begun here, too. They're running after the black chicks. Soon there'll be intermarriage."

As if to confirm our talk about S.C.L.C. personnel, a young man I had seen at the Atlanta headquarters came over to greet my companion and stayed a while. He didn't seem to know any more about the April plans than I had been able to find out. "They're all worried about what might happen," he said. "I mean, they can't tell *what'll* come off."

I said King would call it off if the demonstrators returned violence for violence.

"Man, *he* can't call it off!" he exclaimed. "You can't call off things like that no more!"

Despite their put-down tone about King and their wariness about his proposals, young blacks do not ignore him. They have not written him off, as have white theorists of the black movement in the last year. Young people recognize in him that courage they demand of themselves, just as white Southerners, conversely, still hate and fear him despite their surprised respect for him, a fact that became evident the next morning at the airport.

IN order for King to cover in two days all the areas in Mississippi and Alabama where the campaign was to be launched, he had rented a plane from a private charter service. The service's office man and I were the first there, at 6:30, and he looked at me with great curiosity; as soon as he learned I was not on the King staff, he confessed that the job had been passed on to them by a larger company that had been afraid to take on Dr. King. "We don't care about all that," he said, his way of dissociating himself from civil-rights quarrels, "but we told our pilot, if there's any trouble any place you land, just take the plane out on the runway."

It was a twin-engine Cessna with room for nine, including the pilot and copilot, and both were needed because it was a rainy, overcast day. Before the pilot took off into the white mist, he turned around to King and asked him if in his travels he had ever met Timmy Brown, who plays for

MARCH ON WASHINGTON, PART I—*Demonstrators at the mass civil-rights rally in 1963. "King hopes the 1968 demonstrations will end with a march similar to 1963's but lasting at least three days . . . 'I believe this action will create new alliances,' he says."*

the Philadelphia Eagles. "I don't believe I have," King said. The pilot said he and Timmy had both been raised on the same Indiana farm and he was going to write his folks to tell Timmy he had been flying Dr. King around. King simply smiled, taking the pilot's friendliness at face value.

With King were Bernard Lee, a personal assistant who worries about arrangements and tapes King's speeches; Hosea Williams, in charge of voter registration for S.C.L.C. and now assigned to the Poor People's Campaign; an Associated Press man, and two film-makers shooting the campaign for Public Broadcasting Laboratories. They were all worried about the weather, and Hosea Williams, a chunky man with a smiling face, was reminded of a bumpy flight the previous week. The hostess had asked him if he were frightened and he'd said, "Not me—I'm a Presbyterian!"

King, a Baptist, enjoyed that, and, instead of opening his briefcase, he half turned in his seat and talked with Williams and Lee during most of the flight, while the film men worked their hand-held camera and portable sound equipment. Williams said that the news of the Black United Front's support had to be checked because he'd heard that while they endorsed the objectives of the April demonstrations, they still couldn't go along with the tactics. King nodded soberly.

(Later, Young confirmed that the Black United Front had voted to endorse the campaign, support it with food and housing for delegates and leave the question of participation to the decision of individual followers — a decision that pleased the King organization.)

I asked about the Orangeburg incident, and King said he had issued a statement about it. "Terrible, terrible," he said. Only two weeks earlier he had married Cleveland Sellers, the S.N.C.C. field secretary who had been wounded at Orangeburg while watching from the sidelines. "That's a lovely girl he married," Williams said. King agreed: "A beautiful girl." Williams found it funny that the only witness Sellers brought to his marriage ceremony was a white friend. King laughed: "Oh, he's a *white* black nationalist!"

In a moment they were reminiscing. "What was the name of that sheriff in Monroe, Georgia?" King asked. "He was the meanest man—meaner than Jim Clark [Selma's ex-sheriff], I believe. Something about a Negro wearing a hat drove him crazy. *'Take off that hat, boy!'* " And King laughed with his whole body, like a man who trusts his feelings.

BEFORE we left Atlanta we knew we might have to land at Jackson, Miss., and not Vicksburg, because of the weather, and Lee had called ahead to let them know. But it was not until the last moment, while still flying through clouds, that the pilot decided on Jackson because its radio beam could lead him into the field. Leon Hall, S.C.L.C. leader in Mississippi, was waiting at the airport; so was a man, presumably from the State Sovereignty Commission, the agency set up by the Legislature in 1956 to keep check, among other things, on "potential agitators." The man photographed our every move, occasionally darting forward for individual closeups; he also carried a clipboard with a pad and made notes.

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No one paid any attention to him except Hall. "You ought to work for us," Hall said, pointing a finger at him. "I don't know if you're a good photographer, but you sure can take them fast." The man followed us to Edwards, Miss., site of the Mount Beulah Conference Center, a former Negro college now owned by the Delta Ministry, a project of the National Council of Churches, but none of the 32 leaders of black organizations who had responded to Dr. King's call bothered about him or about several other men who looked like police or F.B.I. agents. The black leaders were to meet in the dining hall to hear King, Andy Young, who had arrived the night before and Hosea Williams; then they were to decide whether they would back the campaign. It was a crucial meeting for King, but you could not tell it from the relaxed, happy way in which he greeted old friends.

Walking to the dining hall, the Rev. Henry Parker told me: "I'm prejudiced, I have known Dr. King a long time and respect him. But I don't know about this campaign. The people here are interested in practicalities now—they have been on lots of demonstrations, there's nothing new about them. You know, I could show you black people here in Mississippi just starving to death, their children dying of worm infestation."

At the dining hall Andy Young decided it would be best if the film men and newsmen were not at this meeting, so discussion could be unconstrained. (There was also some worry about the reaction of black nationalists.) We waited at another building and were joined by a white Southerner from The Jackson Daily News, whom everyone had taken for an unfriendly policeman; his editor had called him at 6:30 that morning and told him to cover the meeting. "I wonder how he knew," the A.P. man said, "there's been no publicity about it." The reporter had no idea.

Three hours later hunger drove us into the dining hall. An elderly Negro woman was speaking. "I like that—going to Washington to get money in our pockets," she said. "But let's not forget about other things while we's getting the money. They're running black people off the land here, making it so we can't have any." The meeting had been good: there had been no objections to the campaign and it was expected the leaders would now go back to their organizations, obtain approval and begin recruitment of those to be trained for Washington. King left happy, his car followed by four others with State Sovereignty Commission and F.B.I. men riding in them.

The children of the junior high school at Edwards, all black, were out in the street waiting for him and he had only time to get out of his car and walk up and down to greet them. A thrill ran through the rows of children —one heard it as a collective intake of breath — and they clapped and moved toward him, their faces beaming. The same was to happen when he walked into the Alabama meetings at Birmingham that evening, at Selma next morning and Montgomery that afternoon. He turns the most distracted gatherings into a

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AND ITS SO BEAUTIFUL TO BE BLACK

TO BE BLACK—*"King is in sympathy with many of the points that Black Power leaders make. In the Atlanta headquarters, there are posters advertising a recent cultural evening sponsored by S.C.L.C. with the title 'Black Is Beautiful.'"*

unified mass, their applause for him pride in themselves.

THE weather and the long meeting in Edwards made it necessary to cancel a flight to Eutaw, Ala., (for the pilot and copilot, one less check of the plane for bombs) to visit the tent city of people thrown off the plantations, and to miss an afternoon meeting in Birmingham with business leaders. (In the few minutes he spent at the Jackson airport, King called Dora McDonald, got her reports and dictated three letters.) There was only time to reach Birmingham's Gaston's Motel, a historic headquarters for civil-rights demonstrations, for dinner. King took no more than a cup of coffee and listened to Albert Turner, S.C.L.C. leader in Alabama, tell about the men King had missed that afternoon. "They're ready, they're interested, but you got to open the gates." King decided to see them after the meeting, no matter how late.

He opened the gates at a packed church that night in Birmingham, as he was to do in Selma and Montgomery the next day. They were singing when I got there, the minister calling to each row in turn to walk down the aisle to the front where the collection baskets had been placed before the pulpit. The choir and the audience sang to rhythmic clapping as the marching people dropped their contributions into the baskets and returned to their seats:

Great day for me,
Great day for me!
Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!
I am so happy
I'm gonna be free!

When King spoke, they called out their agreement in words—"Oh, yes!"; "Yessir!"; "That's the truth!"—or with murmurs and sighs, a chorus to his rhetoric. His humor is varied and their responding phrases and laughter always caught his tone. Ironic—"When black folks can't get jobs, it's a social problem; when whites can't, it's a depression; with the black man it's welfare, with the whites, subsidies." Sarcastic—"This country has socialism for the rich, rugged individualism for the poor." Just plain funny—"Governor Wallace and his wife are 'Sister and Brother Wallace.'"

After the meeting, a white woman reporter from a Birmingham paper asked me if I thought King would bring off his Washington demonstrations. "He just might," I said, considering it a conservative statement after the enthusiasm of the meeting. "I don't

think so," she replied. "I know the Negro people of this city and they just aren't interested."

I repeated this to another white woman later, a Southerner whose looks and accent made it seem a miracle that she had devoted the recent years wholly to the civil-rights movement. To my surprise, she said, "It's going to be hard. You know, the movement has never won anything really. Things aren't the same; they're worse."

I said that with so many people who had nothing to lose, it should be easy to accomplish.

"You see, sometimes poor people don't know how bad off they are," she said. It pained her to say this and to see my disappointment, so she explained: "I am thinking of the woman who was sitting next to me at the meeting—did you see her? She was amen-ing and saying she'd go to Washington with Dr. King while he spoke, but when the meeting was over, she put a hand on my arm and said, 'Missy, can you help me out with the bus fare home?' Of course, I gave it to her and she said, 'Missy, I knew you was a kind white lady.'"

She thought that over a moment and made an effort to be positive. "But we're going to do it," she said. "We've got to do it. I believe this is the last chance this country has to put things right nonviolently. Otherwise, it's just going to explode in the worst way."

FLYING back to Atlanta the next afternoon, everyone was relaxed on the plane, including King. He had spoken twice that day. At the Atlanta airport there would be an hour before he caught a plane to Detroit (to hear Aretha Franklin, the singer, in her first hometown concert), and he expected to spend it going over correspondence and dictating letters to Dora McDonald, who has never bothered to figure out how many hours a week she works. He would also call his wife. The next day, Saturday, he would fly to Chicago to talk to his staff there and give a speech. Sunday morning he would preach at the regular service of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, where he shares the pulpit with his father. In the afternoon he would leave for Miami for week-long seminars with a group of Negro ministers on urban leadership problems, a project for which S.C.L.C. had received a Ford Foundation grant.

But in the plane to Atlanta he was especially happy because Montgomery, quiescent in the movement lately, had responded the most enthusiastically of the four places he had visited. Hosea Williams was happy because he had obtained such a large contribution at Montgomery. It seemed an augury that all the thousand arrangements before April would go well, and it led Hosea to reminisce about the Georgia plantation where he was reared, just one plantation away from Marvin Griffin's, Governor Wallace's running mate.

I asked Hosea where the plantation was, and he called out over the plane's engines, "Attapulgus!"

Dr. King clapped his hands and laughed when he saw my quizzical look. "Nobody knows where that is—it's a suburb of Chitlin Switch!"

Seeing King in that mood, the film men took out their equipment, and I remembered to ask Hosea if I had heard right at the meeting when he said he had been in jail 42 times. "That's right," he said. I asked King how many times he'd been in jail. He believed it was 19, but he wasn't sure. Hosea talked about the times he had been really frightened. King said he had been frightened twice. There was the time he was marching through Chicago for open housing while people jeered and threw rocks: "It was then I faced the inevitability of death for the first time." The other time was in Philadelphia, Miss., where the three young civil-rights workers, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, had been murdered in the summer of 1964. With a colleague, the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, he was speaking at a meeting there, and Sheriff Lawrence Rainey, one of the principal suspects in the triple killings, stood right behind him on the platform.

King laughed as he recalled the moment when he had said that the people were behind them in their fight and Rainey had growled in his ear: "That's right, I'm right behind you!" King shook his head at the thought. "Well, it came time to pray and I sure did not want to close my eyes! Ralph said he prayed with his eyes open!"

Everyone in the plane laughed and then slowly stopped and became quiet. The film men put away their camera and sound equipment; they were *cinema verité* men and they knew they could not hope to catch a better sequence that day, just as I felt that I had the key to Dr. King's style: praying with his eyes open is what he does all the time. ■