

White Alabamians Stage Selma March To Support Negroes

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SELMA, Ala., March 6— Seventy white Alabamians expressed their concern for the plight of Alabama Negroes in a public demonstration here today.

Observers said it was the first time an all-white group of Southerners had demonstrated in the streets for Negro equality.

The demonstrators marched 12 blocks to form a line in front of the Dallas County courthouse, the scene of repeated Negro demonstrations in recent weeks, and immediately found themselves between 500 friendly Negroes and 100 menacing whites.

One of the white bystanders slugged a photographer, another knocked a stack of leaflets out of a demonstrator's hands and two of them were arrested for disorderly conduct.

The white bystanders, most of them sturdily built and roughly dressed, jeered and insulted the white pickets.

The Negroes cheered the

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ALABAMA WHITES SUPPORT NEGROES

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pickets and shouted encouragement.

The police moved the white crowd back several times as it became more and more hostile.

At the height of the tension, one white bystander yelled, "I think we ought to send them back to Birmingham."

Another bystander shook his head and answered, "Huh-uh. I think we ought to put them in the river, right now."

The Negro bystanders were ignored.

The Rev. Joseph Ellwanger of Birmingham, the white pastor of a Lutheran Church for Negroes, led the demonstration. He read a statement on behalf of the group as he stood on the courthouse steps, flanked by sheriff's deputies posed rigidly with an eye on the hostile white crowd.

With his voice almost drowned out by taunts, Mr. Ellwanger read:

"We, as white citizens of Alabama, have come to Selma today to tell the nation that there are white people in Alabama

who will speak out against the events which have recently occurred in this and neighboring counties and towns."

Thirty-eight of the demonstrators came from Birmingham. Others were from Huntsville, Montgomery, Tuscaloosa and Auburn. The group included professional and business men and housewives. Many had moved to Alabama from other states.

They gathered this morning at the Reformed Presbyterian Church, a Negro church on Jeff Davis Avenue.

Allen Lingo, a white field secretary for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the organization headed by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., gave them instructions on nonviolent methods of demonstrating.

A white Roman Catholic priest from Selma commended them.

"You people are taking a tremendous step here today," said the Rev. Maurice F. Ouellet, pastor of St. Elizabeth's Mission. "I'm sure you know what you're getting into and I know God will be with you."

While they were at the church they got the first sign that they were not universally welcomed in Selma.

The Rev. L. James Rongstad, pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church at Selma, confronted his fellow Lutheran minister in front of the group and said:

"Rev. Ellwanger, you have had your Birmingham and now

we have our Selma. We did not interfere in your problems and we do not need your interference in our problems."

He said, "Demonstrations in Selma have been fruitful, peaceful and constructive. They have pointed out the failure and weaknesses of men. Selma is now gradually coming to repentance. Measures are being taken to correct the faults."

Mr. Ellwanger replied: "We are not here to point the finger at Selma. We are here to point the finger at the state and at the nation."

Under the eyes of several policemen and agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the demonstrators left the church in groups of four spaced 30 feet apart to avoid violating the city parade ordinance.

Weather Is Chilly

The weather was cloudy and chilly and the marchers wore coats.

They attracted little more than stares of curiosity as they walked past the stores on Broad Street. The shopping district was alive with Saturday crowds.

They reached the courthouse, a block down Alabama Avenue from the main street, and were met by about 20 sheriff's deputies and volunteer possemen. Sheriff James G. Clark, who has arrested hundreds of Negroes demonstrating at the courthouse since mid-January, was not there.

A deputy stepped in front of Mr. Ellwanger and read a tele-

gram to the sheriff's office from Edgar Homrighausen of Cullman, Ala., president of the Southern District Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. "He is, in effect, my bishop," Mr. Ellwanger explained later.

The telegram said that Mr. Homrighausen did not agree with Mr. Ellwanger in his actions and that the Birmingham minister had no official support from the Lutheran Church.

The demonstrators formed a line facing the courthouse entrance and raised neatly printed signs. Mr. Ellwanger's wife, a thin woman in a black coat, held a sign saying, "Decent Alabamans protest police brutality."

In the statement Mr. Ellwanger read, the group said:

"We consider it a shocking injustice that there are still counties in Alabama where there are no Negroes registered to vote and where Negroes have reason to fear the hostility and harassment of public officials when they do try to register."

Protest Police Action

The group's statement also said: "We are horrified at the brutal way in which the police at times have attempted to break up peaceful assemblies and demonstrations by American citizens who are exercising their constitutional right to protest injustice."

The statement said: "We are sickened by the totalitarian atmosphere of intimidation and fear officials have purposefully created and maintained to dis-

courage lawful assembly and peaceful expression of grievances against the existing conditions."

It continued: "We urge that the Governor of our state and all elected officials—state and local—use their power and prestige to see to it that all open and subtle intimidation of persons seeking to register to vote be removed."

The statement concluded: "We ask that not only the Federal Government, but our own State Legislature, go on record against the current college-test type of registration form and favor a simple information blank and that assistance be made available for white and Negro citizens who are not able to fully understand or fill out the form.

"We finally plead for Federal help in terms of laws and registrars, if these injustices are not removed forthrightly."

Negroes of the Alabama Black Belt went ahead today with plans for a 50-mile walk from Selma to Montgomery, to start tomorrow, but Gov. George C. Wallace said at Montgomery that state troopers and Dallas County officers would not permit it. He said it would cause a traffic hazard on Highway 80. Dr. King is to arrive tomorrow morning to lead the marchers.