

Lead March On Virginia State Capitol



The climax to the Pilgrimage of Prayer rally held at the Mosque in Richmond on New Year's Day at 2:30 was a gathering of leaders and supporters at the State Capitol in protest to the closing of the schools in Prince Edward county to block desegregation. Some of the leaders at the rally are shown above.

Left to right are: Dr. Robert L. Taylor, pastor of Fourth Baptist Church, Richmond, and president of the Goodwill Baptist Convention; the Rev. Robert G. Williams of Petersburg, coordinator of the rally; Dr. King and the Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker of Petersburg, chairman of the resolution committee.

Open School, Marchers Ask Almond

Dr. M. L. King
Heard By 2,600
Virginia Pilgrims

Special to Journal and Guide
RICHMOND — More than 2,600 Virginians adopted a resolution here New Year's Day urging Governor J. Lindsay Almond Jr. to use his emergency powers to open the schools of Prince Edward county.

A highlight of the mass meeting and pilgrimage of prayer for public schools held at the Mosque at 2:30 was an address by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The leader of the bus protest at Montgomery, Ala., told the gathering:

"NOTHING IS more sublime than suffering and sacrifice for a great cause." He added that "attempting to resist integration today is like standing against a tidal wave . . . it is an unstoppable movement."

The resolution said:

"Whereas 1,700 Negro children in Prince Edward county Virginia are without public school facilities and 1,500 white youths are enrolled in obviously inferior private school set-up; and

"WHEREAS the 'freedom of choice' Perrow Commission statute and the Pupil Placement law are sophisticated techniques to circumvent and defy the desegregation orders of the federal court; and

"Whereas the employment of the above-named statutes lay open to irreparable damage the whole fabric of the American system of free, public education in our Commonwealth; and

"WHEREAS we recognize the difficulties and anxieties of a dying social order that is undemocratic, immoral, and un-Godly;

"Be it therefore resolved that we prayerfully and with sincere purpose do petition the General Assembly of Virginia to reaffirm their belief in and responsibility to free public schools as the elected representatives of the citizenry of Virginia by granting:

1. "IMMEDIATE relief to the children, Negro and white, of Prince Edward county by restoring the public schools. (See GOVERNOR, Page 2)

2,600 Hear Dr. M. L. King

Governor Almond Urged To Open Prince Edward County Schools

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(Emergency powers can be granted to Governor).

2. "Repeal of the 'freedom of choice' Perrow Commission statute and the Pupil Placement law.

3. "Appointment of a bi-racial commission to ease the social transition across the state in a climate of harmony and goodwill."

THE RESOLUTION was signed by the Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker of Petersburg, committee chairman.

Dr. King, who was the main speaker at the meeting, said colored Virginians are saying in effect to white segregationists "we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer, and in the process we will win your hearts." He added:

"I DO HOPE that citizens in the Prince Edward community will not accept the offer of private schools for Negroes. I

hope they won't sell their birthright of freedom for a mess of segregated pottage."

Dr. King's reference was to the plan of some white citizens of Prince Edward county to organize private schools for the colored children who were deprived of educational facilities when the schools were closed to prevent desegregation. Some 1,500 white children are attending makeshift private schools, but nothing has been done for the colored children.

COLORED PEOPLE, Dr. King said, have "a new sense of destiny to struggle, sacrifice and even die. . . We stand on the threshold of the most constructive period in the nation's history in race relations. We stand," he continued, "on the border of the Promise Land of Integration."

A few white people attended the rally which was follow-

ed by a march 17 blocks to the State Capitol. The prayer pilgrimage was a non-violent protest against the closing of schools to prevent desegregation.

ROBERT D. ROBERTSON, president of the Virginia NAACP; Oliver W. Hill, chairman of the Virginia NAACP legal staff; the Rev. L. Francis Griffin, president of the Prince Edward County Christian Association; and Robert G. Williams, coordinator of the mass meeting, also spoke.

"The Old Dominion," Williams said, "is experiencing the dark night of the soul. We have closed schools because we have closed hearts."

He described the meeting as a "non-violent, prayerful protest against the closing of Prince Edward schools in basic defiance to the law of the land."