

SELMA: SARCASM OR SATISFACTION ?

Recent events in Selma, Alabama, have been viewed by either one of two viewpoints. The first, sarcastically holds that the "nigger" has forgotten his "place" and is being pushed and agitated along the road to radicalism by communist instigators for the purpose of fermenting internal disorder.

I for one, cannot agree with such a view, but instead believe that Selma will be the symbol for a long overdue satisfaction of the provisions contained in the Federal Constitution. By participating in the first segment of the Selma to Montgomery march, I affirmed my belief, with thousands of other Americans---both white and Negro, in the common humanity and equality of man.

Three busloads of Chicago area citizens(including 50 students from No. Central College, 27 from Elmhurst College, and others) left Naperville about 9 AM, Saturday March 20 for Selma. Upon our arrival at 8 AM on Sunday, we saw a quiet, peaceful town with little indication that it had recently seen much civil strife, violence, and hatred. A sign on one store proudly proclaimed: "Selma, Alabama---Progressive and Friendly." We were soon to see that Selma was a long way from reaching and realizing such an idealistic goal.

At Browns Chapel, in the heart of the Negro ghetto, we were warned by the service which began with the singing of "We shall overcome." We were one---with a common cause and a goal which will not be denied. It mattered little that we stood there in ever growing numbers for three hours before the march began. After hearing Dr. Martin Luther King tell us that "We are standing together to make it clear that we are determined to make brotherhood a reality for all men," we began a well organized and carefully planned march.

Of the march itself, you may read specifics in the newspaper and magazine reports. I would however, like to share with you a few taunts which came my way. Beautifully and intelligently phrased sentences such as---"Hey nigger-lover, who'd you sleep with last night?," "Hey boy, where's Walter Jenkins?," "Scum---we want our rights too!," "What's wrong with you preacher, ain't you got nos sin up north?," "Dirty communist agitators, go back to Russia!," and other obscenities graced the clear spring air of Selma. Of course, there were those more ambitious hecklers who voiced their protests with their spit and rocks. For some the march was a burlesque and a picnic---for others, it was a witness and a promise.

The Federal Government is to be complimented for the protection afforded the marchers. Though to some, President Johnson ~~III~~ may be viewed as a "scalawag" and a "traitor to the ^{south}" (as I read in a Meridian, Mississippi newspaper last year at this time), he has proved that he is an American who is concerned with the rights of all citizens and is willing to protect Americans who are seeking equality through non violence.

Selma will be a symbol for many years. For me, it will be a symbol of progress and friendship. Perhaps someday, that sign I saw in Selma will become a universal truth for all American citizens, regardless of their race, creed, religion, or economic status.

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