

# MDs Join in Picketing A.M.A. 'To Assure Full Integration'

*Medical Tribune—World Wide Report*

ATLANTIC CITY, N. J.—A picket line of Negro and white physicians and other health workers patrolled the boardwalk outside the American Medical Association meeting here, appealing for the organization "to assure full integration . . . in medicine."

The demonstration, an orderly walk back and forth in front of the Traymore Hotel as the A.M.A. House of Delegates met inside, was organized by the Medical Committee for Civil Rights, a recently formed group with headquarters in New York.

The chairman of the committee, Dr. John L. S. Holloman, Jr., a Harlem general practitioner, told MEDICAL TRIBUNE that the pickets made up an "action group, which is here because the A.M.A. has failed to take a forthright stand on racial segregation and discrimination."

He said the committee organized and selected this protest move as its first project scarcely two weeks before the A.M.A. opened its 112th annual meeting.

At that time Dr. Holloman and Dr. Walter J. Lear, general coordinator of the committee and public health chairman for the Community Council of Greater New York, wrote to Dr. George M. Fister, A.M.A. president, asking the national organization "to speak out immediately and unequivocally against racial segregation and discrimination wherever they exist in medicine and health services."

The letter asked A.M.A. to end racial exclusion policies in state and county medical societies, to make direct membership possible in the A.M.A. for Negroes who are denied membership in local societies, to "actively oppose the 'separate but equal' clause of the Hill-Burton Act" that finances hospital construction with Federal money, and to instruct A.M.A. representatives on the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals to urge integration of patient services as a minimum standard of accreditation.

## "Long-Standing Policy"

In reply, the A.M.A. Board of Trustees said the organization has a "long-standing policy of nondiscrimination for membership in the association and constituent societies," that direct membership is not available to anyone, that the Hill-Burton matter would be referred to the appropriate A.M.A. council, and that the question of integration of patient services would be referred to the Joint Commission "for consideration."

Drs. Holloman and Lear, both of whom are members of the New York county and state societies and the A.M.A., said the reply was "totally inadequate" and that picketing, the "public phase of the appeal,"

was "necessary . . . in order to convey the seriousness of the situation."

Only minutes after the picketing was begun outside, Dr. Edward R. Annis, new president of the A.M.A., was delivering his first presidential address to the delegates inside.

Dr. Annis characterized the A.M.A. as having "a future both challenging and limitless," said it was the movement that could blend "multiple [health] efforts under one cooperative and effective banner," and then stepped down from the lectern to find Dr. Holloman waiting for him with another letter.

This said the Medical Committee for Civil Rights was "sorrowed and dismayed" that the A.M.A. reply to the first letter was "with policies adopted in 1944 and 1950 . . . [that] offer little if any hope of prompt and constructive resolution of these problems."

Later in the day, Dr. Percy E. Hopkins, chairman of the A.M.A. Board of Trustees, issued a statement calling it "unfortunate that this incident has tended to obscure the achievements in medical science being reported at this meeting, which will improve the health of all people regardless of race."

## Negro Member of House

Dr. Hopkins pointed out that "a Negro physician — my friend, Peter Murray of

New York—served for 12 years as a member of the A.M.A. policy-making House of Delegates, and today Negroes serve as officers of county medical societies."

Dr. Holloman told MEDICAL TRIBUNE that "Dr. Murray's membership in the House was progress, but he's gone now . . . and so has the feeling of 10 or 15 years ago that allowed gradualism and tokenism in the breaking down of racial barriers."

(Later the committee met in New York to evaluate the demonstration and decided it had been a "giant first step," according to Dr. Lear. He said the appeal to the A.M.A. will be continued, "using all possible nonviolent methods such as were used in Atlantic City.")

Delegates and other A.M.A. members who strolled past the pickets ranged in their reaction from such expressions as "It's high time somebody did it," to the comment of one physician's wife, "They shouldn't push; they should wait."

Most of the passing physicians were interested, polite, and noncommittal. Dr. Harvey Renger, Texas delegate, walked up to Dr. Holloman and said, "I haven't seen you denied anywhere."

Dr. Holloman replied that "Texas is enlightened among the Southern states" but that at least six other states "down there" have in their medical societies "technical devices for limited or scientific membership . . . something short of full membership for Negroes."

Marchers in the picket line numbered at most 20 at any one time, nearly half of them white.

Atlantic City public safety officials gave oral permission for the boardwalk picketing. On hand to observe the demonstration were two local policemen—one Negro, one white.



*Medical Tribune Photo—Myron Ehrenberg*

**Physician pickets march on the boardwalk in front of the A.M.A. convention hotel in Atlantic City, led by (from right) Dr. John L. S. Holloman, Jr., New York; Dr. Robert Smith, Jackson, Miss.; and Dr. Walter Lear, New York, asking integration in medicine.**