

The Paper With The New Look



A. M. E.

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CHRIST OUR REDEEMER

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## Dr. Leonidas H. Berry, A.M.E. Health Director, Heads "Flying Black Medics"

Dr. Leonidas H. Berry, Director of Health Commission of A.M.E. Church and past President of the National Medical Association, surrounded by a task force of medical professionals flew into Cairo, Illinois on Sunday, February 15, 1970. The setting of their mission was "Task Force 1 — A Conference on Health". Included in the operation was a survey to determine the need for medical cure, for poor people regardless of race, color, and creed.

Sometimes in the fall of 1969, after listening attentively and sympathetically to the cry of the needs of Cairo's organization known as the "United Front" consisting of Blacks with a few outside Whites, Dr. Berry was convinced that a need existed. He expressed this to the A.M.E. Ministerial Alliance, Missionary groups and many other friends and associates. The response to his call was great and rewarding. At Christmas loads of medical supplies and food were sent to Cairo.

Upon further observation, it was revealed that many, many persons were in need of medical services. It was reported by the United Front since March 31, 1969, when the boycott started, that the one and only hospital has made it most difficult for blacks to receive any kind of medical attention. As a result of this action, many persons have suffered and died for the lack of medical help, so states the United Front. Dr. Berry stepped up his action by appealing to his comrades among doctors and allied health to join with him in organizing a group to be known as

the "Flying Black Medics". They were to board two chartered planes for Cairo. There were boxes and boxes stacked high containing medical laboratory instruments, medications, and gifts for children and adults such as candies, tooth paste, soap, vitamins, cough syrup, liniment, aspirins, disposable diapers, Band Aids, etc. As the group quietly conversed among themselves the news came that the clouds were too low to fly into Cairo's Airport, as originally planned, but clearance for landing at Paducah, Kentucky had been finalized. Paducah is about 30 miles from Cairo. Shortly afterwards, Medical Task Force I — "The Flying Black Medics" were boarding their planes for take-off. The flight to Paducah was about an hour and thirty-seven minutes. We were met by a delegation headed by Reverend M. T. Harrell, Pastor of Ward Chapel A.M.E. Church, and Reverend Charles Koen, Executive Director of the United Front. We traveled by bus to Cairo. The Reverend Charles Koen gave us a little background history of the Cairo struggle. He informed the medical task force that they united themselves to confront the long outstanding racism that carried with it evil and injustices against the Black People. He further advised that the United Front called a boycott against all white merchants in Cairo on March 31, 1969 and now in its eleventh month. It has been 98 percent effective. Since the boycott, six stores have been forced to close and many others on the fence for similar action. Incidentally, as we rode along the business section in

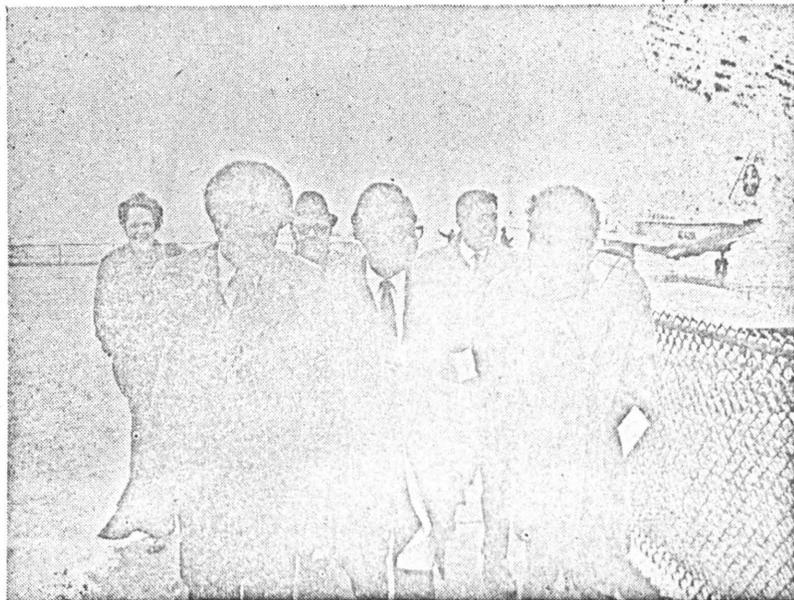
needs of Cairo's organization known as the "United Front" consisting of Blacks with a few outside Whites, Dr. Berry was convinced that a need existed. He expressed this to the A.M.E. Ministerial Alliance, Missionary groups and many other friends and associates. The response to his call was great and rewarding. At Christmas loads of medical supplies and food were sent to Cairo.

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Many hours, days and weeks went into the planning of the medical task force for Mission I to Cairo. It was a cloudy, sunny, Sunday morning, February 15, 1970 when the medical task force gathered at Midway Airport, Chi-

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Arrival of Commuter Airlines Plane at Paducah, Ky., en route to cars and bus for Cairo. Ill. L-R. Photographer for United Front Rev. Charles Koen, Exec. Dir. Cairo's United Front, Rev. M. T. Horrell, pastor Word Chapel A.M.E. Church Cairo, Seat of Task Force Clinic. Leonidas H. Berry, M.D., Chicago, organizer of project, Rev. Cooper and Leon Page, asst. and coordinator United Front.

## Dr. L. H. Berry—

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is very effective in achieving the United Front's overall objectives. Reverend Koen further stated that a political struggle is now on in that Blacks are driving toward 50 percent representation in that the Black population consists of that percentage or more.

Finally, the Medical Task Force I arrived at Ward Chapel A.M.E. Church where the pastor and the church family had left nothing undone in their readiness to receive Dr. Berry and his Medical Task Force.

The Medical Task Force began at once to unpack and set up a Real Medical Clinic in the Church Basement. It was like a beehive—everyone hard at his task in the link to perfect the cause of the Mission, similar to an Army field operation. Little private stations were set up for each physician in his respective speciality. Separate stations were deployed medical social workers, dietitians and the medical diagnostic laboratories.

Upstairs in the sanctuary of the church, registration took place with Mrs. Emma Berry, wife of Dr. Berry, head of that team and Secretary of Statistics. Also in the church sanctuary, in the front section, Mrs. Bettye Jenkins, educator in the field of Psychology and Administration, Chicago Conference Branch Missionary Y.P.D. Director and President of the Women's Missionary Society of Woodlawn A.M.E. Church, Chicago, was in charge of Audio-Visual showing films, slides, and leading discussions on same which consisted of health, Dr. Berry's travel in Africa, where he lectured to physicians, some history on famous medical physicians such as Charles Drew and others, and pictures of young black people at work in health careers in medical centers of Chicago and elsewhere.

At the end of the day each physician had seen from twenty to twenty-five patients each most in need of medical attention and some were of a serious nature. All physicians were specialists in their fields and nearly every area of the medical field was represented.

Late in the afternoon a panel discussion, moderated by Dr. L. H. Berry, was held on the subject:

area to establish the need for medical care and (2) to follow up ways and means for future considerations in providing adequate medical care. From the reports of the various physicians at the end of the day, it was very obvious that the need exists. On the other hand, upon Dr. Berry's presence with other physicians in the one day Clinic survey, the St. Mary's Hospital, apparently took on a positive attitude toward treating Blacks as they invited Dr. Berry's staff to set their Task Force Operation up in their hospital. The United Front also received a telegram from said hospital expressing its desire to work with the United Front in meeting the medical needs of the Blacks. Both Dr. Berry and the United Front's director, Reverend Koen believed this to be a milestone on the way of achieving their overall objectives.

The total project was a tremendous cooperative effort. The Chicago A.M.E. Ministerial Alliance was induced to purchase the supplies which came especially from Woodlawn, Grant, Coppin, Bethel and Quinn under the co-chairmanship of Reverends H. E. Walden, J. A. Dames. The William Clinic loaned \$8,000.00 worth of medical laboratory equipment including Blood Chemistry and Electro-Cardiography Machines. The doctors chartered the planes. The entire news media of Chicago covered the project and NBC TV flew ahead into Cairo and took pictures at the airport and church all day. The Telecast was seen out of New York, The Today Show and the National Huntley and Brinkley News.

In the process of dialogue, Dr. L. H. Berry made reference to the fact that he was born in an A.M.E. parsonage and the spirit of African Methodism is in the fabric of his making. Dr. L. H. Berry's actions and trend of philosophy reflects one of Greatness. He possesses a total human commitment. Somehow he has been able to pass this on to others such as the following members of the Task Force I: Emma F. Berry, Secretary Statistics; Dorothy Chambers, Dietitian; Audley Connor, Jr., M.D., Internist; Rene Crosby, Lab. Assistant; Col. William Cunningham, M.D., Endocrinologist, Logistics; Patricia Danzie, Dieti-

tor in the field of Psychology and Administration, Chicago Conference Branch Missionary Y.P.D. Director and President of the Women's Missionary Society of Woodlawn A.M.E. Church, Chicago, was in charge of Audio-Visual showing films, slides, and leading discussions on same which consisted of health, Dr. Berry's travel in Africa, where he lectured to physicians, some history on famous medical physicians such as Charles Drew and others, and pictures of young black people at work in health careers in medical centers of Chicago and elsewhere.

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The Reverend Charles Koen  
Executive Director, United  
Front, Cairo

Jasper Williams, M.D., Pres.  
Williams Clinic, Inc., Chicago

Audley Connor, Jr., M.D.  
Planning Committee, Dr. Dan  
Williams Neighborhood  
Health Center, Chicago

Frank Perry, M.D.  
Professor and Chairman, Dept.  
of Internal Medicine, Meharry  
Medical College, Nashville,  
Tennessee

In essence, the panel brought out the apparent need for a clinic in the vicinity with facilities to follow through on complete medical care for the poor and needy. Dr. A. Connor, Jr., outlined procedures by which a neighborhood Health Center could be established under Federal Grants-In-Aid. The overall fact was established that many, many poor people in the area were in need of immediate health care. The Medical Task Force brought to focus many constructive purposes in their one day of packed activities, but an underlying fact revealed that two major purposes were brought out: (1) to survey the

Cardiography Machines. The doctors chartered the planes. The entire news media of Chicago covered the project and NBC TV flew ahead into Cairo and took pictures at the airport and church all day. The Telecast was seen out of New York, The Today Show and the National Huntley and Brinkley News.

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The entire "Task Force" is deeply grateful to our Episcopal Prelate, of the 4th District, Bishop H. Thomas Primm who gave his full support and a source of great inspiration.

Arrangements Committee: Mrs. Hattie Kendrick, Co-Chairman,

Cairo; Leonidas H. Berry, M.D., Co-Chairman, Chicago; Reverend Jonathan A. Dames, Chicago; Reverend Harvey E. Walden, Chicago; Mrs. Genola McBride, Assistant, Cairo.

Each of the above implemented a spirit of being totally committed to the task through long hours of hard work. They also reflected a source of satisfaction by being personally involved in a most successful venture.