

SUPREME COURT OUTLAWS BUS SEGREGATION

By Bob Ingram

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Laws requiring racial segregation on buses in Montgomery and throughout Alabama were declared unconstitutional yesterday in another historic decision by the U. S. Supreme Court.

And while the decision dealt specifically with Alabama statutes and ordinances of the City of Montgomery, in effect it also outlawed similar segregation laws throughout the South since this ruling sets the precedent for all similar cases in the future.

The ruling yesterday brought an immediate prediction from a Negro leader here that a decision to end the 11-month bus boycott would “unquestionably” be made at a mass meeting tonight.

Calling the decision a “glorious daybreak to end a long night of enforced segregation,” the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. declared emphatically that his race would use “every legal means” to see that the court’s decision was complied with in Montgomery.

OMINOUS RUMBLING

But from white leaders of the city and state came warnings of possible violence and blood shed if any attempt is made to carry out the decision.

C. C. (Jack) Owen, president of the Alabama Public Service Commission, declared that segregation must be maintained “to keep down violence and bloodshed.”

And Luther Ingalls, local leader of the pro-segregation Montgomery Citizens’ Council chapter, predicted flatly that “any attempt to enforce this decision will inevitably lead to riot and bloodshed.”

BOYCOTT RESULT

The court’s decision yesterday stemmed directly from Montgomery’s long boycott. The tribunal, in a unanimous decision, upheld a June 19 decision of a special three-member panel of federal judges which had ruled that Montgomery’s bus segregation laws were unconstitutional.

Amid all the confusion as to the decision, one fact appeared to stand clear – the court’s decision had ended with abrupt finality any legal efforts the city or state might initiate in an attempt to preserve segregation on public conveyances. There is no appeal from a U.S. Supreme Court decision.

The court order was not only unanimous, it was also brief. After citing the 1954 school segregation case and also citing subsequent decisions which outlawed segregation in public parks, playgrounds and golf links, the court ruled briefly:

MOTION GRANTED

“The motion to affirm is granted and the judgement is affirmed.”

This affirmation left no doubt that the Supreme Court was outlawing segregation on all bus systems. Earlier this year some question had arisen when the court simply dismissed an appeal from another decision overturning a South Carolina segregation law. That left the decision in effect but led to confusion – ended yesterday – as to the Supreme Court’s intent.

Meanwhile, what action the National City Lines, Inc., will take locally became an issue of paramount importance. National City operates the local buses.

Officials of the company in Chicago declined comment due to the absence of the firm’s president. Locally, no bus line official would comment on what steps might be taken in view of the decision.

Also declining comment were members of the City Commission as well as Gov. James E. Folsom.

Mayor W. A. Gayle, speaking for the commission, said he had not seen a copy of the decision but would make an “appropriate statement” after he has studied the court’s ruling.

The court’s decision yesterday placed into immediate effect an injunction ordering the City Commission of Montgomery to cease enforcing its segregation laws.

3 -JUDGE PANEL

This injunction was issued by the three-judge panel, but then held in abeyance pending the outcome of the city’s appeal. It was on this appeal that the Supreme Court ruled yesterday.

There had been some question – and hope among white leaders – that the injunction might still be in abeyance, but this was ruled out by U. S. Circuit Judge Richard Rives, one of the panel members.

He said the injunction would go into effect as soon as the court order reaches U. S. District Court in Montgomery. Rives said it customarily takes two to three weeks for an order to reach the local office.

Judge Rives also pointed out that the Supreme Court’s decision yesterday applied not only to Montgomery, but that it sets a precedent for all similar cases of the future.

He noted that the City Commission and the Alabama Public Service Commission have the right to petition for a rehearing within 15 days, but he said the possibility of further delay in the effective date of the order was slight.