

International Association of Fire Fighters

905 - 16TH STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON 6, D.C.



October 5, 1966

The Reverend Martin Luther King, President
Southern Christian Leadership Conference
334 Auburn Avenue, N. E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Reverend King:

I have just learned from some of our members and friends in Atlanta that you had gone there on September 3 to address the members of a breakaway group from the International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO, and to offer your assistance to them.

On behalf of the International Union I write this letter to express my strong hope that, if these reports are correct, you will give serious consideration to this request of mine to refrain from supporting, directly or indirectly these men who have walked out of our union.

The IAFF is an International Union chartered by the AFL back in 1918. Its charter and its constitution prohibit the use of the strike weapon, because the nature of the fire fighting responsibility is such that the fire protection services must be at full strength at all hours of the day and night. The members of the Atlanta Fire Department, like members of other departments throughout the country, took an oath of responsibility, both when they joined the fire department and when they joined the union, not to strike.

In Atlanta a majority of the fire department personnel - as the result of long years of failure of the city government to recognize clearly their justified economic needs - has twice gone on strike. The city's short-sighted policies provided a reason, but not a justification, for this strike action.

The fact is that there is no trade union justification whatsoever for their decision to resign from this AFL-CIO union and to form a separate unaffiliated organization in order to carry out these erroneous and short-sighted strike policies.

It is for that reason, for instance, that AFL-CIO President George Meany has issued a strong statement supporting the position of the International Union; I enclose a copy for your study.

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The Reverend Martin Luther King

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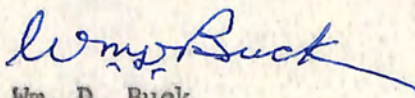
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You have made clear on a number of occasions, Reverend King, your own belief in and support for the basic principles of the trade union movement and the AFL-CIO, which our union supports as a loyal affiliate. We would hope, and we do request, that you re-evaluate your position in regard to this small group in Atlanta which has broken away from its parent union and turned its back on fundamental trade union responsibilities in the fire fighting service.

We do believe that when you have done so, and when you consider the position of our union and of the AFL-CIO in this matter, you will agree that this Atlanta group of former fire fighters do not merit your concern or support.

We shall be glad to give you any further information you wish, and I am enclosing a number of our past statements and summaries of action as a matter of possible interest.

Very truly yours



Wm. D. Buck
President

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enclosures :

cc: Rev. Martin Luther King - Warren Ave.
Congregational Church, Chicago
✓ Hon. Ivan Allen, Mayor of Atlanta, Ga.
Mr. Charles Ellis, President Local #134, Atlanta, Ga.

PS Please note that I am sending a copy of this letter to Mayor Ivan Allen, Mayor of Atlanta, and Mr. Charles Ellis, President of our local union in Atlanta, for their information.