OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ Mr. Cairns

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

October 11, 1955

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL
BY COURIER SERVICE

Till, Emmett

Honorable Dillon Anderson
Special Assistant to the President
Executive Office Building
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Anderson:

For your information, a confidential informant of the Chicago, Illinois, Office of this Bureau, who has furnished reliable information in the past, on October 8, 1955, advised as follows:

According to Ray Tillman, chairman, South Side Division of the Illinois-Indiana District of the Communist Party, and Arlene Ward, a member of the Communist Party, four religious organizations; namely, the Congress of Christian Organizations, the United Church Council, the Baptist Ministers Alliance and the National Crusade of Christ, were to sponsor a huge mass rally on Sunday, October 9, 1955, at the Rosebowl, 4747 Cottage Grove Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

The purpose of this meeting was to raise money and to organize a delegation to go to Washington, D. C., on October 22, 1955, in regard to the murder of Emmett Louis Till in Mississippi. This meeting of October 9, 1955, was also to have been sponsored by the Afro-American Congress of Christian Organizations which is also known as National Congress of the Afro-American People, Afro-American Congressional Guard and Afro-American National Infantry. This organization, under the leadership of Clarence William Harding, is an outgrowth of the Universal Negro Improvement Association which has been referred to as the Marcus Garvey "Back-to-Africa" movement.

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Arlene Ward, mentioned above, has been in contact with Harding, who has stated he will accept assistance from any source. As a result, the Communist Party gave Harding $100 on October 7, 1955, for the purpose of publishing leaflets to advertise the meeting of October 9, 1955. The Communist Party was to be active in mobilizing people to make the meeting a success and was to organize transportation committees for delegations going to Washington, D. C. This meeting of October 9, 1955, was not instigated by the Communist Party and the Communist Party does not control the Afro-American Congress of Christian Organizations; however, the Communist Party will attempt to influence this organization.

Harding planned to leave Chicago, Illinois, on or about October 10, 1955, for a trip to New York, New York; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Detroit, Michigan; and other cities in the North and the South. In these cities Harding was to contact people in his organization to obtain donations and prepare delegations for the trip to Washington, D. C.

Harding desired from the Communist Party the names of people whom he could contact, but in the event the Communist Party gives Harding any names such will be limited to individuals in trade-unions and the National Negro Labor Council.

During the afore-mentioned trip, Harding planned to contact the underground forces of his organization which have headquarters in Mississippi and reportedly are armed.

Tillman, Ward and Jim Durkin, a member of the Illinois-Indiana District Board of the Communist Party, have stated that Negro people in Chicago, Detroit and other cities are purchasing small firearms and sending them by various means to relatives in the South. Possibly these firearms are being sent to persons residing in states adjacent to Mississippi and are then being smuggled into Mississippi.

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The afore-mentioned informant pointed out that to his knowledge the Communist Party is not in any way instrumental in the purchase or shipment of these firearms. The informant stated that while there may be some boasting in regard to the shipment of firearms to the South, it is his opinion there is some basis for this information and it is not just idle talk.

The informant noted that although the religious organizations, which also sponsored the meeting of October 9, 1955, may not agree with the entire program of the Afro-American Congress of Christian Organizations, they could not remove their names as sponsors because of the sentiment among the Negro people over the Till case.

The afore-mentioned informant subsequently advised the Chicago Office of this Bureau that at the rally held on October 9, 1955, the sum of $370 was raised and it was voted to send a delegation to Washington, D. C., on October 22, 1955, in regard to the Emmett Louis Till case. The informant furnished no information concerning the possible contacts of this delegation while in Washington, D. C.

The National Negro Labor Council has been designated by the Attorney General pursuant to Executive Order 10450.

The files of this Bureau reflect that Marcus Garvey, a British West Indian Negro, reputedly formed the Universal Negro Improvement Association at Jamaica, British West Indies, on July 15, 1914. Garvey entered the United States on March 23, 1916, and commenced to promote his movement in the Harlem Section of New York City. Garvey described himself as the Messiah of the Black People throughout the world and made many violent and inflammatory attacks upon the white race and its treatment of Negroes. In connection with the numerous business ventures engaged in by the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Garvey was convicted of using the mails to defraud in 1925. He remained in prison until 1927 when he was deported to the British West Indies. Garvey died in 1940.

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Relative to the Afro-American National Infantry, also known as National Congress of Afro-American People, the files of this Bureau reflect that on December 4, 1942, Harding was interviewed at his request by Agents of this Bureau. At that time he advised that the National Congress of the Afro-American People was created by him in August, 1938, at which time the first conference was held in Chicago. He indicated this organization consisted of delegates from all of the various Negro organizations in the United States; that it was more or less a federation of Negro societies and that the Afro-American National Infantry was the military division of the National Congress of the Afro-American People.

The Preamble to the Constitution of the National Congress of the Afro-American People reflects the purpose of the organization was "to form a strong confederation of men and women of African descent dedicating our every effort to the proposition of the complete emancipation of our noble race both here and beyond the seas."

In April, 1943, Harding, then a private in the United States Army, was court-martialed for uttering disloyal statements. He was found guilty and sentenced to serve a prison term of five years.

The Attorney General and the intelligence agencies of the Armed Forces are being furnished the foregoing information.

Any additional pertinent data received relative to this matter will be made available to you promptly.

Sincerely yours,

J. Edgar Hoover

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