

Memphis employees to mark King day

By The Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. -- City employees in the town where Martin Luther King Jr. was killed have decided after all to take off the same day the rest of the nation celebrates the civil rights leader's birth, a union leader says.

Early last week it was unclear whether the employees would observe a holiday on Jan. 19 or take off as usual in April on the anniversary of King's murder.

James Smith, executive director of Local 1733 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, said last Thursday that union members took a vote on which holiday they prefer.

"The vote was overwhelming to observe Jan. 19 instead of

April 4" as the holiday, Smith said.

He said the workers will still have April 4 off.

"But we are going to take vacation days or unpaid days off," he said.

King's birthday is Jan. 15, but under federal law, the national holiday comes on the nearest Monday, which is Jan. 19 this year.

The civil rights leader was shot to death in 1968 while standing on the balcony of a Memphis motel.

James Earl Ray, a prison escapee from Missouri, pleaded guilty to killing King and is serving a life prison sentence.

Since 1977, members of Smith's local have taken the anniversary of the King assassination as a paid holiday.

The 7,000-member local has 1,500 city employees.

Early last week, city officials said they would not go along with the national holiday unless union members agreed to give up April 4 as a paid day off. Members of the City Council said the city cannot afford the \$600,000 cost of a second holiday.

Last Monday, Smith said he thought Memphis should observe both anniversaries because King died in the city.

"It didn't surprise me," he said of the union vote. "I'm elated that they did."

"I think the administration wanted to have Jan. 19 because that's the national holiday. We are elated that we are going to be off on Dr. King's birthday in line with the rest of the nation," he said.



Eyes On The Prize America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965

Freedom Riders John Lewis, left, and Jim Zwerg after being beaten by a mob in Montgomery, Ala., as they took part in the 1961 Freedom Rides that ultimately brought integration of interstate transportation to the South. Freedom Rides and lunch-counter sit-ins are the subject of "Ain't Scared of Your Jails, 1960-1961," the third part of "Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965," airing Wednesday, Feb. 4, on PBS (photo by the Nashville Tennessean).

Fla. justice urges respect for holiday

By The Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- Despite a request from Florida's chief justice that all state circuit courts observe the national holiday for slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., some courts will remain open Jan. 19.

Orange-Osceola Chief Judge George Diamantis told *The Orlando Sentinel* recently that he has left rescheduling case loads at the discretion of the circuit's 20 judges. He said it would be impossible to reschedule all the cases on such short notice, and some courts must remain open for emergency hearings.

Of the remaining 19 circuit courts in the state, 13 will be closed for all but emergency hearings on King's birthday, their administrators said.

Three circuit courts -- in Jacksonville, St. Petersburg and Bartow -- will not observe the holiday at all.

Of the state's five appellate courts, two will be closed, one will be open but will not schedule any hearings, and two are undecided, *The Sentinel* reported late last week.

"We're not like a supermarket that can just shut its doors," said Bill Lockhart, administrator of the 6th Circuit, which covers Pasco and Pinellas counties. "We've got people who want their cases decided."

Chief Justice Parker Lee McDonald wrote administrators

of the state's 20 circuit courts Dec. 22, less than a month before the Jan. 19 holiday honoring King.

"The failure of the court system to observe (the holiday) would cause unnecessary criticism of the courts and adversely affect our public relations," he wrote. "If you have not already done so, plan for this holiday to be properly observed."

The anniversary of King's Jan. 15, 1929, birth was first observed as a federal holiday in 1986. Congress designated the third Monday of each January as the holiday, but Florida has not officially adopted it for state employees.

A law passed last year forces the state executive branch to use one of its two floating holidays on Jan. 19 this year, but it does not apply to the courts or county

governments, many of which plan to do business.

"We have not appropriately planned for it. ... But in the future that is going to be corrected," McDonald wrote in his prodding letter, which was unwelcome news for administrators who have filled court dockets for the day with ongoing cases.

Officials said they had made independent plans long before the arrival of McDonald's letter.

"It's not an absolute declaration," the chief justice said. "But it is as strong as I can persuade without making it an absolute order."

The letter was prompted by complaints from state Rep. Alzo Reddick, D-Orlando, who was unhappy that the Orange-Osceola circuit court was not respecting the holiday.

"... It's one of the strangest things that all the great military geniuses of the world have talked about peace. The conquerors of old who came killing in pursuit of peace, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Charlemagne and Napoleon, were akin in seeking a peaceful world order ...

... What is the problem? They are talking about peace as a distant goal, as an end we seek, but one day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal we seek, but that it is a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means. All of this is saying that, in the final analysis, means and ends must cohere because the end is pre-existent in the means, and ultimately destructive means cannot bring about constructive ends."

-- Dr. Martin L. King, 1967

HYATT  WINSTON-SALEM

'I HAVE A DREAM'

(August 28, 1963; Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D. C.)

HIGHLIGHTS

I HAVE A DREAM TODAY! I have a dream that one day "every valley shall be exalted and every hill and mountain shall be made low. The rough places will be made straight, and "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." This is our hope.

LET FREEDOM RING! Let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire; let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York; let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania; let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado; let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California. But not only that. Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia, let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee; let freedom ring from every hill and mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, and when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: "Free at last. Free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last."



Dr. M.L. King Jr.
time capsule
to be planted

WASHINGTON -- The Martin Luther King Federal Holiday Commission recently announced that a Martin Luther King "Time Capsule" will be implanted in central Washington this year and will remain underground for 100 years.

The capsule will contain selected memorabilia chosen by Mrs. Coretta Scott King, as well as photos, videos and audio tapes, filmstrips, speeches and sermons, all depicting national historical events highlighting the work of Martin Luther King Jr.

Brief audio statements by world and national leaders, historians, educators, children and working men and women on the life and legacy of Dr. King will be included in the capsule.

The time capsule will also contain a miniature Liberty Bell, on which will be inscribed the famous "Let Freedom Ring" passage from King's "I Have a Dream" speech. With the aid of computer technology, thousands of names will be "laser-inscribed" on the bell. These will all be unearthed and transcribed for the information of future generations.

The commission considers this a most unusual and appropriate perpetuation of Martin Luther King's memory.

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