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Blacks trying to heal rift between Jesse Jackson and SCLC leadership

By BRYANT ROLLINS

A group consisting of some of the most prestigious Blacks in the country is attempting to bridge the gap that now separates Rev. Jesse Jackson, and the leadership of the Atlanta-based Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

The call for unity developed out of a Sunday afternoon meeting at which leaders from across the country gathered in New York to voice their support for the youthful "Country Preacher."

The meeting was called in the wake of Rev. Jackson's resignation from SCLC following SCLC's demotion of Jackson the previous week for "administrative improprieties."

Unity call

Leading the call for unity at the hastily called New York meeting were Carl Stokes, former Cleveland Mayor; Richard Hatcher, Mayor of Gary, Ind.; actor-director Ossie Davis; musicians Aretha Franklin, Roberta Flack and Nat Aspinally; SCLC Board member Mrs. Marion Logan of New York; Amsterdam News Editor and Publisher, Clarence B. Jones, and Clarence Avant, millionaire president of Sussex Records in Los Angeles.

"When Jesse Jackson decided to leave the SCLC, many of us felt that we cannot afford — Black people cannot afford — to lose the presence, involvement, and leadership of the man who forged a new path in the struggle for freedom," said Stokes, speaking for the group.

"We have committed our fiscal, physical, spiritual and professional aid to Rev. Jackson in whatever he decides to do," he added.

New organization

Rev. Jackson is expected to announce on Saturday, the formation of a separate organization, national in scope, to pick up the religious-economic programs started



Old friends greet!

Dr. Charles Hurst, president of Malcolm X College in Chicago, Illinois, gave a bear hug to longtime buddy Jesse Jackson Saturday. The warm expression of support followed Jackson's announcement that he had resigned from the SCLC.

under the structure of Operation Breadbasket.

There was great concern at Sunday's meeting, however, that steps be taken to prevent a further opening of the rift between Revs. Jackson and Abernathy.

Ossie Davis, who is close to SCLC, was assigned to contact Rev. Abernathy and Mrs. Coretta King to express the concern of the group and to determine whether or

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not the Atlanta forces would be inclined to meet "with a group which has extensively supported Black movements in the United States in recent years.

"This group does not wish to see the schism widen," said a spokesman who attended the meeting, but wished to remain anonymous.

Support Jackson

"This group is committed to supporting Jesse Jackson to the hilt, but it's also committed to working with Rev. Abernathy and Mrs. King to find ways to bridge a gap which will be detrimental in the long run to all Black Americans."

It is not known at this writing whether a meeting between the leadership group and the SCLC leadership has been arranged.

While Mayor Stokes and others at the meeting contended that their purpose was "to support Rev. Jackson, not to comment on the removal" the general tone of those in attendance was that of disappointment at the way SCLC handled the affair.

Disputes

The demotion of Rev. Jackson stemmed from on-going disputes between his mushrooming success with the Chicago-based Breadbasket and the growing problems, financial and organizational, within SCLC.

Last Spring, Rev. Abernathy at-

tempted to move the Breadbasket headquarters from Chicago to Atlanta, a move that was successfully resisted by Rev. Jackson.

More recently, conflict developed over the disposition of some \$500,000 earned by Breadbasket in October through its highly successful Black Expo.

In addition to the major figures mentioned above, the Sunday meeting at New York's Hotel Commodore, was attended by:

Dr. Alvin Poissant, scholar and psychiatrist at the Harvard Medical School; Pierre Sutton, son of Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton who called the meeting but could not attend due to the death of his mother in Texas; Cecil Hollingsworth, Ed Lewis and Bill Minson of Essence Magazine; Kenneth Cunningham, road manager for Aretha Franklin; Peter Long, manager of the Apollo Theatre; bandleader Ruben Phillips; freelance journalist Ernest Dunbar; Al Johnson, owner of a Chicago Cadillac agency; Atty. Tom Todd, counsel for Rev. Jackson and a professor at Northwestern University; Warner Saunders, SCLC Board member from Chicago; Loretta Long, who is Sesame Street's Susan; Junius Griffin, Motown Records' public relations director; Ben Johnson, Philadelphia lawyer; and Will Tatum, Treasurer to the Amsterdam News Corporation.