

April 7, 1941

Reverend William Lloyd Imes
St. James Presbyterian Church
St. Nicholas Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Dr. Imes:

I was privileged through the courtesy of the Reverend Owen A. Knox to read your reply to him dealing with the Detroit situation. Ford is trying desperately to fan a race riot into flame.

I have been here several days and feel that Ford's efforts in this direction will be abortive, but every effort must be made to acquaint the country with what is going on.

I believe a statement from you, deploring an appeal to racial prejudice as un-American, subversive, and calculated to do immeasurable damage, would be effective. The Negroes in the plant are undoubtedly misled, but this does not tend to alleviate the situation.

The press here has, of course, given undue emphasis to the racial angle, thereby obscuring the major issue, which is the right of American workers to organize in organizations of their own choosing. Unless this is realized, all talk of collective bargaining, seniority rights, better working conditions and wages is pointless.

The statement in your letter that: "I shall have to get further light on this before acting" is a little disquieting to me. Time is of the essence. To wait is to court disaster. I am hoping that you can see your way to speak out at once. Detroit can supply a repetition of 1919's East St. Louis, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Tulsa, Oklahoma race riots under circumstances far more dangerous.

Sincerely yours,

William L. Patterson

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