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The Vine City Council, a grass roots organization based in the 136th district, long concerned about the terrible housing conditions which the City of Atlanta has permitted to exist in violation of the law, planned to picket the Marikham Street Area on Sunday, January 30, in the hope of focusing attention on the negligence of the landlord and city government. But January 30 turned out to be a terribly cold day—the temperature dropped below zero and the Council, joined by members of the Southern Regional Council and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, began to survey the area to determine what emergency relief was needed. They found many families living in houses with no heat, or with only a coal or wood stove, with cracks in the walls, ceilings, and floors. They found many families lacking adequate blankets or sufficient coal or wood to obtain what little heat they could get from their stoves. They found one family in which several children were numb from the cold. Contact was made with the Red Cross to obtain blankets and workers went from house to house distributing these blankets where they were needed. Over 300 blankets were distributed in the area. On Monday morning, a worker for the Vine City Council returned to the area and was visiting people in the Marikham Hotel to see how people were doing after the bitter cold night and to arrange a meeting at the Marikham Hotel for that afternoon where it was hoped that Mrs. Martin Luther King Jr., Mrs. Benjamin Mays and possibly Mayor Ivan Allen would be present to see the situation. As Hector Black was in the building he was approached by Joe Shaffer, the landlord of the building and many other buildings in the area and asked what business he had there. Black said he was visiting friends, whereupon Mr. Shaffer told Black he was nothing but a trouble maker and to get out of the building or he would call the police. Black replied that he had a right to be there. Shortly later Black was arrested on the front steps of the hotel and charged with trespassing.

Column book
Landlord
with arrest
in church
Board
Mayor

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Members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, SNCC, and SRC, and the Vine City Council called an immediate meeting to plan action to protest the arrest of Black. At the meeting a joint statement was drafted and plans were made to begin picketing Marikham Street. A few hours later members of the VCC and SNCC began picketing, carrying signs saying, "We demand Heat" and "Landlords Must Go". Martin Luther King Jr. and Rev. Ralph Abernathy of the SCLC appeared and made a personal inspection tour of the area. Afterwards, Dr. King was quoted as saying that the Marikham St. Area had some of the worst conditions he had ever seen. The Press was there in great number and for the first time some of the abominable housing conditions which exists in Atlanta under the nose of giant skyscrapers and great affluence were brought to public life.

That evening, a second strategy meeting was held to contact the welfare department and Red Cross to see what sorts of aid they could provide. When contact was made with these agencies, they