

Methodists Commend Sit-Downs

DENVER, May 7 (AP)—America's largest Protestant body, the Methodist Church, today commended the "dignified, non-violent" behavior of students involved in recent sit-in demonstrations against segregation.

But the denomination's quadrennial general conference also left a question about its religious authority for the action, first of its kind.

In complimenting the students' conduct, the church applauded what it termed the good professional performance of police forces in preventing chaos in those cities where the demonstrations have occurred.

Awakening Conscience

The picketing of lunch counters and other segregated facilities, the church said, serve as reminders that "many citizens of our country are denied basic human rights," and are a means of awakening community conscience.

But moments after adopting the resolution, delegates also voted to refer it to the church's judicial council for a ruling next fall on whether it is in keeping with religious discipline.

The question concerned the church's laws in regard to civil obedience.

The heated discussion came in the closing session of the 11-day governing conference of the 10-million-member church.

It is the first such official action on the subject by a major denomination.

John C. Satterfield Sr., a Yazoo City, Miss., attorney and president-elect of the American Bar Association, sought unsuccessfully to amend it to stress "due respect for the laws of the land and the property rights of others."

Manner Sanctioned

Leonard D. Slutz, a Cincinnati attorney, said it does not sanction the demonstrations as such, but only the manner in which they have been conducted.

"The students are only asking for rights that every citizen of this United States ask for," declared Dr. James P. Brawley, Negro president of Clark College, Atlanta.