

Letters to the Editor

Riots in the Cities

The good people of the United States, black and white, are standing supinely by, while our country is exploding into hate and bitterness. Nightly, we wait for the television communiques about racial eruption throughout the Nation, as if we were in a state of war. Some action is indicated and now. We cannot wait for the summer to end and for our problems to go away, as if we were in Wonderland.

I should like to suggest that the President call a White House Meeting of Governors and Mayors of our major urban areas, with responsible Negro leaders and representatives of Congress, for the purpose of developing certain priorities to put into action so that our country can return to a degree of normalcy as early as possible. Furthermore, a continuing task force from this group, which would have the responsibility to continue to monitor this Nationwide situation, should be appointed so that the President of the United States could be kept informed of progress being made and impediments being met. The President and Congress should use whatever emergency powers they have to accomplish this implementation.

The President and the Congress, however, cannot do it alone. All of us need to look into our hearts, have a spiritual rebirth, and ask ourselves daily what is it that we can do today and every day, wherever we are, to show a greater measure of Christian charity to our neighbors, our fellow workers, our employees, and everyone with whom we come in contact. This was the injunction given to us 2000 years ago, and it would not be inappropriate to begin to put it into practice now.

PAUL B. CORNELLY, M.D.,
 Head of Department, Department
 of Preventive Medicine and Public
 Health, College of Medicine,
 Howard University,
 Washington.

The slum Negro has no reason for hope. His people have been trapped in the poverty cycle for 200 years. The gap between Negro and white income has been increasing. The war on poverty is a token effort, both in terms of money and, more importantly, in terms of the concern and energy of Americans.

This is the reason for riots. They appear to be the only way to awaken a complacent America, and they express the frustration that has built up for many years. And, despite the horror, riots are a sign of health, a sign that years of humiliating poverty and discrimination have not destroyed the spirit of a people.

PAUL OSTERMAN.
 Chevy Chase.

The problems of civil rights would be lessened if the newspaper and television media would simply report the facts, and not treat each incident as a major crisis.

Too many everyday grievances and misunderstandings are headlined out of proportion to their importance. This accomplishes little other than to draw attention and incite an easily provoked people.

HERBERT SOMMERS.
 Washington.

What do the black militants expect to gain from the mixed bag of loosely worded resolutions passed at the recent Newark conference, which range

from the useful to the vengeful?

The question of a "black homeland" staggers the mind. Suppose the U.S. Government impossibly agreed to the creation of a homogeneous Negro state within its borders—an entity certainly unconstitutional to start with—could it ever be amicably agreed what territory the Negroes would acquire?

Perhaps black nationhood involves Black Muslim concepts: the purchase or grant of land for the purpose of founding agricultural or industrial cooperatives. This might provide short-term satisfaction but would probably prove monastically stultifying in the end. In any event, it is ironical that blacks who complain of being colonized by white society now wish to colonize themselves.

JULIETTE C. MUSCAT.
 Alexandria.

In the summer of 1963 thousands of Americans, black and white, stood or sat together and heard Martin Luther King say, "I had a dream." And all of us there felt a part of that dream, were swept up in it on that hopeful summer's day. It was all so clear: only ignorance and bigotry needed to be overcome and America would at last be rid of this cursed color consciousness.

How long ago was it? How long ago was that summer's day? Only four years? Funny, it seems much longer than that.

DOUGLAS ROBERTON.
 Washington.

I was incensed by your benevolent treatment of the victims of Newark's rioting.

You would do much better printing an article to show the police in these riot-torn areas for the heroes they are rather than accuse them of killing the innocent.

Law and order must be established. The police must be respected, not jeered at by the insolent. If it is necessary to shoot looters or snipers to restore law and order then they must be shot.

ARDEN WAGNER.
 Annandale.

What kind of order are we calling for? The order of squalor? The order of vermin housing? The order of degradation? The order of—but I cannot find the words to express the heartless cruelty that we have called order for almost a hundred years, in the United States.

The disorder we witness is not of today, but of the cumulation of disorder in our hearts and in our parents' hearts for almost a century. Individually, you and I have exploded many times and with far less justification, in milder forms, in the cumulation of far less hurtful frustration over far shorter periods of time.

My plea is to you, and to our social scientists, to view and to study human performance in the cumulation of inward-outward views, conscious and unconscious, rational and emotional, mechanical and intentional, and otherwise complexified. Human performance is not just of today, or even just of the years that have passed since "the city of Detroit was badly shocked by its fearful race riot in 1943."

DOUGLAS SAGER.
 Washington.

Unfortunately, the enormous sums being paid for the Vietnam war restrict to almost token sums the necessary expenditures to alleviate the fundamental causes for the discontent.

This adds another reason why it is vital that no opportunity for peace should be overlooked, even if it means that we must compromise with our adversaries to bring about the cessation of hostilities.

FRANK E. KARELSEN.
 The writer is a member of the New
 York City Community for Mental Education of Disadvantaged Children.
 New York.

Discovering the precise causes of the Newark and Detroit riots is almost as difficult as working out a solution and a preventive program. But the action of Illinois Senator Dirksen is a clear example of what not to do.

Instead of vague generalities, may I cite Sen. Dirksen's impassioned pleas in 1965 to reduce funds for the President's Aid to Education program. And while opposing anarchy in prosaic language last week, Sen. Dirksen also continued his opposition to gun-control legislation and said "no" to the Administration's plan for rat extermination in the slums.

And a regular reader of this newspaper has noted eloquent criticism by the Senator of the excellent model cities plan and rent subsidies for the poor.

To show he is not always negative, and has thought about the problems of the cities, Senator Dirksen this month actively supported splitting up the OEO, which administers the War on Poverty. He has also supported a so-called antiriot bill which besides being very probably in violation of the U.S. Constitution (as your paper has suggested), is a cheap and inexpensive way to pretend Congress is taking action.

If existing laws, 10,000 troops, police and tanks can't control native Detroiters, an additional criminal statute against out-of-state rioters doesn't seem to meet the main problem.

Instead of reverting to repression, our leaders in Congress must face up to the evils of poverty and pent-up despair. Our leaders, of whom Senator Dirksen is a prime example, speak of anarchy but attack creative programs to prevent it while presenting none of their own.

CHRISTOPHER B. COHEN.
 Chicago.

There is certainly no connection or relation between race riots and the civil rights movement. Looting, arson, and murder are nothing less than crimes and should be severely dealt with.

Today, there are four deadly enemies that threaten the life of our Nation; namely—ignorance, crime, poverty and hate.

No person should be blamed for his color or racial identity. No person was ever allowed to choose his color or racial identity; but it is clearly evident that an all-wise Creator chose to make different colors.

Different colors exist and there is no way to change it.

No race riot can make a single Negro white or make a white person Negro.

L. C. FARRAR.
 Washington.