

## **An Editorial: Let's Face Facts**

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# **An Editorial: Let's Face Facts**

The calling out of the National Guard to restore peace to Chicago's riot-torn Westside was an altogether proper and necessary action — but it was, at the same time, a tacit admission of the dismal failure of Mayor Daley and his administration.

Had Chicago policemen exercised intelligence and discretion in the initial stages of the conflict, the opening of a few fire hydrants need not have escalated into insidious rioting.

The Westside area has been, for a long time, a tinderbox ready to explode.

There have been enough incidents in recent months — including those of last summer's riots — to indicate that the people were brooding over the fact that nothing had been done to cure their very real and bleeding sores.

It is incomprehensible that, while the mayor and his police officials knew a storm was gathering, while they knew that guns and ammunition were being transported clandestinely from outside the city, yet they did nothing in a serious way to prevent the coming disorders. Here were future events, casting dark

shadows ahead; yet they failed to shake the city out of its usual lethargy and indifference.

It is well known that the Westside community for years has been demanding more resident political leadership. It has not yet achieved this objective.

Riots are always symptomatic of untended social tumors that fester beneath the surface. The corrective is not to be found in the indiscriminate use of the policeman's billy, or in hysterical outbursts of dishonest politicians looking for a scapegoat or through the misguided utterances of a misinformed metropolitan press.

The Sun-Times attributes the riots first to outsiders, then to "young toughs who toss bricks through store windows and make off with loot, who throw Molotov cocktails at squad cars and shoot at police."

But when will the white power structure and most of the white community correct their unfortunate failure to comprehend the real and basic gravity of today's Negro revolution? These elements must

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sweep the cobwebs from their brains before substantial progress in race relations can be achieved.

We do not condone acts of violence; but we look upon them as the logical effects of easily discernible causes. They are the surface manifestations of deep resentment over social proscriptions, over economic denials that characterize ghetto living. In the black-night of despair, the black man sees no shaft of light giving promise of a better day to come.

The plea for open occupancy in this city has fallen — and continues to fall — on deaf ears. Not only the bulk of Chicago realtors, but substantial numbers of white property owners—including Chicago's American—are doggedly opposed to freedom of residence.

The American holds it to be unconstitutional. But does anyone doubt that the real aim of all open occupancy opponents is to keep the Negro mired in the mud of the black ghetto?

The Chicago Tribune, which also is opposed to open occupancy and civil rights in general, would "run the rioters out of town" — either through legal process or by resorting to the "harassment tactics of the Capone era, when gangsters were jailed whenever they showed their faces."

Strangely, the Tribune seems not in the least embarrassed that, in recommending "banishment" for rioters, it is advocating a retrogression to the legal theories current in Greece more than 2,000 years ago, before the establishment, even, of the Roman Republic and the Roman system of law.

The Tribune's prescription for getting rid of a disease seems to be the banishment of the patient. The ultimate result would be the complete dislocation of the entire Negro community — for the disenchantment of the black masses goes far beyond the explosive action of the few.

The attempt to blame the riots on Dr. King or members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference is as dishonest as it is insulting. It is an affront to the intelligence of the Negro people to suggest that they could be swayed against a man as devoted to civil rights as is Dr. King.

The Negro community welcomes his strenuous efforts to focus attention on the despicable conditions which the city has failed to correct.

To be sure, it is regrettable that Dr. King did not avail himself of the counsel and influence of the whole local leadership, some of which he assumes to be a bulwark of the status quo. In his perfectly legitimate quest for a cure of ills that beset Negroes, he could have used help that was available. Had he done this, his crusade would have yielded greater rewards.

There is a background of hopelessness and a feeling of unequal opportunity on the Westside that Mayor Daley has failed to see as capable of touching off the powder keg.

And our elected Negro officials—who might have enlightened the mayor and lent their voices to a real effort at solving the problems they know full well — have been ignored as though they were voiceless puppets.

This community cannot afford its complacent, "sociology-as-usual" policy — which plainly threatens us all with a Chicago-Watts.

Public confidence in police fairness is not what it should be; and this stems from daily demonstrations that too many police officers have little understanding of the problems with which they are dealing.

Nevertheless, neither policemen nor guardsmen have the power to solve the race problem. The mayor and other city officials must face squarely and honestly the very real and heavy responsibilities which clearly are theirs.