

"TIMES" SAYS RIGHTS ACT JUST "BEGINNING"

(EDITORIAL, from page 2)

every case the Government would sue to end discrimination in a state facility—as Titles 3 and 4 of the pending legislation would allow it to do—rather than cut off aid.

The Administration originally proposed to end the matter there, by authorizing suits. But the House felt that action to end discriminatory use of Federal money should be mandatory, not discretionary. We have come to the conclusion that if the issue is not faced now, it will have to be later. We think, on balance, that Congress should make its decision now and declare that in the rare case of the ultimate choice, no aid is better than aid to one race only.

The disadvantage suffered by the average Negro in this country because of the color of his skin is nowhere more burdensome than in the area of job opportunity. The unemployment rate is twice as high among Negroes as among whites; median family income is about half as much.

This is a national, not a Southern, problem. Commonly in the North, as in the South, Negroes are confined to menial jobs. Throughout the country, large locals of some major unions that control access to skilled employment will not admit Negroes. We need look no further than the disgraceful behavior of a plumbers local

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Call to Conscience

Religion is not unrelated to life. Men who profess a belief in God cannot be devoid of a sense of moral obligation—a commitment to work for what they believe to be just and true. Thus men who are religious leaders have a duty to influence and lead their followers even in connection with political issues when clear moral imperatives are involved. The granting of equal rights and equal opportunity to all God's children is surely such an issue.

President Johnson had every justification, therefore, in saying to the Protestant, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Jewish leaders assembled here for the National Interreligious Convocation on Civil Rights that "It is your job, as men of God, to reawaken the conscience of your beloved land." That conscience, roused, will spell the end of racial discrimination.

Indifference and complacency alone can thwart passage of the civil rights bill. As the Rev. Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, chief executive officer of the United Presbyterian Church, told the convocation, the "unconcerned" and "uncommitted" must be won to the side of civil rights. That is properly a job for religious leaders.

The Lincoln Legacy

The Republican Critical Issues Council has come forward with a set of civil rights proposals which, if they were vigorously pursued, would bring the Party back to its own rich heritage. Asserting that the GOP will maintain a century-old commitment to civil rights, the Council said: "We will resist any present temptation to duck the implications of the Lincoln legacy, the Eisenhower example or the 1960 platform."

Specifically, the Council urged that all still-segregated school districts be required by law to make an immediate start toward desegregation; it is high time for some such legislative support of the judicial action taken a full decade ago. The Council also urged that the President act, if Congress refuses, to withhold Federal aid funds from projects in which racial discrimination is practiced; it is high time for this kind of executive support of the Supreme Court.

There can be no doubt that this is in the Lincoln tradition—in the best tradition of a party committed to civil rights from its birth. It is not quite so clearly in line with "the Eisenhower example" and not at all in harmony with the views currently expressed by some Republicans in the Senate. When the GOP as a whole is ready to say, and do, what its Critical Issues Council recommends, it will be ready to rejoin the 20th century—and return to national political power.

in New York for an example.

Title 7 of the civil rights bill now before the Senate is an ambitious proposal for a national attack on discrimination in employment. It prohibits racial or religious discrimination by companies with 25 or more employees and unions with 25 or more members, after a four-year transitional period.

To enforce its provisions, this title creates an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which would investigate complaints of discrimination and could sue in the Federal courts if persuasion failed. The misrepresentations by opponents of the civil rights legislation are at their wildest in discussion of this title. It would not, as has been suggested, require anyone to establish racial quotas; to the contrary, such quotas would be forbidden as a racial test. The bill does not require employers or unions to drop any standard for hiring or promotion or membership—except the discriminatory standard of race or religion.

It must be candidly recognized that Title 7 would not overnight wipe out inequality of job opportunities for Negroes. This is a large and diverse country, and one commission in Washington cannot effectively check the hiring practices of every company. The probability is that the greatest effect of a new Federal fair employment statute would lie in the mere fact of its passage by Congress: A standard would thereby be set for the great majority of management and union leaders who want to do justice and obey the law.

What is important is that the enforcement method provided be strong and clear enough to constitute a meaningful warning.

The millennium will not arrive if Title 7 is enacted. But there must be a beginning; and it is surely time for a Federal undertaking to end an injustice that is damaging the American economy and, more important, imposing misery and frustration on Americans for no other reason than their color.

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