

UNITED STATES



OF AMERICA

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 90th CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

VOLUME 114—PART 8

APRIL 10, 1968, TO APRIL 26, 1968

(PAGES 9407 TO 10822)

reason. The sights on television of men, women, and children looting stores and burning buildings have sickened me, and from the mail I am getting, my constituents feel the same way.

Rioting is not constructive in any way. I do not pretend to know what the answer is, but I do know that a breakdown of law and order cannot be tolerated.

I am told that laws regarding looting and burning were not strictly enforced in the early hours of the riot because the police and firemen were hopelessly outnumbered, but that this stopped when the troops arrived. Unfortunately there are glaring examples that would indicate another story. One answer might be a quicker response to riot situations and where the law-enforcement officials feel overpowered, a quicker decision to use troops.

There is little that we as legislators can do in regard toward the preservation of law and order in riot situations. However, I, for one, am not pleased with the lack of respect for property that was displayed in Washington by the rioters and unfortunately by some of those enforcing the law.

J. Edgar Hoover stated recently:

Those who break the law acting alone or in concert, must be detected and arrested, promptly prosecuted, and given proper substantial punishment. In halting riots and removing crime from our Nation's streets, this should be the first order of business.

I quite agree and I hope that the courts will see that these people are given a fair trial. I am sure there are instances where compassion is called for, but in cases where it is not, I hope the participants will not be lightly excused.

There is one aspect of the Washington civil disturbance that has particularly upset me—that is the number of Federal employees arrested during the riots. We may not ever know how many actually took part in the disturbance, so many said they were unemployed. The Washington Post reported that 11 of the first 119 arrests during the riots were individuals who worked for the Federal Government.

To me there can be no excuse for an employee of this Government participating in such a disturbance and it is for this reason that I am today introducing a bill which would remove persons from Federal employment who are convicted of unlawful acts connected with civil disorders.

"White Racism and the Common Man"— Address by Tommy M. Tomlinson

HON. WALTER F. MONDALE

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Thursday, April 11, 1968

Mr. MONDALE. Mr. President, the report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders will be remembered for its searching analysis of the causes of the riots; for its challenging recommendations; for the public debate it has generated. But perhaps most of all it will be remembered for the phrase "white racism."

There are many interpretations of this phrase. Open bigotry is white racism. But there are less obvious meanings as well. White racism can also mean the attitudes and actions of well-meaning citizens who consider themselves without prejudice.

Tommy M. Tomlinson, a psychologist at the Office of Economic Opportunity, has written of the unconscious personal prejudice pervading even "liberal" white America.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Dr. Tomlinson's illuminating paper, entitled "White Racism and the Common Man," be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the paper was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

WHITE RACISM AND THE COMMON MAN: AN EXTENSION OF THE KERNER COMMISSION'S REPORT ON AMERICAN RACISM¹

(By Tommy M. Tomlinson,² Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D.C.)

Of all the words in the Report of National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, none have been so stunning to white America as the word "racism". The Report makes clear the effects of white racism in perpetuating the institution of Negro disadvantage. It does not, however, translate the meaning of racism in such a way that each white American is made aware of his individual contribution to the maintenance of social, as well as economic, inequality. As a consequence the bulk of white America may escape through the net of the racism charge. Thus, this paper elaborates upon some specific aspects of the phenomena of common racism.

"Racism" is a word customarily and popularly used to describe the more blatant examples of discrimination and in the public mind the synonym for "racism" is "bigotry". But most Americans are not and/or do not view themselves as bigots; the belief and behavior systems of most white Americans about Negroes has become exquisitely complex and subtle, although nonetheless "racist" in nature. The problem then, is identified, but not described by the word "racism"; a description of the manifestations of systematic racism in the day-to-day social interaction of Negroes and whites is necessary to characterize the racist mentality of the average white American.

Let us turn now to a few specific examples of common white attitudes and behavior which to many whites seem plausible but which betray a racist mentality.

Items:

(1) Social anxiety. How many white Americans have good friends who are Negroes? How many whites can distinguish between the relationships characterized by the statement, "some of my best friends are . . ." and the comfortable and unremarked companionship they have with white friends? How many whites feel at ease in a social situation with Negroes? How many whites are embarrassed because they "don't know what to say" to Negroes?

(2) Assumptions about "Them". Why are individual Negroes continuously asked "what are these riots all about?" "What do Negroes want?" or "what are they thinking and doing down there (in the ghetto)?" This assumption betrays a view of Negroes as a "foreign" body, and indicates how perfectly removed from the experience of questioning whites "they" are. Furthermore, the best example of the "foreign body" assumption is the nature

¹ The views expressed are those of the author, not his agency.

² I am indebted to Diana L. TenHouten and Barbara Williams for many helpful suggestions in the preparation of this paper.

of the question itself. The questions betray an inability by whites to perceive that they share a common humanity with blacks which, if considered, might help the whites understand "what they're thinking", "what they want", and especially "why they want it".

(3) The absence of accommodation. In this instance racism is manifested in refusals to allow or give credence to the various, often labored, attempts many Negroes have used to achieve dignity. Cartoonists jibe at the tortured attempts of blacks to name themselves, e.g., a well-known social satirist depicts scornfully the cycle of naming from Negroes, to blacks, to Afro-Americans. Citizens are outraged by "Black Power" (or any organization with "Black" in its title), upset by "natural hair", and derisive of Muhammed Ali's name change. Moreover, whites continuously presume intimacy based on the quite unconscious assumption that high status people do not have to grant the dignity of formality when they interact with racially defined or otherwise low status people. Whites justify this assumption on the grounds that immediate intimacy e.g., first naming will demonstrate the absence of their own race or status prejudice. In fact quite the opposite occurs, and the irritation whites feel when Negroes reject their offer of intimacy is the measure of their lack of awareness and accommodation of black dignity. The demand is that blacks be just like whites, no deviations in the interest of personal integrity and dignity are allowed. No accommodation of the attempt to overcome perceived and felt inferiority is allowed. The blind spot is that blacks are just like whites, behaving just like whites do when inroads on their dignity are made.

(4) Negroes are getting ahead. The average white proclaims, "yes Negroes are doing well, look at Sidney Pottier, Sammy Davis, Jr., Ralph Bunche, etc." Or a teacher was heard to say, "yes Negroes have accomplished much and they have contributed to the nation and these contributions should be marked by us all. Why don't we spend time in class telling our students about Nancy Wilson?" Nancy Wilson? Is she the culmination of 300 years of history? or Sidney Pottier, or Sammy Davis or any of the other "exceptions". Whites proclaim integration when one "safe", i.e., "white", black person enters a white system. The smallest evidence of change is exaggerated into monumental progress.

On the other hand every Negro is held responsible for the behavior of every other Negro. Whites say, for example, that Adam Powell is a discredit to his race, but few, if any, say that the peccadilloes of movie stars of, say, Italian extraction, reflect poorly on Italians. Where Negroes are concerned most whites seem unable to articulate individual differences, except when they utter the racist opinion, "He's different from the rest".

(5) Negroes are all right, but. But what about their crime rate, unstable family structure, dependence on welfare, etc. Whites are somehow unable to make the connection between institutionalized racism and its products. The products are viewed as examples of inferiority, not of the centuries of systematic exclusion from "upright" society. One would think the history had never happened.

(6) Lift yourselves up. Negroes are exhorted to lift themselves, but at the first sign of independence or even aspirations to independence, whites in one way or another interfere. Those whites who want to help interfere by "helping", i.e., refusing to wait while the Negro does it himself. Most whites are simply threatened by signs that Negroes intend to assume equal status, justifying the negative response with beliefs that Communists, Black Power, radicals, criminals, etc., are responsible for the self-assertion. As if the self assertion would not occur but for "outside agitation". As if Black Power had

no justification. As if Negroes ought to be, and but for the "agitation", would be content with their lot in American society. As if "uplift" would change the white attitudes which created the ghettoization of Negroes (unless, but not always, the uplifted persons is a celebrity).

In almost any informal and many formal situations where a black person assumes command, whites find themselves anxious, agitated, surprised and often insulted. The rules of subordination-superordination have been broken and no new social rules exist to account for or respond to aggressive, i.e., success oriented, behavior on the part of Negroes, except condescension or anger.

(7) The plausible, but irrelevant excuse. Many whites say, "I'm not against Negroes but I believe a man should be able to sell his property to whomever he wants". The primary assumption is that property rights prevail over human rights. But there is hypocrisy in that assumption too, for most white property owners who agree to the above statement, also express repudiation about selling to someone that their neighbors might not like. Or feel that they should be consulted and their wishes considered if a neighbor entertains the notion of selling to a Negro. Thus what is real is that property rights are a convenient excuse to avoid Negroes in the neighborhood. If the property owner was consistent with his notion of his "rights", he would not be constrained by the wishes of his neighbors, nor would he express opinions about his neighbors intentions. He would sell to whom he pleased, and he would be willing to extend that privilege to his neighbors. (Here is the "foreign body" again. Apparently many property owners can better understand why his white friends might not want a Negro neighbor than why it is critical for a black citizen to be able to live in any house he can afford.)

This list could go on, examples are virtually without limit. The point, however, is clear: racism is not simply discrimination or bigotry, it is the systematic attitudinal and value bias of whites toward Negroes and the absence of shared awareness of the common humanity of all men.

Since it is white racism that instigated and perpetuates Negro disadvantage, it is instantly obvious that major attention should be given to programs designed to ameliorate or remove those attitudes. The Commission dwells at length on what is to be done for the Negro, but not at all on what is to be done about whites. What can be done? Many suggestions might be made, but among those which can be quickly conceived are:

(1) The Federal government, especially the executive branch, should examine itself with an eye to removing its own symptoms of racist attitudes. Having done so it should lead the way in educating the mass of white America about the meaning of racism. It could set an example of conscience by deliberate efforts to remove the evidence of overt and implicit assumptions about the character of Negro-white relations. One outcome of this action would be a public statement which indicates an understanding by the Executive of the meaning and motives of Black Identity, Black Power, natural haircuts, and the myriad other examples of the Negro reach for dignity and self-determination. Similar action could be taken by state and local leaders.

(2) Concentrated attempts by the communication media to acquaint white America with its own racism. For example, in addition to National Drivers Examinations, and like types of programs, the media could develop programs aimed at allowing each viewer to test and gauge his own racism. The media could undertake to explain to the white public the many conscious and unconscious forms that racism takes, while at the same time documenting the impact of that racism on all Americans.

(3) Efforts could be made to revise the curricula of schools, so that children could be made aware of the meaning and appearance of racism. Not simply in the teaching of Negro history, but also in its descriptions of the history of white response to the "Negro problem." Systematic attempts to explain and undercut the dynamics of prejudice could be accomplished, not only with students, but with their teachers as well. Thus, the responsibility for the educational reduction of prejudice and racism lies with the colleges who train teachers as well as primary and secondary schools.

(4) Programs could be developed for the purpose of bringing Negroes and whites together, not only in informal situations, but also in formats designed to produce the exchange of information necessary to achieve the goal of common understanding of the problems and the generation of true relationships. An example of this format is the "Human Relations" training program developed by the National Training Laboratories. Programs such as this have, on a limited scale, been successfully carried out in many places, and a notable example is the "Community Seminars" program at the Department of Urban Affairs, University of California Extension, Los Angeles, California.

Finally it would be useful, though not immediately applicable, to carry out a clinically oriented study of white racism, especially focused on the types of behavior described in the foregoing section, but also examining similar variables which influence the communication media, the schools, the Federal government, etc. This should not be a simple documentation of discrimination, but a behavioral and attitudinal analysis of the nature and influence of racist assumptions in the portrayal of Negro problems, the writing of school books, the development of remedial programs, the training of teachers, etc. There is virtually no area of American life that is free of the influence of racism, and the manifestations and impact of that fact needs careful and sophisticated documentation in order to move effectively to its reduction and ultimate elimination.

This brief analysis has attempted to substantiate and to a limited extent explicate the existence of "common racism". It is, however, only a scratch on the surface of an enormous problem. We need far more research and analysis to really understand how pervasive, insidious and influential the subtle, day-to-day manifestations of racism are in determining the course of race relations in this country. We already have an idea of the dimensions of the problem, but we do not as yet have any clear idea of how to approach it. For example, open housing only indirectly attacks racism; we need to know how it can be directly encountered. This paper is intended to suggest some beginning directions for ameliorative action, much more needs to be done.

Statement on the Proposal for an Open Occupancy Ordinance for Northbrook

HON. DONALD RUMSFELD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 11, 1968

Mr. RUMSFELD. Mr. Speaker, although the Civil Rights Act of 1968 has been cleared for the Presidential signature, I feel that the following thoughtful statement by Mr. John Williams, a member of the board of trustees of the village of Northbrook, Ill., will be of interest to the Members.

Mr. Williams' statement follows:

STATEMENT ON THE PROPOSAL FOR AN OPEN OCCUPANCY ORDINANCE FOR NORTHBROOK

The proposed ordinance has stirred a great deal of public controversy and dissension. Since one of our goals is to promote harmony, I hope we will conduct our deliberations in a manner which will reflect the respect we have for all our citizens and our toleration of views which may differ from our own.

It has been suggested that this is a controversial issue which should be the subject of a referendum. I think this would not be constructive, I will not try to rehash the Federalist papers; but the founders of our government entrusted the legislative power to the public's elected representatives. I believe this is sound; and that it is not only the prerogative but the duty of the elected representative to use his own best judgment and follow his own conscience.

While the idea of a referendum makes sense on the surface, I believe that a referendum would not settle anything. It is virtually impossible to frame a question so that the outcome of the vote would be meaningful; and, in a case like this, the campaign would almost certainly evoke the most inflammatory arguments on both sides of the question and generate much more heat than light.

The report on last summer's riots makes it clear that the racial situation constitutes a major police problem of our cities. Thus it seems perfectly clear to me that legislation aimed at the relief of racial tensions is within the police powers of the state and its municipalities.

One approach to the problem would be oppression of the Negro population; and I do not doubt that it would be within the power of white society to control the racial situation by sheer force. But this approach would make a mockery of everything our country stands for and has fought for through the years. The only other approach is action to relieve the causes of racial tension.

One of the causes is lack of equal opportunity in housing. While many protest that legislation on this subject is not needed, it is clear that in the years since the Civil War, too little progress has been made. Senator Dirksen recently acknowledged the need for legislation in this area when he introduced an open housing bill in the Senate and said that he would not have Negro boys return from Viet Nam to a segregated housing market. If we fail, as a Village, to take effective action on vital problems, we will forfeit our right to govern ourselves and, by default, turn over the initiative to the federal, state or city government or the courts. Thus, I conclude that the Village should enact an open occupancy ordinance.

What kind of ordinance is appropriate? The narrowest form of ordinance applies only to real estate brokers. I believe the citizens of Northbrook feel almost unanimously that a real estate broker has no business imposing his own prejudices on the entire community. I don't believe there is any evidence of widespread discriminatory practices by our real estate brokers, and I certainly don't think it is fair to blame them for a problem which is really the responsibility of us all. However, I believe there have been instances of discrimination by some brokers. This is entirely unwarranted and, as a minimum, we should have an ordinance prohibiting discrimination by brokers—and I would add provisions prohibiting block-busting and panic peddling.

The real battle ground of public opinion involves provisions prohibiting discrimination by the homeowner. To date, the overwhelming majority of those who have spoken on the subject have stated that they believe that racial discrimination in housing is wrong. But a substantial number feel that an ordinance applying to the homeowner is either unnecessary or undesirable.