

worldview

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AMERICA'S MINORITY PROBLEMS

Americans traditionally have liked to make a sharp distinction between domestic and foreign affairs, between "our" business and "their" business. The events of the past two decades have taught us, however, that the distinction is generally unreal. No man is an island and today no nation is an island; we are all involved in each other's fate and what happens "here" inevitably affects what happens "there." A whole world watches to see how this nation manages its "private" problems and, inevitably, the pattern of America's domestic life has effects on life abroad. During the past several years Mr. George Kennan has repeatedly reminded us, for example, that one of the most important challenges we face in the Cold War is to set our own house in order, because a nation that is unwilling or unable to secure justice within its own borders cannot hope to be the symbol and defender of justice for the rest of the world.

In this respect, no problem in American society is more basic or more urgent than the problem of America's minority groups. This nation will be judged on how it treats them. Are we in fact a pluralist society which promotes genuine equality of opportunity for each of its members, or is American "equality" only a myth? Our society is struggling to answer this question. And on the answer a great deal of our future in the world depends. The form this question has taken is both racial and religious; it involves two of our most numerous minorities: Negroes and Catholics. In dealing with the questions they are now asking America's conscience is being put to a great test. Are we—in spite of our fine democratic professions—determined to maintain ourselves as a white-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant culture, or is this indeed a land of "liberty and justice for all"?

America's racial problem is its greatest trauma. The American Negro has suddenly awakened from a long, docile slumber to demand an active role in the nation's life. The lunch counter demonstrations now taking place in the South are not the work of a few hot-headed youths: they are a historic sign that the American Negro is finally, a

hundred years after emancipation, demanding first-class citizenship. The Negroes' struggle has thus moved beyond the courts, beyond legalism; it has become immediate and personal and calls for an immediate and personal response from the nation's white majority. The time when this majority could be neutral about, or detached from, this question—content with the "status quo"—is forever passed. On the Negro question there is no status quo: all is in ferment.

If a better measure of justice, a better America, is to emerge from the ferment, the nation's religious groups will have to play a more active role than they have in the past. It is still a bitter fact that in the United States 11 A.M. on Sunday is the most segregated hour in the week. America's Churches, on the whole, have a sorry history here; in their approach to Negro rights they have lagged behind the best insights of the secular-humanist conscience; they have rationalized and temporized and, sometimes, connived with injustice. For all this they have much to answer. Perhaps their major role in the social order now is to guide and speed the real emancipation of the American Negro that has finally begun.

The Churches—especially the Protestant Churches—face a similar challenge and have a similar role in that other "minority" question that is now dividing the nation: the question of a possible Roman Catholic candidate for the Presidency of the United States. And here the question is one of particular psychological delicacy for some Protestant Americans, since it may seem to threaten their traditional image of America as an unofficially "Protestant" nation. But the challenge for the Protestant conscience here is similar to the challenge for the white conscience in regard to the Negro: it is whether the American promise shall finally be made real for groups other than one's own. The most damaging disservice that can be done to American society—and to America's image in the world—is a continued denial to any "other"

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group of participation in the full opportunity of American life. The test for America's maturity and claim to world leadership will be its success in dealing with its own minority problems.

SEEING RED

Anyone who thinks that the problem of McCarthyism ended with the censure of the late Senator Joseph McCarthy should be quickly disillusioned by reading almost any pronouncement by the Chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee, Rep. Francis E. Walter. Mr. Walter seems determined that the spirit of McCarthyism shall live on, and his most recent attempt to perpetuate it is his defense of the Air Force manual, "Security, Education and Discipline," prepared for use in training non-commissioned officers in the Air Force Reserve.

This manual, as everyone now knows, resurrected the old J. B. Matthews charges of Communist infiltration among the Protestant clergy. It informed trainees in the Air Force Reserve that "Communist and Communist fellow-travelers and sympathizers have successfully infiltrated our churches" and said that "it is known that even the pastors of certain of our churches are card-carrying Communists!" The manual also charged that thirty of the ninety-five scholars who had prepared the Revised Standard Version of the Bible "had been affiliated with pro-Communist fronts, projects and publications."

The Pentagon quickly repudiated the manual, once it was brought to public attention, and Thomas S. Gates, the Secretary of Defense, apologized to the National Council of Churches for having distributed it. But Rep. Walter would have no part in the retreat. Instead, he counter-attacked, denouncing the Secretary of Defense for having made "a grovelling apology." He would have done well, Mr. Walter said, "to have investigated the facts concerning the bureaucracy which runs the National Council of Churches." And his committee, he announced, was prepared to "investigate" the manual's withdrawal.

The nation's Protestant clergy, or the National Council of Churches, needs no defense from the sweeping unsubstantiated charges made in the Air Force manual. Their irresponsibility is self-evident. The fact that Mr. Walter should press them, though, is one more indication that he

speaks in Congress for the hysteria of our recent, irresponsible past. Under his leadership the House Un-American Activities Committee continues to undermine the very concept of congressional investigation. Surely it is long past the time when he should be relieved of his post.

THE TIES THAT BIND

The forthcoming meeting of the Atlantic Community on March 29 might well become a milestone in post-war international cooperation, and a new and important phase in the development of U.S. foreign economic policy. The meeting will bring together the eighteen Western European nations of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation, Canada and the United States for the purpose of establishing an organization within which all twenty members may coordinate their economic, fiscal and social policies.

After twelve years of existence OEEC must be considered a tremendously successful experiment. Its main purpose of overseeing the reconstruction of Europe's war-ravaged economies has long been accomplished, but its usefulness has outlived this main goal. Over the past five years the organization has issued periodic reviews of the economies of member states, and warned against those tendencies, such as overexposure or excessive protectiveness, that could destroy the real economic gains since the war. Further, it has devised a program for aiding economies that have, for a variety of reasons, run into shallow water. Turkey, France and Spain have all benefitted from this program, and the people in these nations have been spared the personal calamities that follow general economic collapse.

Now it is time for OEEC to turn to newer, less dramatic, but equally important tasks — those of overseeing the continued improvement in European living standards and attending to the needs of less developed areas of the world. The full U.S. participation in the new organization is a natural development in a process that has found us associate members of OEEC, and the major moving force in NATO. The traditional American fear of entangling alliances has too long prevented our leaders from entering the ties that bind nation to nation in the peaceful pursuit of liberty, justice and happiness. U.S. participation in this new group can only move the free world further toward these ultimate goals.