

AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME.

It is said that on the night he died, Victor Hugo made this closing entry in his diary: "There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world; and that is an idea whose time has come." Later it was put in more dramatic form: "Greater than the tread of mighty armies is an idea whose hour has come." This is the issue with which we have been wrestling for months. There will be continued resistance for one reason or another. There will in some quarters be a steadfast refusal to come to grips with what seems an inevitable challenge which must be met. The idea of equal opportunity to vote, to secure schooling, to have public funds equitably spent, to have public parks and playground equally accessible, to have an equal opportunity for a livelihood without discrimination, to be equal before the law - the hour for this idea has come and it will not be denied or resisted.

It is not the first time that an idea has pushed aside contemporary thinking and moved to the top. Long years ago in this Senate, the idea of a Pure Food & Drug Act was resisted in language which today sound quaint. But it would not be denied. Long years ago, the Civil Service and merit system was decried and opposed but the shot which took the life of President Garfield suddenly opened the way and it would not be denied. Long years ago, even President Wilson thought that a Federal Child Labor Act was absurd but it would not be resisted. Long years ago, suffrage for women was regarded with genuine amusement but it would not be stopped. Even as these challenges faced the Senate in other days, so now we are faced with an idea whose hour has come.

What then are the forces which conspired to bring this idea to fruition in our day and time? They are many and perhaps we have failed to re-examine history with proper perspective. Let us go back to an orientation point.

June 28th 1964 is an anniversary date. It will be so to millions but perhaps they have forgotten. It was just fifty years before on that date that the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria went to visit the newly acquired province of Bosnia. The people were sullen and angry. His journey took him and his morganatic wife to the little town of Sarajevo where he paid his respects at the city hall. Shortly

thereafter, while entering his motorcar, a young man suddenly appeared with a pistol in his hand. He fired but two shots. Both proved fatal and the archduke and his wife died almost instantly.

The news was duly recorded on the front page but to us it made little impression at the time. Life was so sweet and delightful, so tranquil and diverting. Mary Pickford was then America's movie sweetheart and Maude Adams, Laurette Taylor and Ethel Barrymore were charming audiences over the land. Jack Johnson retained his heavyweight title and Billy Sunday was doing then what Billy Graham does now. The Underwood Tariff Bill was the top political issue of the day and Champ Clark was Speaker of the House. There were 500,00 flivvers on the highway and it was the year that Ford announced the \$5 eight hour day and that one could buy a Ford in any color so long as it was black. Mexico was in turmoil, Woodrow Wilson was in the White House and it was the first year for the Federal income tax.

But the ghost of Sarajevo was to haunt us. Soon, the Legions began to roll toward national frontiers, there were charges and countercharges and Europe was in the grip of conflict. The Kaiser's submarines were soon to prowl the seven seas and torpedo vessels in his effort to humble Britain. As destiny would have it the Falabia, the Gulflight and the Lusitania were to become the victims of a torpedo and in the inevitable surge of events, Woodrow Wilson stood before a tense Congress and asked for a Declaration of war.

That war was to see millions of young Americans, white and non-white don uniforms in the cause of Democracy. The record shows that 273,000 young negroes served in World War One, many of whom saw overseas service. There they were to observe that there was no color line and no discrimination and they were to return ultimately and bring those observations with them. That was nearly a half-century ago. Those young men, if alive are in their sixties. Many of them are fathers and grandfathers and surely, as is the nature of a soldier, they were to recite their adventures to their children and grandchildren and not the least of their recitals would deal with the complete equality which they enjoyed abroad in uniform.

But 23 years after the armistice which concluded hostilities in World War One, came Pearl Harbor and once more a generation of young Americans

Total 273,000

marched to the four corners of the earth to halt the march of Fascism and the liquidation of human freedom. A total of 16,112,566 Americans served in that struggle and of that number 1 611,000 were negroes.

There came in our time an effort to dominate the little country of Korea - meaning Morning calm. At the time, it was deemed nothing more than a policing action. But the cemeteries in Asia attest to it's magnitude in blood and treasure. Before we were thro, 5,700,000 young men served in that police action and 570,000 were negroes.

It is interesting that in every one of these conflicts, 10% of the men in uniform were colored.

But those who served in World War I are not only fathers but grandfathers. In places where they served, they noted the lack of discrimination on account of color and the story must obviously have been told and retold to children and grandchildren.

The men of color - and women also- who served in World War II have become the fathers and mothers of families. They served in areas all over the world and particularly in countries where color was no bar and dicrimination was unknown. Their children are the young negroes of today and from the lips of fathers and mothers, they have heard the story of non-discrimination elsewhere except in the land which sent them forth to fight for freedom and a free world.

All this has been a part of the incubation of an idea, more powerful than armies, whose time has come.

But other things have happened. There was a time when the negro was not particularly considered as a professional man. His role in life was generally accepted as a manual worker, a porter, a stevedore, a truck driver, a section hand on a railroad. But times have changed.

Today there are 2440 negro lawyers and judges and 4996 negro doctors; today there are 4193 negro engineers in all lines of engineering; today there are 2341 negro dentists and 3614 accountants; today there are 122 negro architects and 81 aviation pilots and navigators; today there are 325 negro actors and 1886 artists and art teachers; today there are 5869 negro college professors and instructors and 90,286 negro elementary school teachers; today there are 33,581 negro instructors in secondary schools and an additional 8272 not listed in these classifications. These are trained, educated people who for years have been contemplating the question of equality, freedom and discrimination and their thinking, has assisted in the incubation of the idea whose time has come.

There are other factors which have contributed to this long inexorable process of incubation and gestation. Consider Africa, long the happy hunting ground of colonialism. But a generation ago, there one found the Belgians in the Congo, the French in northern and central Africa, the British in southern Africa, the Portuguese in south west Africa, Spain in northern Africa, the Germans in central Africa.

The natives took account of the living standards which freedom and industrial development could provide for a people. Docile and tractable as they were under the direction of the white empire builders from over the world, the yearning for independence and equality began to stir in the souls of even illiterate people. The throb of nationalism advanced from a hope to a murmur. The murmur became louder and soon expressed itself in a demand. The demand reached a crescendo and became stronger than the white man's soldiers and the whips of the overseers. It would not be stilled and it would not be stayed. It became an idea whose time had come and today, what was so often referred to as The Dark Continent is in the main a continent of independent Republics holding the balance of power in the General Assembly of the United Nations. These and many other factors have quietly and almost imperceptibly nursed an idea whose time has come, the idea of freedom, equality before the law and equality of opportunity.

It is here. It is on our doorstep. It will not go away. It is a challenge which must be met. To think in terms of old forms is futile. To think provincially in terms of a state where the problem and the challenge has not reached substantial political dimensions is to ignore the overall challenge itself and what it means to our common country. We deal not with some economic platitude or with an abstruse unrevealing plank in a political platform. We deal with a throbbing idea whose time has come.

It has penetrated the conscience of the clergy and insinuated itself into the sense of fair play of the youth of the land. It has broken down the barriers in labor organizations and a host of other groups. It's time has come.

Our problem as legislators is to deal with it realistically, fairly, equitably, practically and in the context of the rights of all citizens.