

Extremists Can't Be Permitted To Decide Our Future For Us

The decision for the future of Raleigh cannot be made for us either by the Negroes sitting on their suitcases outside the Sir Walter Hotel here, or by the Sir Walter's management which says it won't accommodate Negroes. The decision for Raleigh's future must come from the thousands of Raleigh people who are truly seeking an answer to our problems instead of from the few extremists on each side who are generating more heat than they are light.

The truth of Raleigh's status in human relations now is that the Sir Walter is becoming more and more an island of stubborn insistence on segregation in a sea of Raleigh businesses which have agreed to discontinue discrimination solely on the basis of race. So is the Sir Walter's across-Davie-Street neighbor, the S&W. And, the presence of those islands simply emphasizes the willingness of the vast majority of Raleigh's business people to take the steps to break with custom which has denied decency and opportunity to some citizens simply on a basis of race. The willingness of this majority is based on a number of facts. One fact is that it is morally right to permit a human being the opportunity to hope. Another fact is that it is good business economically. A city which is wracked by hatred and by fear and by tension isn't a healthy city economically.

The old, tired fear that serving all the public without discrimination solely because of race will hurt business has been disproved

right here in Raleigh in recent days. The Raleigh Merchants Bureau polled some businessmen who have agreed to such non-discriminatory practices, and found that their businesses hadn't suffered. The Merchants Bureau has opened its membership to Negroes, and it hasn't suffered. The Chamber of Commerce has opened its membership to Negroes, and it hasn't suffered.

Raleigh cannot now afford the luxury of letting irritation at Negroes on suitcases and at the Sir Walter get on nerves already worn a bit thin by weeks of demonstrations and worn thinner just now by really hot weather. Raleigh has been making long strides toward a time of better human relations for all people here. Raleigh must continue to make such strides. Raleigh must support the tireless work of the men of both races who have done so much to bring back peace and decency and dignity to our city, and that support must come from men of both races.

Some other cities in the South have tried to settle their problems with fire hoses and night sticks, and now they are tied up in problems made infinitely worse. Raleigh has tried to settle her problems with quietness and decency and fairness, and Raleigh has come a long way in a short time. Other cities in North Carolina have tried that decent way, too, and have made their progress just as Raleigh has done, cities such as Durham, Winston-Salem and Greensboro.

We must not let actions of extremists on either side block that progress.