

Editorials

A Sobering Question

WHAT HAS HAPPENED to Dallas?

Many citizens of our town, of every political persuasion, from all walks of life, are asking the sober question and pondering their own fearful answers.

Thursday night's display of malevolence against Ambassador Adlai Stevenson has brought sensible Dallas to the sickening realization that "harmless extremists" can not only cause physical harm but create destructive havoc for their fellow citizens—regardless of how little actual connection the extremists have with political parties or logical causes.

Republicans and true conservatives were quick to banish any ties with the kind of people and the sort of thinking which staged this dangerous, outrageous debacle.

What is the solution?

We must quit preaching hate. We

must stop spreading and believing the ridiculous stories of suspicion and distrust of our fellow Americans which form the seeds of uncontrolled frenzy.

And who must do this?

All of us who know that our own freedom to believe or to disagree is based on everyone else's freedom to do likewise.

Picketing and placarding, done in a responsible manner, are American rights and traditions. But deliberately disruptive tactics, carried on to the point of physical assault, are not only undemocratic but unlawful. Demonstrating under a cloud of artificial "Americanism" does not legitimize perverted patriotism. And the right to speak freely is accompanied by the right to listen to what you choose.

Ambassador Stevenson and his audience were denied both rights.

Dallas stands on the brink of acquiring a disastrous public image which is not only unreal but is unjust and unfair to hundreds of thousands of citizens. We must not become known as a city of walled minds where freedom of opinion is not tolerated. We must not let ourselves become the butt of national scorn.

Dallas is not a city of extremists, a captive of the lunatic fringe of shadowy politics. Those who would make it so are in the minority and they must be made to realize that this is the case.

To some degree, every citizen of Dallas who considers himself a responsible, dedicated American must accept some blame for the situation which has grown into the hate-spewing sight we shuddered to see Thursday night. We have shrugged when we should have demanded reasonableness. We have allowed baseless, savage, hate-motivated rumors to pass our ears as factual information.

What is Americanism? We know what Americanism is. We were born in it, we suckled Americanism from birth. And the foundation stone of real Americanism is the freedom to believe and to disbelieve; the right to hold a point of view, no matter how much it might be counter to someone else's.

On this foundation can be erected all kinds of disagreement, ideas, or divergent philosophies. But they must be contested by reason and logic, not force and the argument of brawling brawn.

Dallas is not going to capitulate to any such doctrine of hate.

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