

The history of our country since pre-revolutionary days is, in real part, a history of the struggles and conflicts in which we have been engaged as we have striven to translate the American creed, "All men are born free and equal," into American reality.

The forms which these strivings have taken have changed from time to time, but the goals are constant.

In the first half of this century, the great domestic issue was the establishment of decent and dignified standards for working men. Here at home, as in some other countries, the result was the emergence of a trade-union movement and a revolution in our thinking on the relations between management and labor.

The great issues of these later years of the century, other than the overriding issue of survival under the threat of nuclear holocaust, are (1) the waging of a successful war on poverty and, (2) the peaceful resolution of the revolution for civil rights.

Just as with nuclear war, these are not merely domestic problems, but confront every nation and the total world society. All human strivings for freedom, decency, personal dignity and justice depend now on our desire and ability to resolve these issues.

In the North, both require for their success the extending and translation into reality of a whole series of guarantees of equality in education, employment, housing and the command of sufficient goods and services for participation in the main stream of American life. Targets are school desegregation and enriched educational opportunity, not only for reasons of racial pride but also, in the long run, economic survival; an increase in job opportunities not only at the entry level in low pay—low status jobs, but in management and the executive suite, and a drastic change in the image of the black ghetto.

In the South, in addition to all these and perhaps of prime importance is the dismantling of a complete system of color castes which has too long enslaved Negro and Caucasian poor alike. In the South, the Negro wants and needs his "courtesy" title—(Mr., Mrs., etc.). At the heart of this is the problem of stigma, or as Richard M. Titmuss put it at the recent NCSW Forum, (Social Policy and Economic Progress—R.M.T.—Professor Social Administration, London School of Economics, May 30, 1966), "of felt and experienced discrimination and disapproval on grounds of moral behavior, ethnic group, class, age, measured intelligence, mental fitness and other criteria of selection rejections. The problem then," says Mr. Titmuss, "is not whether to differentiate in access, treatment, giving and outcome, but *how* to differentiate . . . We cannot now disengage ourselves from the challenge of distributing social rights without stigma; too many *unfulfilled expectations* have been created, and we can no longer fall back on the rationale that our economics are too poor to avoid hurting people."

Towards the end of his brilliant analysis of significant factors for social policy which we have too long neglected, Mr. Titmuss lists these:

1. "We overestimated the potentialities of economic growth by itself alone to solve the problems of poverty—economic, educational and social.

2. "We exaggerated the trend towards equality during the Second World War in respect to income, employment and other factors.

3. "We overestimated the potentialities of the poor without help, to understand and manipulate an increasingly complex *ad hoc* society, and we failed to understand the indignities of expecting the poor to identify themselves as poor people and to declare, in effect, 'I am an unequal person.'

4. "Lastly, and perhaps most significant of all, we have sought too diligently to find the causes of poverty among the poor and not in ourselves. Poverty, we seem to have been saying, has its origins in *either* social pathology and a lack of self-determination or in agency delinquency and a failure in coordination or in the shortage of social workers and psychiatrists. Now, in the poverty program, the United States appears to be discovering a new set of casual explanations: the lack of political power among the poor themselves.

5. "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings," he concluded.

The Declaration of Purpose of the Economic Opportunity Act is most revolutionary. For the first time in the history of man, a government has declared that it is its policy and intent to eliminate poverty—"to open to everyone the opportunity for education and training, the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity."