

What has happened to our society when we can only prepare and plan to deal with violence rather than deal with the causes and make sincere and constructive efforts toward the elimination of violence? What has happened to the old saying, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"?

We look to our city officials and community leaders to use initiative, foresight, and just plain common sense in understanding that a man who can feed his family, give it decent housing, and have respect in the community, regardless of his job, will not take part in violence because he feels that he is a part of the community.

It is my sincere wish that, at this time, the officials of the District Government and the community leaders do not slip back into their complacent ways, but realize that what has happened in the past few days could only be a preview to the violence that could erupt because of inaction on the part of those in the City Government and responsible community leaders to make radical and constructive changes that could improve the plight and the despair of many of our poor and underprivileged citizens.

Respectfully,

ROBERT S. MOORE.

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 17, 1968.

HON. WALTER E. WASHINGTON,
Mayor of the City of Washington,
District of Columbia.

MY DEAR MAYOR WASHINGTON: Since your appointment as Mayor of the City of Washington, you have had a most favorable press. Indeed the public image you have projected has been exceptional. Many of us Washingtonians have observed this with great satisfaction. All of us like to see our government capably administered, and we have thought that your appointment would work both to shut off criticism by dissident Negroes, and to encourage better relations between the white and colored people of our population.

Apparently, it hasn't.

There have been many favorable comments about your handling of the recent riots. It isn't fair to second guess, and of course I do not have available to me as much information as you had. I can't know what the various actions taken were based on. What I have read and observed convinces me that the problem was not well handled at all.

Television reports showed you saying you were going "back out onto the streets" on Thursday. Later, TV movies showed looters walking past policemen with their arms full of stolen goods, with no action being taken by police who were standing by. The reasons for the lack of police action were explained as lack of manpower to make necessary arrests, but if this decision had to be made, it is clear that the riots were already out of hand. If you were there, it should have been obvious to you also. Condoning such illegal acts as burning and looting, and even beatings and shootings, only encourages wrong doers to step up their unlawful acts.

The attitudes displayed by the rioters plainly were not related to Dr. King's shameful murder. Rather, the looters displayed a carnival mood.

It should not be necessary to point out to an administration the simple, cardinal principles of the application of a force capability. Mr. Eisenhower understood it well. So have others in similar situations. When force is required, it should be applied promptly, and in overpowering strength. Such a display brings order quickly, and in the long run saves both lives and property. Whether orders to policemen to shoot rioters would have prevented the growth of the riots is moot, but I think that there is a fair chance that, had the orders been in effect in Washington that Drew Pearson credits with forestalling trouble in Philadelphia and in Atlanta, and if these orders were publicly known, we may very well have had fewer deaths than the 11 attributed to the three day riots.

The greatest danger of all is that otherwise moderate and law abiding citizens will come to believe it is necessary to take the law into their own hands in order to protect their property and their families. For such a situation to develop in Washington it would almost unquestionably lead to greater bloodshed and property loss.

Governor Agnew of Maryland has put his finger squarely on one big, important aspect of this problem. That is the failure of the Negro leadership to speak up in disavowal of the claims of the firebrands. Those of us in the white community have been remiss, too, in that we have not voiced our determination to