

Another Side of the News

By Bob Gray, Sr.



Our mail is heavy with reader apprehension and conviction that 1970-71 may well be our last chance to admit, confront and solve our grim stockpile of problems which we have known existed but failed to cope with.

Letters to this column are fearful that morality, conscience, and compassion are no longer at work in our tangled human affairs which seem near complete social breakdown. We have more cars, money, education, aptitudes and natural resources than any other people in the world. We also have more debts, more tensions, more crime and more self-doubt.

Our society seems a giant sponge saturated with fear, adrift in a sea of helpless frustration, and a lust for violence coursing through our national bloodstream. We are not safe on the streets of our cities or even in our own homes. Ominous events during the past few days should shock us into complete unity against crime itself and a determination to find causes and remedies.

The need for block mothers in Richmond offering protection to small children on way to school is an incredible reality. Drug abuse, which we feared might be a problem, has become an epidemic. Drugs and drug addicts are responsible for much widespread crime.

Blacks and whites continue their senseless conflict and have closed schools in scattered sections all over America. Police have arrested teenage boys in Illinois trying to trade 700 pounds of explosives for weapons or money. In Missouri, a sniper's bullet exploded a truck loaded with 21 tons of dynamite, tearing a 30 foot deep hole in a four-lane highway. Arson, bombings and shoplifting have become our fastest growing industries.

Imagination cannot rationalize the murder of 10-year-old Mike Bayles, whose body was found in Henry County or someone in Richmond putting three kittens in a trash box for disposal in a shredding machine. There's another grim story of a dog in Chicago tied to a tree just out of reach of food. When found, the animal was terrified, crying and nearly starved. In Indianapolis, teen-age boys dragged a dog through city streets until police stopped them. The dog had to be shot. About the same time New York City hoodlums robbed a blind man of \$32 and his guide dog.

All this symbolizes the hysteria of our times. Surely we have made a wrong turn somewhere. Such awesome cross-section crimes focus our concern on the emotionally ill persons loose among us whose serious disorders are deep beneath the level of their conscious mind. Such unfortunate but dangerous individuals are incapable of knowing right from wrong. It is disturbing to realize that the suppressed tensions of these sick men and women can suddenly explode into expressions of murder, cruelty and blind hatred.

We should debate and perhaps even argue on solution so long as we are not disagreeable with each other. What really matters is that we search until we find answers to our crime and disunity. This column offers no apologies for deep and honest conviction that we lost our unity and created generation gaps by sending our finest young men to kill and be killed in futile efforts to solve Asian disputes as old as mankind itself.

Our burdens are heavy and our problems thorny and dangerous but for a nation with our proven ingenuity, they are not insoluble. We have the tools needed to bind up our wounds and fix whatever is wrong. Our sins of omission often seem as serious as our sins of commission, but hopefully, when we have suffered enough we will relegate poverty, fear, crime and disunity to a status of only a fact of the past and not tolerated in our society today. All of us should work hard for such a worthy goal.