The price is very high: the price of delay is vasily higher:

Father Hesburgh's program for racial justice

By Theodore M. Hesburgh

America's national psyche is troubled today, although we hide it in multiple ways. We namecall, hide behind code words, pass the buck. Some even say that all goes well, that there are no real problems. But there are. The New York Times editorial endorsing McGovern for President spoke of the need for "a perception of the things that are wrong with America — politically, socially, economically, morally—as well as the things that are right; and a sense of priorities that gives precedence to human needs and public integrity over the panoply of wealth and the arrogance of power."

Both candidates say that this campaign offers a choice on real issues, as never before in this century. However, most campaign rhetoric tends to be negative and does not always get to the heart of the problem. No one likes to look at the heart of darkness. The real solutions are painful. Even speaking about them is not the best way to make friends and win votes. But the issues do remain. What are the real problems that face America

The Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh is president of the University of Notre Dame and chairmon of the United States Commission on Civil Rights. This article is based on a speech he made at Union Theological Seminary upon receiving the Reinhold Niebuhr Award.

today? The most neglected ones are mainly domestic: poverty, welfare, urban blight and lawlessness, flight to the suburbs, unemployment, cost of living, taxes, housing, political corruption, unstable family life, education and busing, drugs, dissatisfaction among ethnic groups-to name a few. The most spectacular international performance, and ours has been truly spectacular of late, cannot bury or obscure these human problems or justify neglect in solving them.]They are all, in a real sense, interlocking, part of the total organic structure and reality we call the quality of American life, or the lack of it. To the extent that they are unresolved and continue to exacerbate millions of Americans daily and mar their lives, America lives in contradiction to its highest expressed ideals of liberty and justice for all.

We are not the only nation in the world to have these and other problems. What is unusual is that the most affluent nation in the world should have them at all. It suggests that we have used our wealth badly, as indeed we have; that we have had some poor leadership over many years and worse priorities, as indeed we have. Yet in none of these have we been unique in the world. Other nations have had equally bad or worse leadership and priorities, and, while some have not squandered the enormous sums that we have, it is probably because they have had less wealth than we. There is something unique, however, about Amer-

ica and its domestic problems. This becomes most

apparent when others attempt to compare us with Sweden in health or with Britain in crime. Most nations are reasonably homogeneous in their populations, whereas America is the greatest melting pot in the world for all races, religions, colors and nationalities. In fact, we, as a growing nation, encouraged this: "Give me your tired, your poor . . .' is proudly inscribed on the Statue of Liberty at the entrance to our greatest port. By and large, it should be said that this human mixture has enriched American life. The lists of our greatest artists, scholars and scientists are dominated by those who were born abroad and came here to seek opportunity and freedom from persecution. Many are those who entered as paupers and died here as millionaires. Our Horatio Alger story has never been so true elsewhere in the world.

[October 29, 1972]

Despite all of this success, the melting pot, failed to function in one crucial area. Religions and nationalities, however different, generally learned to live together, even to grow together, in America. But color was something else. Reds were murdered like wild animals. Yellows were characterized as a peril and incarcerated en masse during World War II for no really good reason by our most liberal President. Browns have been abused as the new slave labor on farms. The blacks, who did not come here willingly, are now, more than a century after their emancipation by Lincoln, still suffering a host of slavelike inequalities.



We don't even like to talk about this failure and its consequences. When someone does talk about some aspect of it seriously, as, for example, Daniel Moynihan in his report on black families, he is accused of bad motives and excoriated for his seeming prejudice-even though the latest census report amply justified his findings. (The number of black families headed by women jumped from 20 per cent to 30 per cent in the last decade.) The reason for this sensitivity is as complicated as the problem itself. One cannot consider seams in a seamless web. Families reflect opportunity, or especially, the lack of it, in housing, employment, health, education. There were few Moynihans around to comment when blacks were not allowed by whites to marry, when black women were abused freely by white masters and when black brothers and sisters were bought and sold like farm animals, even by some of our greatest Founding Fathers.

But the point I really want to make is that because of our failure to cope with color differences, as we did with differences of religion and nationality, we now have uniquely complicated domestic problems. I speak frankly as a white man to the white majority. Equally frank talk will be needed between and among the colored minority groups.

Most of our domestic problems are exacerbated by our problem with color. In fact, until we recognize this and begin to understand that failing to cope with color means inevitably failing to cope with the other domestic problems, we are condemning ourselves as a nation to a constant lowering of our quality of life, to a continual negation of the hopes of an increasing number of Americans who are now without much hope of real equality. Moreover, while this is very much a minority problem in its pinch, it must be very much a majority problem in its solution. The white majority does not like to face the real cost of the solution.

Few white Americans have taken time to study the real dimensions of the color problem, except insofar as it touches them personally as whites. In the context of our segregated society, it touches all too few very acutely. First, look at the numbers. About one out of every six Americans is colored. Twenty-two million are black, about 12 million are brown, about a million are yellow, somewhat less than a million are red, and then there are variations of all these colors-for a total of 36 million Americans. This means that there are more blacks in America than whites in Canada, more browns in America than white Australians in Australia. A problem of this dimension cannot be ignored or Band-aided over. It should be noted parenthetically that not all of these colors are equally unequal. Generally, rcds are at the bottom of the totem pole of inequality, browns are in the middle and blacks, whose problem is larger and has, because of visibility, received more attention in recent years, are on top. Yellows are a very special case.

All of these, whatever their nonwhite color, are people, Americans and citizens, and they are probably growing in numbers faster than the white majority. Consequently, the longer this problem remains unsolved, the larger and more complicated it becomes. Also, the more intractable become most of our other domestic problems, which are so enmeshed with the problem of color. The time for solutions is now—it should have been yesterday, when the problem was smaller.

For example, there were about three million blacks in America at the time of Emancipation. In fact, Americans at that time began to solve what was a much less complicated problem than we have now. The laws that were passed to guide the transition from slavery to citizenship were generally as good as those we have passed in the last decade. This forward movement was abruptly negated when Haves sold out the blacks to gain the Presidency, which he had lost by popular vote to Tilden and could regain only with the electoral votes of the South. By pulling the Army out of the South and disregarding the Reconstruction legislation, Hayes ushered in almost a century of apartheid in America. Those who downgrade the effect of Presidential leadership in this area, or pooh-pooh the lack of it, should study the disastrous effect of Hayes's attitudes, words and actions on the hopes of black Americans.

I believe that we are at a historic crossroads today, much more momentous than that of a century ago. We have witnessed enormous progress for colored Americans, especially blacks, in the sixties. The whole upward thrust may be reversed in the days ahead as white Americans tire of the effort, or are impatient with the tenacity of the problem, the price it really demands of whites everywhere, not (Continued on Page 76)



DRAWING BY PAUL SPINA



(Continued from Page 21)

only in the South. Never was Santayana's famous dictum truer: Those who ignore history are condemned to repeat its mistakes.

Consider for a moment how the problem of color complicates some of the domestic problems mentioned above. Education is the best issue to begin with, the real issue hidden under the phony issue of busing. As an N.A.A.C.P. pamphlet on the matter was entitled: "It Ain't the Busing; It's the Niggers." The title comes from a remark made by a white woman.

When one tries to find an effective approach to the total problem of racial justice, education is by all odds the best. View the vicious circle: A black youngster is generally born into an atmosphere of poverty and failure. He grows up in a poor house in a poor neighborhood. He has a 30 per cent chance of not having a father at home to guide him, and, if so, his mother must often work to support him, which deprives him of the parental education that most white youngsters take for granted. Then he must go to a dismal ghetto school which resembles a jail more than a school and, often enough, functions as a custodial rather than an educational institution. All around him the atmosphere is polluted, not just bad air and water, but a bad human situation in which to grow up: failure, violence, drugs, prestitution, stealing, unemployment, aimlessness, hopelessness.

Our black youngster may be bright, but no matter. Many of our eager politicians of both parties, lusting for office, obliterate whatever hope he might have of leaving this impossible situation. Even if busing is the only way out, and the courts find that he is indeed being deprived of his 14th Amendment rights to equal opportunity in education, busing will not be available to him as a means of redressing his inequality, if these politicians have their way. If good white neighborhood schools are good for

whites in the suburbs, then bad black neighborhood schools are in no way good for blacks in the ghetto. But no matter: Blacks should not be allowed to contaminate our nice white schools, or neighborhoods, or businesses, and they don't have enough political power to challenge the white majority anyway. So prejudice speaks.

Mind you, I am not proposing that white children go to bad ghetto schools. I am making the opposite point: that unless black children are given a chance to get out of, and away from, these schools we now finally see as so bad (since white children might have to attend them), then we have destroyed the last bridge out of the ghetto, which we also created by prejudice and often by Government-financed housing policies;

Without a real educational opportunity (which for a black often means a nonghetto school), the black youngster will never eventually matriculate at a firstrate college or university, will never qualify for a profession or even a decent job, will never be able to support his family, will often drop out of the only dismal school available and become a troublesome, costly and nonproductive member of society. This isn't much fun for him either, so he will also often be frustrated, aggressive, violent.

There is no escape in trying to put the blame for such educational deprivation on inherent lack of talent or virtue. There are too many telling examples of those few given an equal chance measuring up and even excelling. It would be like accusing blacks of lack of physical courage to compete when they were excluded from competition in professional sports, as they were excluded during our apartheid years. Once allowed to compete, they not only excelled, they dominated, despite their being a minority. The same is true in other fields.

There will always be inequality of performance among men and women of every country. Some will be more virtuous, work harder, accomplish more. But it is in the nature of our national commitment that here in America all will start equal, all will have equality of opportunity. As long as equality of opportunity is not a reality for all, we have no right to criticize bad performance. And it is not a reality today.

I am not saying here that blacks can get a good education only in the company of whites, but I am saying that most predominantly white schools are much better than most predominantly black schools in a society where the majority is white and the political power of the purse is white, where most whites live in good neighborhoods and most blacks in the worst neighborhoods - those discarded by whites. I am saying that in America, North and South, East and West, white children educated in predominantly white schools have historically had a better education than black children educated in predominantly

Concerned priest

Father Hesburgh at a Congressional hearing last March where he opposed a ban on school busing for racial integration. "The real solutions are painful," he says. "No one likes to look into the heart of darkness."

black schools. There have been ample studies to document this.

Some say improve the ghetto schools, but for long decades we whites have been unconcerned about black education and blacks are rightly dubious about'another empty promise. Meanwhile, another generation of young blacks and other colored minorities is condemned to another round of human hopelessness.

One final point: Ever since there have been buses, white parents have been busing their children to where the best education was—as black children were bused only to inferior schools, away from whites. It was only when it looked as if the process might be reversed that the furor began.

. It has been rightly observed that the educational and busing crisis is fundamentally created by housing patterns, and that the problem will remain with us until open housing becomes a reality. No segment of American life is more completely ruled by prejudice and white superiority than housing. It is a simple fact that an underworld gangster or a white call girl can more easily rent or buy a house in most white neighborhoods than a black professional man or woman. A very short time ago, prejudice was so institutionalized that it could be written into leases. The lily-white arrangement was preserved by Federal housing agencies. Even after World War II, houses foreclosed on white veterans would not be shown to black veterans.

Thus we have created the ghettos that blight all of our large cities in every part of the country. Now begins a new and more subtle development. Those with education, employment and social acceptance - mainly white - move to the suburbs. Businesses and employment follow them. So the blacks are ringed by the white noose of the suburbs. If some people try to build low- and moderate-income housing there, so blacks can escape the ghettos and be closer to better schools and jobs, suddenly there are new zoning laws requiring multiple-acre tracts for each dwelling. The suburbs are willing to enjoy every possible Federal subsidy for roads, sewerage, schools and so on, but do nothing that would mean sharing their better living conditions with colored minorities. Even improvements in public transportation come about largely because of the demands of the affluent, who must get into the city to work and back to the safe and secure suburbs at night.

No one person is responsible for this pattern of prejudice, but everyone white is responsible; we and our white institutions, our white housing contractors, our white real-estate agents, our white financial and lending entities -all maintain the myth that one black family, no matter how nice, inevitably ruins the neighborhood. This is a selffulfilling prophesy, and the real-estate agents have made it a profitable myth by their block-busting techniques.

Why do we have bad neighborhoods in the world's most affluent country? Even in some less affluent European countries there are no neighborhoods as bad as ours. Again, we face the problem (Continued on Page 80)



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(Continued from Page 76)

of color and the total failure to integrate one-sixth of our population with the other fivesixths. There are relatively few blacks who live in good neighborhoods. Those who do are well-educated and wellemployed — and they are the proof of what is possible in America, as well as the exception to the present rule of prejudice that has given us our ghettos.

As far back as present memories go, and further beyond to slavery and Reconstruction days, it was unthinkable for most whites to live next door to blacks, since blacks were thought to be inferior-simply because of their color-and, therefore, a superior white should not socialize with an inferior black. It was all right for blacks to take care of white children and nurse them, clean the house, wash the clothes, tend the sick, build the buildings, cook and serve the meals and clean up afterward, even sleep' with lecherous whites who so desired, but even after all that association, they must be kept in their place. That meant until a decade ago there were many places in America where blacks could not get a drink of water or a Coke, a meal or a room, a seat up front on a bus, a swim, a place to pray, a bed in a hospital or, God help us, a place to be buried-if doing any of this involved associating with whites. It is part of my real hope for America that all, or most, of this daily affront to the human dignity of blacks was outlawed in one day by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. But there is no known way of outlawing prejudice, and all of us whites must confess that the sense of white superiority is still deeply rooted within us. As a Catholic priest I should certainly know better, but I catch myself thinking and judging unjustly almost every day.

If problems of housing and education are organically linked, there is a third link In the chain—employment. If you have equal access to jobs, you have access to what are called the good things in life: education, housing, health, food and drink. Now the simple fact is that most Americans of color have unequal access to the better jobs because of a variety of reasons growing out of other inequali-



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ties - mainly educational. Ninety-six per cent of the jobs paying above \$15,000 annually in America are held by white men, which says something about women's inequality, too. There are always. twice as many unemployed blacks as whites, and black teen-agers are about 25 per cent unemployed and often unemployable, mainly because they went to ghetto schools or dropped out of them. Those blacks who are employed make on the average about half as much as whites. Most black mothers of families must also work to supplement the family income. Even those liberal white institutions for the working man-the labor unions in the construction trades-have had a miserable record in granting equal access to work.

Because of the numbers involved and the available facts, I have mainly spoken here of blacks, but we learned a few years ago in a Southwest Chicano hearing of the Civil Rights Commission that the average family income of Chicano migrant farm workers in Texas was \$1,400 a year. The condition of their housing, educational, health and social services was far worse than that of most blacks. American Indians, we are learning, are equally far below the miserably low scale of Chicano farm workers.

I have never been deeply concerned about the wealthy or powerful of this land being deprived of their rights. Only the poor and powerless have these problems in any real sense. And even here, the beginnings of Federal help-for legal services, for exampleare now under attack by insensitive legislators and executives on both the Federal and state levels. New York contractors have been let off the hook for two years on their "affirmative-action" minority-employment programs. Pressure on the Federal Civil Service Commission to hire more minority-group employes has been relaxed, just when the commission had finally begun to move forward on this problem. Again, it's the old vicious circle: Deny equal opportunity to become qualified and then deny employment on the basis of nonqualification.

Americans have traditionally tried to solve problems with money, except when it comes to our own poor. I am willing to concede that the present welfare situation is a mess and should be totally reorgan-



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ized. However, 75 per cent of present welfare goes to the poor who, as the good Lord reminded us, will always be with us: children without parents, the physically disabled, the blind and the halt, the old, the wounded veterans, the mentally deficient. Even some wealthy people who are so ready to criticize welfare costs cannot want this group to starve or be homeless.

As for the "welfare loafers," it makes little sense to criticize anyone willing to work if there are no jobs available or no training available to qualify for work. I believe that everyone who can work, should work — but this does mean both creating enough jobs and opening job training for those now denied it because of color.

It would be interesting to compare welfare with other forms of American governmental subsidization as to cost, and human justification. For openers, in nonwelfare costs, we subsidized others to the tune of \$43-billion last year.

For example, we subsidize wealthy farmers; we subsidize railroads and airlines, and roads for those who have cars; we subsidize those looking for oil and gas, those investing in tax-free bonds, those sending heavy mail in huge quantities for commercial purposes; we subsidize military dictatorships, foreign investments, trips to the moon, travel by Congressmen and Government executives, everywhere for practically any purpose. We subsidize grain for the Russians and Chinese, even though it raises the cost of bread for our poor. We subsidize most poor countries while we gripe about a miserable subsidy to the poor of our own country, and cannot face the obvious solution: federalizing the program, providing work for those who can work and providing a minimal annual income for decent human living in America.

All this is tied up with tax reform, which would tend to lighten the burden of Middle Americans, whether colored or not. They now bear a disproportionate share of the financing of dubious governmental programs, and it is their sons who disproportionately paid with their lives and limbs for the Vietnam debacle. If America is verging toward populism today, it is precisely because the numerous lowerand middle-class Americans, the former made up chiefly of colored Americans and the latter of white ethnic Americans, are beginning to take equality of opportunity seriously, and justice and fairness, too.

The price of solving our domestic problems, especially the problem of color inherent in most of them, is very high. The price of delay is ever larger problems and ultimately a larger human cost. -No nation will have true civil peace — and freedom — unless it expends every possible effort to achieve justice for everyone and, most of all, for the poor and powerless.

Thomas Jefferson, who wrote our Declaration of Independence, was our Ambassador in Paris when our Constitution was written. On his return, he refused to support this Constitution unless a Bill of Rights was added. This was done, and a better, richer document emerged. We have, over the years, enlarged its vision of justice and its scope with additional amendments, the latest giving the vote to the young. As we ap-proach our 200th birthday, as a nation living under the oldest written Constitution, might it not he a good idea to give every American the opportunity to sign and ratify our Constitution in 1976, as those first few Americans pledged their lives and sacred honor in signing the Declaration of Independence in 1776? We might also prepare for our pledge by taking some direct and simple steps now to make the promise of our Constitution come true for all Americans:

Education

• Eliminate all inferior schools. In America, there are too many whites, as well as colored children, in inexcusably poor schools. Recognize also that the school is the mirror of the neighborhood, that if the neighborhood is deteriorated, so the school will be. At least, this is the present datum of history.

 Accommodate in our already good schools --- and they are the majority - as many of those children who are now being only barely educated, or not educated at all, as we can. If the only way to get students from bad schools is by busing, then bus them. Keep in mind the standards on busing established by the Supreme Court - not to bus in a way that will harm the child's health or his education. Also keep in mind that some minority parents would be willing to have their chil-



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dren take a reasonably long bus ride — as is done in most rural areas — if there is a vastly improved educational opportunity at the end of the ride.

• Give top priority to Federal and state assistance to experiment with new approaches to the educational problem and with integration of minority colored children into the improved mainstream of American education. Majority white students will cope better with the persistent American problem of color, I expect, if they have some acquaintance with black, brown, red and yellow American children, wherever possible, and on all levels of education --even at play. Only in this way will American white youngsters begin to see children of other colors as persons, as human beings who are different, yet alike, in their human loneliness, hope, fear and love. Children are not born with prejudice; they have to acquire it. An important prerequisite for living in a pluralistic society is education in a milieu free of prejudiced, stereotyped judgments about people who are different. Classroom instruction the democratic goals in of tolerance and understanding affirms and strengthens what is learned in the living integrated context.

• Do not confuse the educational problems of enormous black ghettos, like those in New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Detroit, with the normal educational scene in America, where quiet progress was being made, North and South, before the retrogressive interference of votesceking politicians who needlessly muddied the waters.

• In very special problem areas, like those of urban ghettos. experiment with large-scale educational parks that create their own physical environment - much like some great Midwestern state universities that accommodate and educate 50,000 to 60,000 students at once. In such parks, we could provide both education and recreation for minority and majority children, as well as all the special classes needed, health and nutritional services, and room for all the private agencies and social services. Teachers would work with both talented and slow children there, in an atmosphere free of fear. All the physical hazards of the ghetto school could be eliminated, and there would be economy of size. All parents should be involved. They, too, might begin to learn how the presence of Americans of color can enrich both the educational process and the quality of life, as other groups of inmigrants who were "different" have enriched American life.

• Vocational training and adult education must be an important element among our educational priorities.

• Repeat, repeat, repeat: What happens to education is what happens to America.

Housing

• Make buying a house, anywhere, for any American who can afford it, as simple as it is now to buy anything else.

• Rebuild the central city and climinate the ghetto by bulldozing all condemned and dilapidated housing, replacing it with low, moderate- and high-income housing throughout the metropolitan area, on the pattern of the new cities of Reston, Va., and Columbia, Md. Bring more jobs, parks, cultural and recreational centers and pedestrian streets to the inner city. Re-establish, by total community effort, a sense of security in the city, a sense of belonging, pride and caring.

• Plan new satellite towns like Columbia and Reston that are linked to central cities by rapid transit and integrate people of different racial and economic groups. Shift the highway program to rapid transit plans that are fairer for all, more efficient, and less polluting. Realize that it is idiotic for 75 per cent of our population to crowd itself into 3 per cent of our land mass, as it now does. After all, the whole population of the United States could be settled in three New York boroughs if we crowded them in as people are packed into central Harlem. But this is no way to live:

Employment

• Make equal access to employment a reality, not a fiction. Promote new legislation to insure that any business, including government, any trade, any association, any profession that discriminates in any way in hiring and promoting qualified people will be cut off from any participation whatever in public funds, directly or indirectly. The same for communities that tolerate only





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essorted east side amenities A Modicon at 72nd-1053 Madison at 80th what maintains their lilywhite situation. Public funds are for all the public and their expenditures and benefits must be color-blind.

So much of the social criticism one hears these dayseven apart from campaign oratory --- sounds dismal, threatening and depressing. 1 suppose that what I have written is also guilty of the same grayness. So I would like to conclude by suggesting that remaking our beloved America in its professed image can be adventurous, inspiring, exciting, even fun. We must be willing to shuck the status quo when it is retrogressive, unjust and going nowhere. We have to be open to change and alert to the great values that inspired this land's beginning and led it to greatness. We cannot do all that I have proposed without leadership to inspire us, agreement of all our people and the will to do it together. We must put an end to the expedient political compromises that stifle progress to gain votes. Many will enjoy more justice and a fuller life if we do what we must. A few Americans will be somewhat reduced materially, but enlarged spiritually, if they can see the justice of it all.

The consequences of not changing would be far worse. We could become, as we are now becoming, a polarized, divided nation, separated into hating groups of white and colored, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, employed and unemployed, secure and insecure, healthy and unhealthy, well-housed and poorly housed, hopeful and hopeless. Such a nation would be a breeding ground for disaster, for continual crisis, for fear and hatefulness, for constant social strife.

One can suggest change, or should be able to, without being a Communist, a Socialist or an anarchist. I am anticipating my mail. One mainly suggests change from deep human and moral reasons so that we might get from where we are to where we should be. Basically, the changes I have suggested rise from a deep conviction, mentioned in our Constitution, that the good Lord and Creator meant for every man, woman and child to enjoy his or her human dignity, and until all do, here and elsewhere in the world, we must be charged to move ahead more quickly with our unfinished human business, which as John Kennedy said, must also be God's, too. 🖪



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