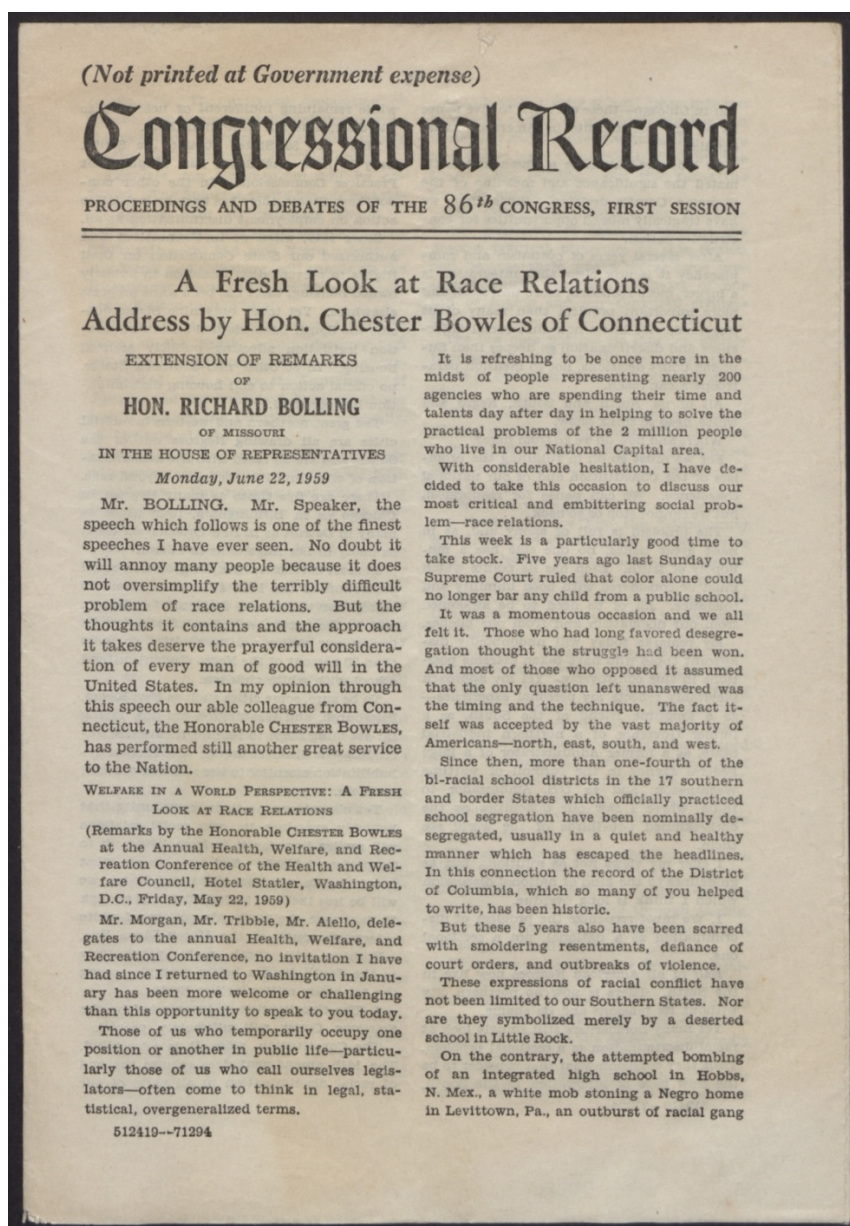


"A FRESH LOOK AT RACE RELATIONS"



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"A Fresh Look at Race Relations"



"A Fresh Look at Race Relations. Address by Hon. Charles Bowles of Connecticut," June 22, 1959, p. 1 (Bishop Robert R. Brown Papers)

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war in Chicago—these are signs to give pause to all the participants in America's racial conflict.

In 1954 the Nation as a whole underestimated the significance and meaning of the Supreme Court's decision. Since then we have tragically missed opportunities for constructive action.

After several years of optimism and complacency it is now clear that integration is a bigger, more stubborn, more universal, and more important problem than many of us imagined. We know now that racial differences and discrimination go deeper than Supreme Court decisions, not to mention paratroopers, can reach.

All of us, North and South, Negro and white, need to think anew.

Where and how do we go from here?

For we must go on in fulfilling the promises of the Constitution and of our national conscience. We can pause for reappraisal, but we cannot stop or go back.

The problem is full of agony and, as in most great issues, no one side has a monopoly of truth. Each has its points which must be considered with both humility and tolerance. All of us need to be awakened from our dogmatism and from our clichés.

My remarks today will undoubtedly disappoint those who have taken extreme positions in this controversy. Yet my approach inevitably reflects my personal experience—as a longtime friend of the South, as a former Governor of a northern industrial State, as a former Administrator of a large Federal agency in the turmoil of wartime Washington, and as U.S. Ambassador to India, where I saw our difficulties as the dark-skinned two-thirds of the world see them.

I offer my views not as solutions, but as guidelines to the kind of national discussion which I think is long overdue.

1. We must recognize the problem of discrimination as a national, not a sectional one.

Half of all American Negroes now live in the North. There is now no northern city without its tensions and its shame.

Yet many northerners still smugly look at racial discrimination as a sectional problem. Thus they condemn what they consider to be the slow pace of integration in the South,

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while remaining indifferent or nearly so to the discrimination all around them.

There are 39 States outside the South. Only 19 have established Fair Employment Practices Commissions. In the other non-Southern States, there has been no legislative action on employment discrimination at all.

Since 1949, when we in Connecticut first authorized our State Commission on Civil Rights to prevent discrimination in publicly owned housing, there has been some progress elsewhere. Yet today only nine States outside the South have adopted antidiscrimination legislation affecting publicly assisted housing. In 30 other non-Southern States, no official action to end housing discrimination has occurred.

The great northern and western industrial cities are all drawing Negroes out of the South, and are all faced with the demoralization of city slum life that goes beyond race.

There are five times as many Negroes in Chicago as in Birmingham, four times as many in Detroit as in New Orleans, six times as many in Los Angeles as in Miami.

In most northern cities the professed equal protection of the laws still hides extensive segregation in fact—by residential exclusion, and by the natural selection of poverty. In few of our major northern cities do more than 20 percent of the Negro students attend school with white children.

To be sure, some cities such as New Haven, Pittsburgh, and Washington are now taking far-reaching steps to rebuild themselves, including the slum clearance and human rehabilitation essential to the solution of racial conflicts.

Yet almost any northern community that honestly examines its own racial relations will realize how far it is from living up to its professed ideals. And once we see what is missing in our own cities and States, we will be less inclined to feel that it is enough to denounce the foolhardy actions of white extremists south of the Mason-Dixon line.

Nothing will speak more persuasively to the South than a better example among the too-ready critics farther North.

2. The Constitution as interpreted by the Supreme Court will ultimately prevail.

The Constitution, after all, is color-blind. The 14th amendment does require the end of racial discrimination in all parts of our

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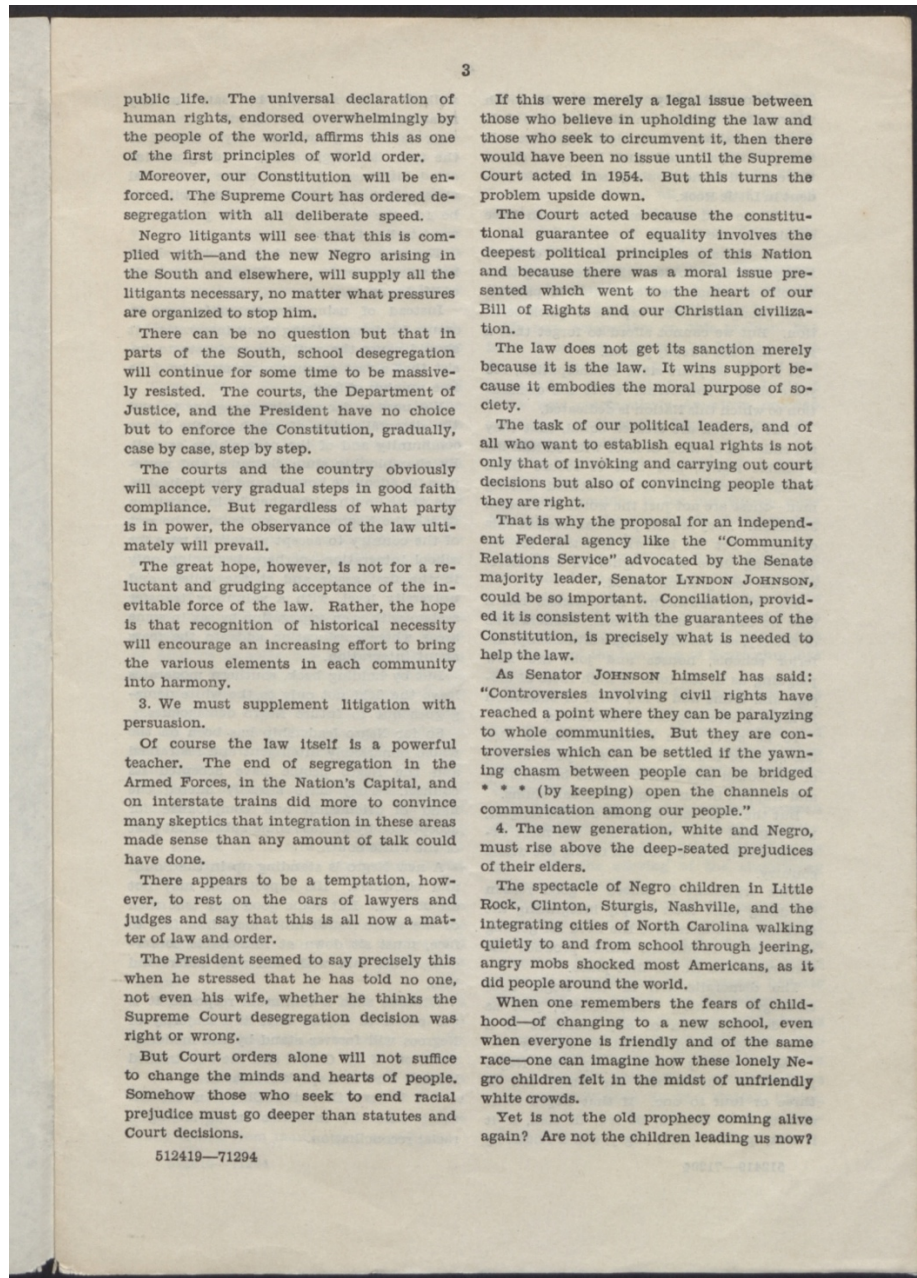
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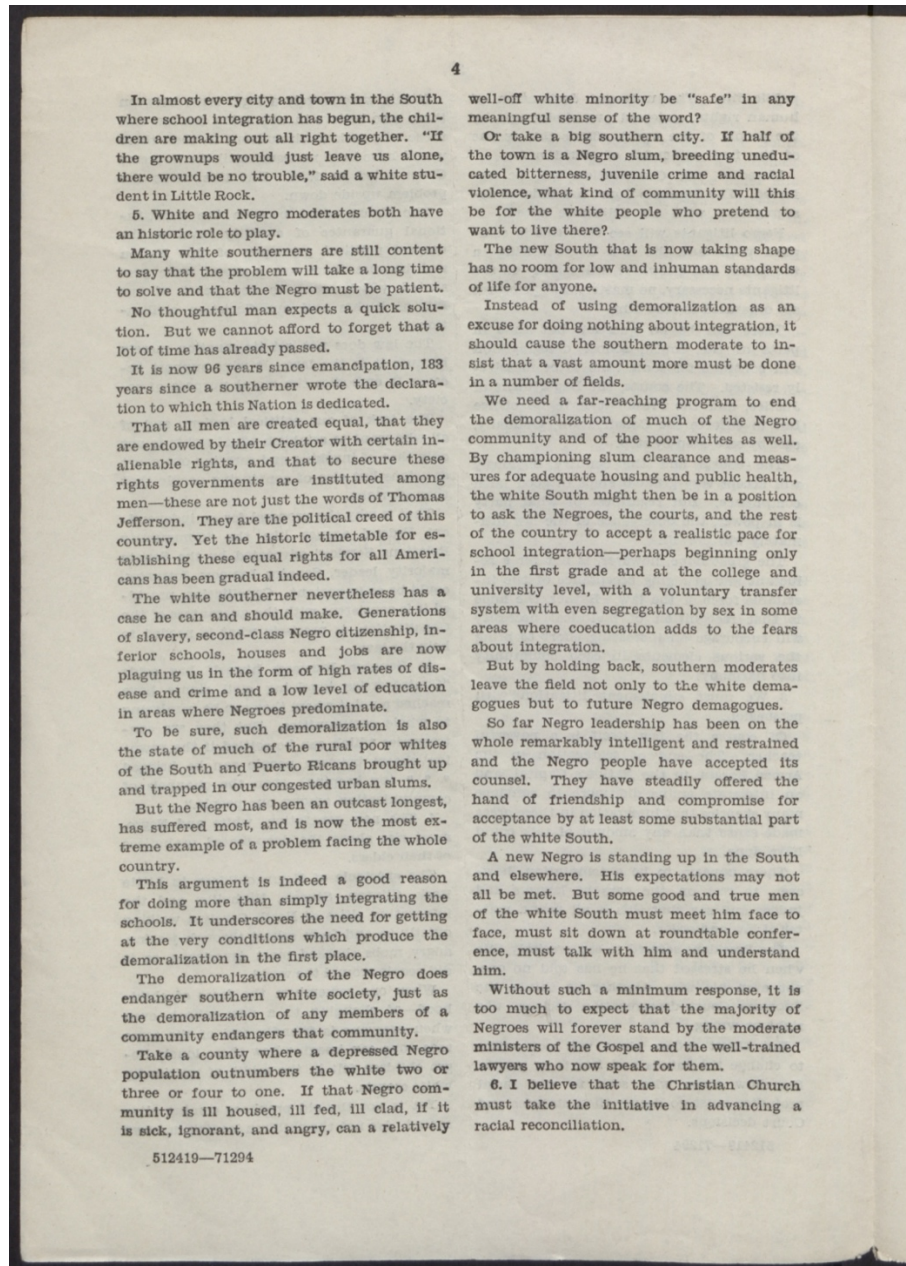


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Let's face it: In many churches in America, a minister who goes against the prevailing sentiment of his congregation risks his job as much as the politician who alienates his constituents.

But from the beginning of the Christian era, it has been the church's duty to prevail against erroneous opinions, even at the price of martyrdom. Surely the church today should be the last citadel against the public relations approach that has infected so much of American life.

Many bishops and ministers in the South have spoken against violence and in favor of law and order. But is this enough?

There will be violence, and the law will be frustrated, unless the two sides in the racial conflict now splitting every southern community begin to communicate again with each other, to negotiate, to reason together, to find common remedies.

Is this not the time for the white and Negro ministers of every southern community to form a continuing roundtable conference dedicated to finding Christian solutions to the racial problems of their community?

For, after all, no country should be in a better position than the United States of America to solve this problem this way. Not only do we have nearly two centuries of democratic experience behind us, but the racial groups in this country, particularly in the South, have the great good fortune and blessing to share the identical Christian faith.

It is no coincidence that it was a white minister in the South, perhaps the most fervently religious section of our country, who said of the integration crisis: "There's just one question to ask: what would Christ do?"

In our hearts we know the final answer. We know that Christ came to demonstrate the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. We know we are our brother's keeper.

We know too that we have done those things which we ought not to have done and left undone those things we ought to have done.

We know that the pride of race, the fear of the strange and the different is one of man's original sins and that it has not been fully erased from man's mind anywhere.

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But we also know, as Lincoln said, that the Declaration of Independence "gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to all the world. It gave promise that in due time the weights would be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance."

Our religious and democratic faith tells us to get on with this job like men.

7. Our capacity to deal with discrimination in America is a measure of our capacity to lead a worldwide revolution for freedom.

My own perspective on this problem has been, I confess, affected by looking at it for some time from the other side of the globe. As a former Ambassador to India, I know how spectacularly American prestige rose as a result of the Supreme Court desegregation decision.

While touring Africa 4 years ago I sensed against how vital a successful solution of our racial troubles is for our future relationship with the two-thirds of the world's people who are colored.

In the winter of 1957 in South Asia I saw the enthusiasm generated by the successful conclusion of the Negroes' bus boycott in Montgomery, Ala. Later in the Soviet Union I saw the Communists take full propaganda advantage of the bombing of Negro churches in the same State.

Of course we can say that prejudice is as old as the hills and just as persistent. India, for instance, has known conflict and caste through centuries of struggle between Hindus and Moslems, Brahmins and untouchables.

In Algeria there is open warfare between the French minority and the Arab majority.

In all of Africa the outnumbered white man feels the stirring of the slumbering African masses.

Therefore as we Americans concentrate on a new effort on our own major social problem, we can take mild comfort from the awareness that our country does not stand alone in isolation as an immoral historic throwback to a bygone age of prejudice.

Having said this, I hasten to add what is merely the other side of this coin. The world community has a vested interest in the speed and effectiveness with which we end discrimination in the United States. Our own role in the world depends increasingly upon the same proposition.

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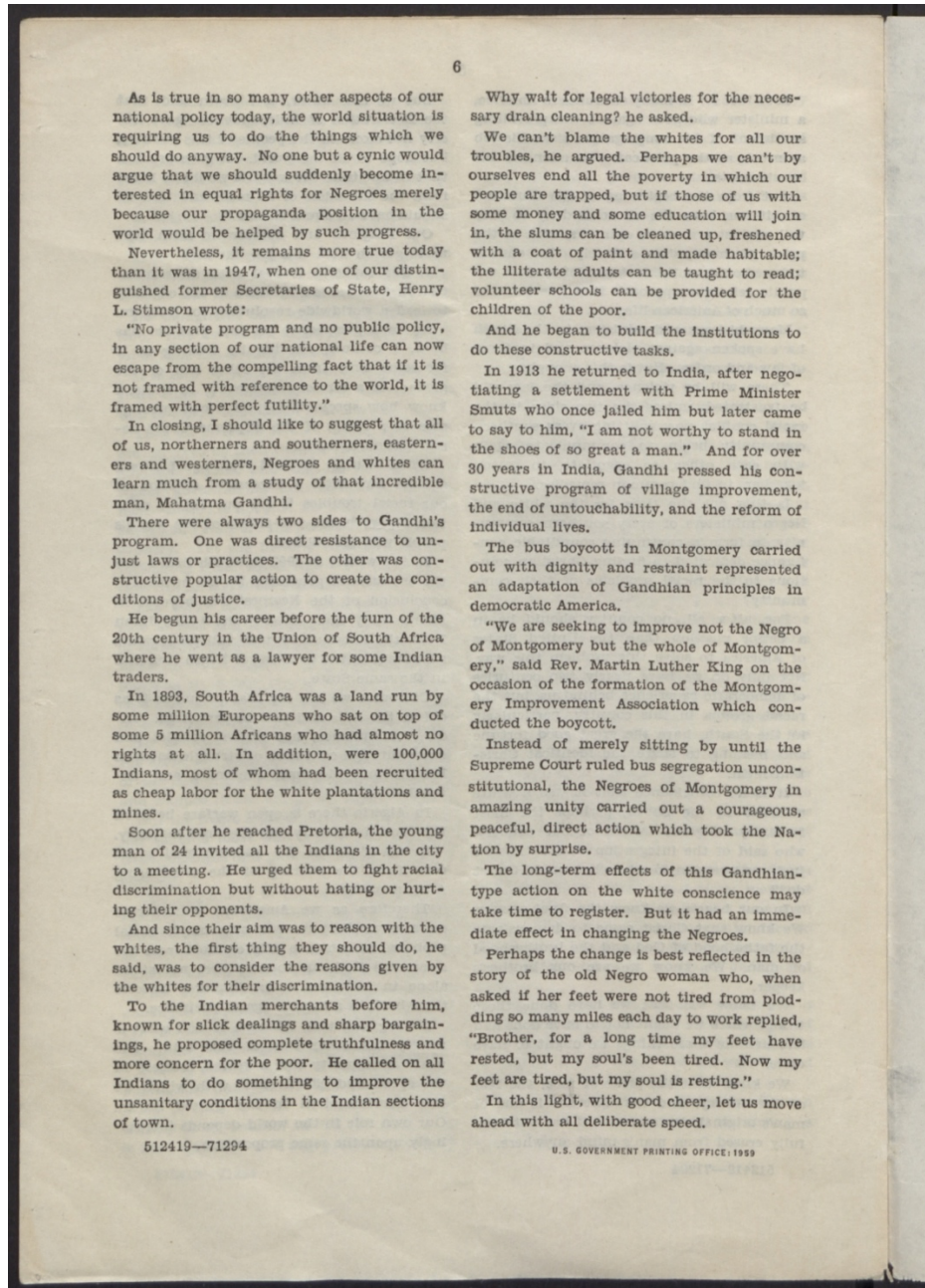
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