

Three out of ten Negro families live in sub-standard housing. A half million Negro families live in rural areas of the country, including the counties of Maryland, where education and housing and health standards are far below the minimum standards of decency.

In 1966, forty-three percent of the Negro draftees were rejected by reason of failure to pass the health and educational qualifications test, while the rate of rejection among white draftees was eight percent. Although Negro citizens comprise eleven percent of the national population, they are nine percent of the U. S. Armed Forces in Viet Nam now. It is interesting to note that in the first half of 1967, it had risen to eleven percent, and fifteen percent of those who have died in the Viet Nam combat are Negroes.

In our history the Negro soldier has never failed his country, and they are today in the jungle outposts and in the front line of battle defending the principles for which we stand as a nation and as a State.

Some of them will never return to their homeland. Some will return with wounds that will prevent them from being a productive part of society. Others will come back full of hope and expectation that their country will assure to them all of the great ideals that they have been fighting to preserve in the far corners of the world, the ideals for which our nation stands.

We can honor the dead, we can thank the wounded, but this Convention can reassure the living that in Maryland we are determined to make a proud and meaningful contribution to the protection of all persons without regard to race, religion or national origin.

The federal language presented by the majority of the Committee is a good faith attempt by sincere persons to place the State on record in support of equal rights. And though the language is fine as far as it goes, it looks backwards to the conditions of 1868 when the 14th Amendment was enacted and when segregation by custom and usage resulted in exclusion from many of the ordinary facilities and benefits that are available to the majority of citizens.

The language of the majority does not face up to the fact that, in spite of the 14th Amendment, it is still lawful in Maryland to acquire land, build housing and offer it for sale to the general public but then to say that no colored citizen, no matter how trained he may be, no matter what

his military record or his moral character is, may buy or rent a home.

It is still possible, under the language proposed by the majority, for services to be offered to the general public in many public facilities of the State except to those whose skins are of a darker hue. While the national trend indicates that these restrictions will ultimately fall under court attack, we have seen the painfully slow process by which they have fallen one by one and only after long and costly struggles on the part of the minority group. For those white citizens who understand that, this is a mutual problem.

Let us then not wait in Maryland. There is an ominous chorus of strident voices in the wings of history today. It is not large but it is a reckless and a destructive group. It repudiates democracy. It comes out of desperation and despair. It argues that faith in law is useless. It argues that we cannot be one State or one nation, and it says we must be divided by faith and ancestry.

They have lost faith in the power of our constitution. An expressed declaration in the State's constitution and the State's commitment will help us substitute the subpoena for the Molotov Cocktail. It will help us substitute the affirmative action of prompt and progressive state legislature and executive leadership for ashes of burned-out buildings. We have a duty to erect a bulwark in our constitution for all the world to see against intolerance and injustice in any form.

Each year thousands of visitors come to our State and see our historic shrines and visit our Naval Academy. They observe our conduct with the hope of finding examples of how democracy can work. We have a solemn opportunity to confirm our nation's commitment to the liberty, equality and dignity of mankind.

And finally, there is a book which has just been published by a great religious leader, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, who commits again the colored citizens of this nation to non-violence. But he talks of the ambivalence in our State and our nation which gives all of us great concern. There is a long and intellectual recognition by all of us that racial discrimination and segregation is wrong, but the emotional tie to the system is so deep that it is hard to develop the will to prune it out.

Thomas Jefferson had the same ambivalence. He was a brilliant political leader and as Mr. King points out, he came close