

"I hope Howard Devore's stuff is ok," said Ted White the other night as we worked on the Progress Report (Soon To Be Seen In Your Neighborhood Mailboxes).

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"Why?" I said, slapping 200 more stickers on envelopes while all stood about me marvelling at my proficiency.

"Well, we lost Detroit, you know," Ted replied, and the look on his face was not the usual look of quiet pleasure at having gotten off a well-phrased line.

I thought about that a while, as Ted and I say in our books, and I finally decided that in a way we had just lost Detroit. And Newark.

And where will the fire next time be?

The fire is all around us, implicit in every matchbook tucked in a black man's shirt pocket, implicit every time a congressman laughs at a program to eradicate rats, implicit every time another brave politician speaks out boldly that "something must be done about these riots -- pass another law against Stokely Carmichael, gang!"

We have a pretty good civilization here, all things considered; the Negro, unfortunately, has not been allowed inside, generally speaking. Sure there are black millionaires. But he can't whistle at a pretty white girl on the streets of the South any more than the late Emmett Till, Jr, could -- and get away with it.

Why should he want to? Why shouldn't he?

Shoot the looters. Is that a non-sequitur? Maybe. But what it means is that a television set -- or a box of shoes, or a case of liquor, or anything that is Property -- is more important than human life. How far can a man run when he's carrying a television set? Not as far or as fast as the kid who snatches a purse and gets shot in the back by a brave policeman who gets a medal for heroism in killing a boy running away from him. (I'm not saying you can't defend yourself when you're in your own home or store and they're coming at you to burn and loot; but you don't have to institutionalize murder, either.)

Especially in this technological day when our Chemical Warfare Department has 75 variations of the Gas of Peace. Especially when they've devised bullet-like devices which, hitting a man, simply knock him down and keep him from moving for half an hour which, if you've taken out a crowd of rioters, say, with this gadget, means you can come by at your leisure and stack them up like cordwood in your paddywagons, for later -- and legally sanctioned -- disposition.

When women sitting in their own homes are killed -- as one was in Newark -- by the careless shooting of untrained and no doubt angry National Guardsmen who themselves were sitting in their own homes two days before, then something somewhere stinks beyond the power of words, of rhetoric, of politicians' twitchy voteseeking slop, to cover it up. The Negro has known this for many years. The Negro now knows also that the time has come for him to get what has been promised him by those people whose life is structured of paper promises, and he doesn't care any longer what he does or what is done to him Nothing could be more vital for us to realize than that from now on the Negro is going to be pushing. And of course nobody can stand a pushy Negro.

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Hoping somebody is the sane...

-- dgv