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THE MOST EXPLOSIVE RACE PROBLEM IS IN THE NORTH

"Tyrannosaurus" Stalks in the City of Brotherly Love

By MORLEY CASSIDY

State Representative JOHN H. Kennedy Holly Springs, Miss.

IN THE STARTLED tones of a man who has just discovered a Tyrannosaurus on his doorstep, several national magazines have been crying out recently that "the race problem is moving to the North!"

They are a little late. Most of their Northern readers have been watching the ugly creature prowl their streets for the last 25 years, noting its growth with mounting apprehension. The potential menace has been visible in crime statistics, in mounting welfare budgets, in spreading areas of slums and "blight," in the number of quiet streets where it is no longer safe to walk after dark and in the shocking changes that have come over schools and playgrounds.

The alarm of ordinary citizens has found but little echo in timid newspapers. The subject is too delicate, and no one likes to ruffle sensitive Negro feelings. The press, for the most part, has whispered that the only way to deal with a Tyrannosaurus is to feed it abundantly, pet it, and hope that it will just go away.

But the problem hasn't gone away, and in recent months a whole series of racial quarrels and "incidents" — in Levittown, Pa., in Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, Oakland and New York City — has compelled even the blindest to see that Tyrannosaurus is now full-grown and vicious. It is a problem that must be faced and dealt with, and the sudden reappraisals are revealing that it is even bigger than was thought.

The white Northerners' love of Negroes — almost limitless when they are considered abstractly, as a race — is proving to be not much greater than that of Southern white supremacists when the colored folk move in next door, three families to a house, and begin throwing rent parties. There is a saturation point, in other words, at which Northern feelings grow explosive. In many Northern cities, it seems to have been reached.

With much less public comment than would have been given to a similar migration by white Okies or Crackers, four million Negroes have

left the Old South since 1940 to find new homes in the North or Far West.

Forty per cent of the Nation's 18 million Negroes now live in the North and the flood of their migration is growing. They are pouring into Los Angeles at the rate of 20,000 a year, into Chicago at the rate of 35,000 a year, into Philadelphia at the rate of 10,000 a year. Most of the newcomers are agricultural workers, but almost all are determined to make their homes in industrial cities where their lack of skills and ignorance of city ways make them uncomfortable guests. In nearly every Northern city, the Negroes' numbers are increasing at a rate five to 10 times greater than the rate of increase for whites.

THIS MEANS THAT, for the future of this country, the dramatic events in Little Rock are of minor significance compared with the boiling-up of new feelings in the North. As a sample of the North's problem it is useful to take a look at Philadelphia. Little Rock's problems reflect the past. Philadelphia's foreshadow the future.

It is a grim picture, made grimmer by the flat refusal of such groups as the ADA and the NAACP to recognize dynamite when they see it. Senator Joseph S. Clark, a charter member of the ADA and a former Mayor of Philadelphia, recently upbraided a Southern Senator who had pointed to racial problems in the integrated schools of Philadelphia. Clark roundly declared that there had never been the slightest trouble.

His statement made Philadelphia eyes pop. Actually, the Philadelphia schools have been plagued for years by racial quarrels and fights in which knives, broken bottles and zip-guns have been used with deadly purpose, and teachers in some schools have abandoned, in fear for their own safety, all effort at maintaining discipline. Clark's bald denial almost coincided with a massive clash between white and Negro

boys which required 20 police emergency cars to avert a full-scale race riot. At many of the city's schools, emergency cars are posted regularly every afternoon at the hour of dismissal.

The near riot brought a warning from Mayor Richardson Dilworth, Senator Clark's Democratic colleague, that "we must calm ourselves down . . . Racial tensions in Philadelphia have never been so acute."

And Police Commissioner Thomas Gibbons, after a Negro mob of more than 500 had gathered to "rescue" a Negro arrested for a traffic offense, had this to say: "If things go on as they are, Philadelphia is in for big trouble. I can't see the shape it will take, but it will be big."

All this is weirdly out of character for Philadelphia. The Quaker tradition and its Christian spirit are still strong in this venerable, easy-going "City of 1,000 Churches." Until recent years no city in America was freer of racial feeling. But this tolerant attitude, except for a dwindling minority, is almost a thing of the past. In its place, one hears on every side open expressions of racial bitterness that would shock many a Southerner who — however strong his feelings about Negroes as a race — holds individuals in real affection.

What has brought about this change?

Basically it is a function of the growing Negro numbers, with feeling apparently increasing as the square of migration. But compounded with this is a sense of frustration as it is realized that Negroes have suddenly come to hold the balance of political power in Philadelphia, and that politicians of both parties are desperately courting their favor, and thereby feeding the problem.

NUMBERS AND POLITICS form an inseparable element in Philadelphia's problem, as they do throughout the North.

Philadelphia in 1930 had 219,599 Negroes, 11.3 per cent of its population. In the 'Thirties, a Democratic state administration discovered the importance of Negro votes and openly recruited for migrants in the South with tales of liberal state relief and equal-rights laws. By 1940 the number had grown to 250,880. The fat wages of war industry and the lure of "equality" raised the number to 376,041 in 1950.

The latest figures show a Negro population of 489,900, a gain of more than 113,000 in seven years, seven times the increase of whites. So Negroes today are 22 per cent of the population, with a total larger than the combined Negro populations of three Southern cities — Atlanta,

New Orleans and Jackson, Miss. Politically, the meaning of this is painted on City Hall for every politician to study.

Philadelphia was a rock-ribbed Republican stronghold until 1951. Today its registration is almost evenly balanced, with 498,554 Democrats, 485,900 Republicans. The Negro vote, estimated at about 300,000, is almost solidly Democratic.

To see what such a solid bloc can do, politicians have only to look at some recent elections. Clark won the Mayoralty (against weak opposition) in 1951 with a majority of 124,700. His Democratic successor, Mayor Dilworth, won in 1955 (also against a sitting-duck candidate) by a margin of 132,706.

Clark moved up to the U.S. Senate last year with a state-wide margin of only 18,000 against Senator James H. Duff; he was saved from defeat only by a Philadelphia margin of 169,750. In each of these elections the Philadelphia Negroes' 300,000-vote bloc was decisive.

The Negro vote has been equally potent in giving Philadelphia a City Council with 13 Democrats and three Republicans. And here politics gets down to the brass tacks of the racial problem in Northern cities — the problem of housing.

Philadelphia, like most Northern cities, has always been loosely segregated, not by law, but by custom. The bulk of its quarter-of-a-million Negroes in 1940 were living in South Philadelphia, and in a central area covering parts of the 13th, 14th and 20th wards. The massive wartime and postwar migration vastly extended the limits of these areas, and prosperity enabled many of the more ambitious to "bust" previously all-white areas throughout much of the city.

Today, Negroes are more than one-quarter of the population in 21 of the city's 52 wards, and in 14 of these they are more than half.

The pressure to "bust" more blocks in white areas has grown explosively as self-respecting Negroes seek escape from the "traditional" Negro areas, now bursting with ignorant and clamorous "refugees from Southern oppression." This pressure fits in neatly with both the ideals and the political advantage of do-gooders and their political allies.

It is a waste of political force, obviously, to have a surplus of Negro voters in the 20th and 24th wards, and hardly any in the "silk-stocking" 21st and 22nd wards, which still vote Republican.

So the unofficial Philadelphia Housing Association, an ADA-controlled group, last year announced the discovery that the "high-rise"

skyscraper apartments of which it had previously been so proud were not the complete answer they were thought to be. In future, public housing should be based upon the "scatter" principle, with many small units spread in all parts of the city.

This principle was enthusiastically adopted by the Philadelphia Housing Authority when it drew up plans for its 1956 program of 21 projects. The plans were revealed with a rush act calculated to throw the public off its guard. The whole program had to be approved in 30 days, it was said, or the Federal money would be defaulted.

The program proved to be a bold attempt at stuffing ballot boxes by housing. Ten of the 21 projects had been concentrated in the "silk-stocking" Sixth Congressional District which had elected Philadelphia's lone Republican Congressman (out of six), Hugh D. Scott, Jr. Others had been placed in all-white neighborhoods where (since Negroes form 90 per cent of the waiting list for public housing in the city) they might be expected to tip the scales in a close election.

The reaction to this overly clever scheme gave Philadelphia its first real insight into the depth of racial feeling that had developed.

The Board of Realtors promptly denounced 15 of the 21 sites as "unsuitable." Public clamor and mass marches on City Hall terrified the Council into ordering public meetings to "explain" the choice of sites. The series of public meetings turned into near riots, and the papers were flooded with letters from white citizens who, quite often, said flatly that they had bought their present homes to escape encroaching Negro areas; they wanted to bring up their children in "decent" surroundings, far from the influence they had seen in areas on the fringe of Negro invasion.

The Housing Authority was compelled, finally, to abandon one-third of its program. But the fight is not over. Mayor Dilworth sounded a new battle cry on October 20 — in Chicago — when he announced that he would call for a "nondiscrimination" pledge as a condition for all *private* housing developments built with government-approved loans. He added a promise that Philadelphia would "crash one silk-stocking neighborhood next year" with a public housing project.

IN PHILADELPHIA, it is only fair to say, the bitter anti-Negro feeling that is developing is not basically a feeling about color *per se*. There are few whites here who have the mystical

Southern attitude that a restaurant is polluted by a Negro's presence, and the rigid enforcement of the state fair-employment-practices laws which has placed Negroes in almost every business establishment has been accepted with good grace.

The feeling grows out of much more practical considerations. In many all-white areas, including swanky Lincoln Drive in Germantown, Negro home-buyers have been accepted, though not welcomed, and white residents have not "panicked." But in all too many areas, it has been observed, the first Negro is the portent of wholesale invasion.

Much of West Philadelphia, thus, has been transformed from an area of solid middle-class respectability into a heavily colored area where trouble is spreading rapidly. Huge sections along Lancaster Avenue have been downgraded into the meanest kind of slums, noisy with bar-rooms, brawls, juke boxes and hoagie shops, where even the police walk warily, in pairs. The once fashionable Strawberry Mansion section is now a domain divided among juvenile Negro fighting gangs, waging war among themselves.

The meaning of all this, in loss of property values, is something Philadelphians with the best good will cannot ignore. A West Philadelphia realtor estimates that white property owners in much of his area, if they wait to sell until their block has definitely "turned," stand to lose 40 to 50 per cent of their investment.

Philadelphians cannot ignore, either, that while Negroes form 22 per cent of the city's population, they form 60 per cent of the population of Eastern Penitentiary. (In New York City, where they are ten per cent, they account for 35 per cent of crime.) Nor can they ignore the fact that of 10,720 arrests of juveniles in Philadelphia last year, 63 per cent were of Negro youths.

They are increasingly aware, too, that a hugely disproportionate amount of the state's unemployment and welfare funds is going to Negroes, especially to Southern migrants interested only in seeking the good life in what seems to them a welfare state.

Welfare figures are well-guarded secrets, but the high rate of illegitimacy among Negroes (nationally, eight times the white average) helps to support a thriving local industry among Negro women who accept children whose mothers cannot care for them, and receive from the state \$18 apiece per month for their board. It is becoming known, too, that separations among Negro couples are three times as fre-

quent as among whites, and that the state in such cases pays up to \$30 per month for each child to the abandoned mother. The suspicion grows that many a couple works this into a nice racket by conveniently "separating" when the social worker is in the neighborhood.

Philadelphia, which once prided itself on its schools, cannot hide from itself the fact that they are sadly changed. Whatever educators may say, parents are convinced that standards are lowered to "carry" the huge numbers of retarded Negro students. The disciplinary problems are glaringly evident. In such schools as Benjamin Franklin High School, overwhelmingly Negro, parents of white children have been known to withdraw them unwillingly at 16 (the age of compulsory attendance) to avoid the hazards of indecencies to the girls and gang attacks on the boys.

All this Philadelphia might be prepared to accept with resignation if convinced that the better element in the Negro community — certainly a very large part of that community — would find the leadership to deal with those who bring discredit on all Negroes. But this is the most discouraging aspect of the whole problem.

James R. Smith, a far-sighted and extremely able Negro social worker, founder of a notably successful Negro boys' club, was bitterly assailed in the Negro press as a traitor to the race when he appealed publicly to Negro leaders to recognize that Negro crime was a plague which the Negro community must strive to deal with. A barrage of editorials and letters gave him the official line: crime is not a Negro problem but a community problem.

Police Commissioner Gibbons has encountered the same irresponsible attitude in his efforts to stop crime in "The Jungle" — the central city area. His attempts — called for by Negro clergymen who had accused the police of ignoring Negro offenses against Negroes — produced only a hate-mongering campaign in the Negro press alleging "police brutality," and glorifying arrested drug dealers and others as "the unlucky victims."

"We can stop crime in 'The Jungle' " — says Gibbons wearily — "but only if every decent citizen is willing to stand up and be counted. They have not shown that they are, and too many of their self-elected 'leaders' have shown that they will oppose effective action in order to inflame race hatreds."

THIS IS ONLY the sketchiest picture of the problems Philadelphia finds on its doorstep, and there is every evidence that it will grow, rather than decrease, as the NAACP presses on

to wield the balance of power it has won, or is winning, throughout much of the North.

Clarence Mitchell, top political strategist for the NAACP, boasted in advance of last year's elections that "Negroes now hold the balance of power in 60 Congressional races, and 16 Senatorial contests." He may be able to enlarge this claim in 1958 and 1960, as the migration continues, for Negroes now form from 5 to 15 per cent of the population in 14 Northern and Western states with 261 Electoral votes. This is five short of the total needed to name a President.

Little Rock and its aftermath have shown how eagerly the politicians will court this Negro bloc. Malcolm Forbes spelled out his own bald racial appeal in his campaign for Governorship of New Jersey. "The only way you can tell President Eisenhower he did right in Little Rock," he told Negro audiences, "is to vote for Republican candidates on November 5." In New York City, Democratic officials, led by Mayor Wagner, have been currying favor with proposals for a law compelling all landlords to rent to Negro tenants, and to carry school integration to new lengths by transferring pupils to schools far outside their own districts, to "balance" the Negro-white ratio in each school.

The issues, and the bidding and counterbidding of politicians wooing the Negro vote, extends from Coast to Coast. So far as the politicians are concerned it is clear that the NAACP can get whatever it chooses to demand. Tyrannosaurus never had it so good.

Morley Cassidy is a top-rank newspaperman of 35 years' standing — having spent the last 18 in Philadelphia. He previously was a reporter for ten years in New Orleans and spent a year in Africa as a correspondent. In the past three years, he has closely covered the race situation and its related problems.

HUMAN EVENTS was founded in 1944 by Frank C. Hanighen. It is published weekly at 1835 K Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C. and reports from Washington on politics, business, labor and taxes. It is usually published in two parts: a 4-page news section and a 4-page article. \$10 per year.

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