

"An Idea Whose Time Has Come"

"There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world and that is an idea whose time has come."

Great Britain learned this sadly in India. The British government imprisoned Mahatma Gandhi time after time in his campaign to achieve political and social freedom for India's "untouchables," called by him *harijans*, "children of God." The government slapped Nehru in jail nine times before he led the Indian National Congress to victory.

Ultimately, Britain's Viscount Mountbatten, formerly viceroy of the Indian Empire, hailed Gandhi as "the architect of India's freedom through non-violence." Nehru became prime minister of India.

"An idea whose time has come" is sweeping the South today. It is the lunch counter protests. From Greensboro to Chattanooga, to Florida a new young Negro leadership is asserting itself.

It will do the South no good to bury its head in the sand and hope the trouble will go away. It will do no good to blame the newspapers for telling what happens. It will do no good to assert that "local custom" sufficient 50 years ago or even 25 years ago must prevail forever. It may not suffice even to fill up the jails.

The idea's moral force—that colored men no longer will tolerate being served at nine counters and rejected at the tenth—cannot be denied. All of Greens-

boro's largest white churches had sermons on the subject Sunday—and invariably they recognized the moral sanctity of the ends sought, if not the means employed, by the protesters.

Sometimes the truth hurts. This is such a time. Sometimes the spirit, rather than the letter, of the law prevails.

Somewhere a Southern community must find an answer. It may not be an answer which pleases everybody, whites or Negroes. Both sides may have to give.

But the hard truth remains. The trouble will continue in one way or another until Southern leadership makes a start.

We are proud that Greensboro's Mayor George Roach has appointed a top leadership committee to sound out public opinion. We are glad that the men chosen have accepted the assignment. We are glad too, that they are willing to stand up and speak out on this question in candor and good sense.

Of course there will be no easy answers.

But Greensboro is keeping its communications open. Its leaders are negotiating at a time when talk is preferable to mass demonstration. Negro leadership has shown itself willing to go more than half-way—to take the first step toward conciliation—and that is commendable.

In a time of trouble, let Greensboro's common sense assert itself.