

End The Trouble Where It Started

President Eisenhower was on sound ground when he said peaceful assemblies and street marches, as long as they are orderly, are "constitutional (and) have been recognized in our country as proper since we have been founded."

The President did not include disorderly assemblies or those which might incite to riot. The right of any group to petition or make its beliefs known does not fall in the category of subversive activity. Some of our Southern officials are grossly distorting the views of the founding fathers when they so interpret.

Of course public officials must maintain law and order. But most of the disruption and disorderliness growing out of lunch counter demonstrations have stemmed not from Negro demonstrators but from groups of white hecklers.

The lunch counter demonstrations do constitute a grave problem. Like Gandhi's passive resistance movement in India, they are growing. The white South's first impulse, like Great Britain's, is to slap them down hard.

That might work if there were no justice on the sit-downers' side. But that is not the case. There ought to be facilities for Negro sit-down food service downtown.

That cannot be denied.

The economic issue cuts both ways. Downtown merchants want Negro stand-up business. They have not erected "no trespass" signs for stand-up service. They

cannot have it both ways.

Either they must decide to cater to no Negro trade or they must deal with the Negro's natural desire to be treated as other customers are treated.

Some merchants fear white business may evaporate if they open lunch counters to all—even if they agree to changes short of total integration. Nobody can predict the outcome. But surely Negro enrollment has not flooded the schools, following the city school board's voluntary assignment across racial lines. The busses and the coliseum are not crying for white business as a result of no discrimination.

The alternative, if nothing is done, is more commotion. Greensboro, where the trouble started, would be an excellent place to end it.

Voluntary changes, in accord with community sentiment and practical consideration, are preferable to harsh anti-discrimination laws which President Eisenhower hinted at in these words: "When an establishment . . . belongs to the public, opened under public charter and so on, . . . equal rights are involved."

Greensboro, through its Mayor's Committee, has a chance to chart a practical and reasonable course for the South. It need not be all or nothing. It might be accommodation somewhere between. Without a plan avoiding two dangers there can only be more trouble for everybody.