

A DOWN-TO-EARTH LOOK AT A GROWING PROBLEM

A plain-spoken woman has written a letter to the editor that is attracting widespread attention.

In this letter Mrs. Irene Palmer of De Quincy, La., challenges the theory—often stated by top officials—that hardships and poor living conditions explain riots, crime,

and growing dependence on government doles. To Mrs. Palmer, this is nonsense.

Crippled, forced to leave school at 17, Mrs. Palmer has worked hard, without luxuries, but: "You will never see us in a marching demonstration line wanting something for nothing. We're too proud for that."

Following are excerpts from a letter to "The Beaumont (Tex.) Enterprise" from Mrs. Irene Palmer of De Quincy, La., and published in "The Enterprise" on Aug. 3, 1966:

These marches, demonstrations, riotings, lootings, police slayings and the such makes me literally sick, especially the reasons our Government officials are trying to cram down our throats as causes of these law-breaking episodes.

Sir, I know what hard work, hardship, pain and suffering is. I had polio at age 5 months which left my left leg one and one-half inches shorter than my right and about one third the size.

My father died at 6 p. m. Sunday in 1935, was buried Monday on my seventeenth birthday. My brother died at 5 a. m. Tuesday and was buried Wednesday, leaving me with two small sisters and my mother to support.

At 17 I was not a drop-out in school. With no education—not enough, anyway—no experience and with only one good leg, I quit school and went to work to support a family. I didn't have a teen-age life because my working hours were always from 10 to 20 hours a day. In 1948, I got my right hand—my working hand; I'm right-handed—in an electric ice shaver and mangled it. It was doubtful whether I'd ever be able to use it again, but after much pain and suffering I learned to use what I had left of a hand. This left me with one good leg and one good hand, but I didn't give up.

"Follow Me Just One Day—"

I would like for Earl Warren, President Johnson, H. H. Humphrey, Martin Luther King, and all the hell-raising juveniles to come to my home and follow me just one day. I can guarantee that they wouldn't have enough pep left to go on a demonstration, marching or rock-throwing party.

My day begins at 4 a. m. and ends about 8 or 9 p. m., when my health permits. I do my own housework, cooking, washing, ironing, sewing, raising flowers and a garden. In fact, for the past three weeks I have been standing in a hot kitchen, over a hot stove, canning my vegetables. Have an air conditioner? Are you kidding? Neither do I run up town when I get hot and turn on the water hydrants, nor start rioting and looting stores. Do you see any civil-rights workers doing this kind of work, trying to add to their income? If you do, show me.

I have two wonderful children who were reared most of their lives in hot, crowded apartments. They know what it is to do without a lot of the better things of life. If we could have afforded just one vacation for them, it would have been a luxury, yet neither are rioters, rock-throwers, nor lawbreakers.

I would like to show some of the officials in Washington, the marchers, rioters, and all those who have their hand stretched out for a handout, some of the handicapped people who are making it on their own and not asking Mr. Nobody for anything. . . .

"Excuses for Riots Are Tommyrot"

Sir, can our President, Vice President, any civil-rights worker, agitator, or whomever they may be, stand up and look us handicaps, whose very life itself has been a struggle for most of us, in the eye and try to cram down our throats an idea as idiotic as hot weather, crowded living quarters, low income, hard working conditions and all the other excuses they try to pass on to the people as being reasons for these riots we are having? I for one cannot nor will I swallow such tommyrot.

You may see us handicaps become furious when we see a gang of able-bodied men and women, whether they are black, white, purple or spotted, running up and down our nation saying I want this, gimme that, without lifting a finger to earn it, but you will never see us in a marching demonstration line wanting something for nothing. We're too proud for that.

I believe a great lesson could be learned from the handicaps. First, faith; then courage, patience, love, kindness, long suffering, pride, competence and all the things that make life worthwhile.

Sir, I didn't intend to write a newspaper when I started, but I have watched so much of these disgraceful crime waves, which are so useless, on television, and read so much about it in the papers, until I just had to say my piece.

So I will close and leave an open invitation for the President, H. H. H., Martin Luther King and his followers, the agitators or whoever it may be who thinks it takes a crime wave to make a living in this old world, to come and follow in my footsteps just one day and I'll show them what can be done if anyone has the get-up about them to try.