

Assignment TV

By **TERRENCE O'FLAHERTY**

Television coverage of the events following the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King was extensive and commendable. Without it we could not have believed the scenes of destruction. But what is more important, without television we would not have realized how many hundreds of white people marched alongside black as anonymous, individual gestures of respect for Dr. King and sympathy for the cause of brotherhood. Unfortunately, any such accent on the positive side of the situation had to come from viewers personally. There is very little such accenting coming from observers of the racial scene. It may be merely an expression of American preoccupation with self-criticism, but on television the negative is obscuring the positive. It is not only bad reporting; it is destructive reporting. It would be foolish to ask television to voice optimism where it doesn't exist, but the facts show that great progress has been made in the area of race relations. It is only fair to give this an emphasis equal to the attention that is given the shortcomings. TELEVISION is the major informational avenue for many of us, and it performs

a critical disservice to both black and white in conveying only the inflammatory news and none that is reassuring.

For an example, throughout his commentary on the orderly and impressive Memphis parade, NBC newsmen David Buntington referred largely to "the bitterness that is felt here" rather than the optimism that could be derived from the march.

Instead of recalling the sight of Americans of different color marching in peaceful demonstration, I remembered his comment that some Tennesseans felt the only unfortunate thing about the murder was that it happened in Tennessee.

THE DAY after Dr. King's death, ABC's Howard K. Smith did an excellent job of what I would call positive comment. At my request he sent me a copy of it: "When President Roosevelt died in 1945, Winston Churchill said, almost with envy,

There are worse fates than to be taken away at the peak of achievement.' Reverend King has certainly had that fate. The rights movement he created and propelled in the South had reached its peak. Its organization was declining mainly due to success.

"Except for hard pockets of delay, public places were opened on equal basis. The vote was assured and Negroes were electing their own officials. In the North the movement was still groping unsurely for the path to success. It could be changed by mob excesses, but the feeling in Washington today is that his death will secure passage for the current rights bill.

"BUT MORE important, in the long view, it is felt here that the King era has made ultimate triumph inevitable. Negro impatience may obscure it but, in fact, tremendous forces are at work and cannot be stopped. "A Negro is in the Presi-

Pins Awarded To Employees

Employees of the Los Angeles County assessor's office were presented service pins by Assessor Philip E. Watson. They include Rueben H. Johnson, 970 Fernrest Drive, Harbor City, a 20 year supervising clerk in the data processing operations division. Receiving 10-year pins were John G. Burrill, 1202 Ashpark Lane, Harbor City, a senior appraiser; George M. Hirokawa, 21400 So. Halldale Ave., an EDP operator; and Joseph Tatchell, 208 Avenue G, Redondo Beach, an appraiser.

"So, whatever excesses occur, however unsatisfied Negroes may feel, Luther King died in triumph. The triumph can be uglified a little by small-bore scavengers like Stokeley Carmichael, but its progress cannot be stopped."

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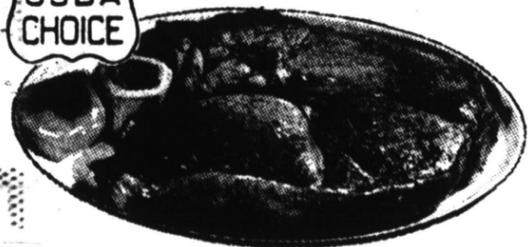
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