now because of the corruption that has been uncovered in the Nixon administration.

Frank Fenderson was a poor black man, about six feet tall and frightfuly lean. He was in his fifties when I met him, but his gait and his style of talking suggested he had lived for ages. He was a laborer in a saw mill and he had worked hard all his life.

"I been here 26 years," he was saying one afternoon in the little hamlet of Bellamy, Ala. "All these years of

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The writer is a member of the editorial page staff.

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working and scrimping and I owe more every year to the company store. I owe $5,000 now."

He went on to speak of the job at the mill, where he ran some of the most sophisticated of the machinery. "Three times, they sent white guys down from New York or someplace to learn this job and run this mill. I trained everyone of them. Then they go on to jobs paying three times what I earn—maybe four times." The tears welled in his eyes then, a simple man stating simply the nature of injustice as it happened to him for years and years.

It would be only a matter of time before I saw Frank Fenderson again, his head high, on the witness stand at Maxwell Air Force, Mongomery, Ala., telling his story to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

He told the same story brought along his pay checks and demonstrated the amazing arithmetic of the rural southern company store to the learned members of the commission, each of whom expressed dismay at the simple facts of Frank Fenderson's life.

In my own mind, Frank Fenderson became a metaphor, a way of personalizing the struggle of blacks in the sixties in terms of the lives people lead that are intolerable, even unbearable but for which they have no alternative. It was the Frank Fendersons, old and young who made the movement, they and their women. I covered those marches and yielded to the rhythms of the music of the country churches and moved thousands of miles across the South and up North to the more brutal outcroppings of anger in Watts and Detroit, Newark and New Bedford.

All this confused and enraged white middle class America, and Spiro Agnew played them like a violin. I remember covering a rally of his in Queens one Friday night. He invoked every unsavory image associated with the struggle of blacks. He said his administration would see that the noisy rebels did time, if necessary, but in no case would they be permitted to continue to be the threat they had been to the peaceful precincts of Queens or Anaheim.

I can remember no occasion during that campaign in which Spiro Agnew conceded and honestly dealt with the problems of inequality. Indeed he told us one afternoon that he had no plans for even visiting an inner city. So much for human suffering and anguish of such dimensions that it turned children into arsonists and caused grown men such as Frank Fenderson to shed tears at their lot.

And the audiences that collected for Agnew in Burbank and Joplin, Salt Lake City and Sumter cheered their lungs out at the promise of the suppression of those angry voices. They didn't come to hear about a plan for correcting the evils that caused the anger, just about the plan to cut off the noise.

When the campaign was over, I was filled with the foreboding that this team of Nixon and Agnew was elected to serve as sheriff and deputy, to restore an order that did not encompass justice.

Now we know of the Plumbers and the Huston Plan, to say nothing of the Watergate break-in itself and they all seem to have been almost predictable. It is as if the American electorate was so determined to blot out the manifestations of these problems of social injustice that they would take the easy route of annointing suppression with the highest gift a democracy has to offer.

I suspect that part of being almost 200 years old means facing the need to become mature about the unfinished moral and social business of our society. It is this we evaded in the 1968, only to have it come back in another form in 1974.

The Frank Fendersons have not disappeared; the problems of the cities have grown more desperate, and morality in politics has become a harsh joke. If we are to make it as a nation, sooner or later we must face those issues squarely. Sooner is better than later.