



*William Raspberry*

## Wallace-ite's Conflict

THE WOMAN from the Virginia suburbs was at great pains to make one thing clear: The fact that she is a supporter of George Wallace does not mean that she is a racist.

Her big concern, she said, aside from safe streets and the other benefits of law and order, is for an end to bad feeling between blacks and whites.

She saw no conflict between her desire for racial healing and her support of Wallace's candidacy.

Of course she knows what

Wallace used to stand for, when he was standing in the schoolhouse door. But that was long ago, and she wonders why black people can be so unforgiving. After all, is it antiblack to want safe streets?

Her attitude may be more widespread than is commonly believed. Certainly not all the 3 million Americans who have voted for Wallace—and the millions more who would have if they had had the chance—have done so because they are Negro-hating racists.

NO DOUBT many of them would not have voted for the Alabama governor if his approach still was to make sure that he wasn't "out-segged" by any other candidate, as it abashedly was a few years back. Most people don't like to have their less worthy instincts emphasized.

But make it possible for them to cater to their baser instincts while claiming loftier motives, and you can get them to do damned near anything you want.

People who would never be a party to the calculated removal of black families from valuable downtown real estate will heartily endorse urban renewal plans for salvaging urban cores, improving tax bases and making cities viable again.

And people who would not dream of voting for segregationist - in - the - school - door Wallace, the Wallace identified with firehoses and police dogs, with denial of equal opportunity and equal access for black people—these same people will vote for Wallace the "populist," Wallace the restorer of safe streets, Wallace the opponent of "forced busing of little children."

Wallace understands this, even if some of his staunch supporters don't. And black people understand it, too. It isn't a question of being unforgiving. It's a matter of

not being stupid.

We're not talking about holding a man's ancient errors perpetually against him. We're talking about a man who has never recanted his antiblack attitudes, who simply stopped talking about them.

IT IS SMART politics to change the subject without changing the underlying attitudes. For one thing, in the absence of any statement to the contrary, everyone will assume the old attitudes still obtain. For another, the only way Wallace could become viable as a national candidate was to make it possible for people to vote for him without having to own up to supporting a bigot.

That will be easier still following Monday's senseless assault on Wallace. Those "Never" buttons were more or less blatantly racist. But how can you argue with a man in a wheelchair?

My suburban correspondent may be a neighbor to those Northern Virginians who used to call and write me to ask what they could do to help the District of Columbia solve its problems. They would ask very earnestly, and then they would re-elect Joel Broyhill: not because of his negative attitude toward the District, of course, but for a variety of more acceptable reasons. The result, of course, was the same.

And so it is not George Wallace of whom I am unforgiving. As his supporters like to say, Wallace lets you know where he stands, if you take the trouble to listen.

No, my difficulty is with the people who expect me to understand that it isn't Wallace's bigotry that they support, merely his stand against busing and crime.

You get the impression that they could elect Wallace the "populist" and be surprised to see Wallace the bigot at the inauguration.