

Negroes Tell Why They Picket; Rap Penney's for Discriminating

Why Penney's?

From the minute the new department store opened Thursday, it has been picketed constantly during working hours by several Negroes.

These pickets are members of a group of over 100 colored people who attended a mass meeting at Bethel A.M.F. Church Thursday night. They have taken action in protest of what they call the J. C. Penney store's refusal to hire Negro sales clerks.

The group has found that a Negro lady was turned down in her application for a sales job at the store; they feel she was qualified in every way for the job and that she was rejected only because of her race. Penney's, they found, hired Negro help here only for labor in stockrooms and janitorial capacities.

According to one of the group, Robert Harden, a few Negroes are in sales positions in other Campaign stores, but the group is still not satisfied. "Some of the stores have token integration," Harden said, "but it's not a common thing." The group would like to see hiring of Negroes on a much wider scale.

It may be asked why the group picked the J. C. Penney store for its action. The answer seems to be twofold.

First, by taking action against a brand-new store, the group will not have to break any precedent if it is successful in getting the store to hire a Negro. They feel it is easier to integrate a new working staff than to integrate an established staff where "segregation" has prevailed for 50 years.

Second, there have been economic reprisals against Negroes as results of such picketing in the past. Penney's, being a new store, cannot, for instance, call in charge accounts held by Negroes. Therefore the group had nothing to lose in picketing.

Penney Manager Announces Cease of 3 Week Picketing

The picketing of the J. C. Penney's store in Champaign has been called off, Robert Myers manager of the store announced Wednesday.

According to Myers a mutual agreement was tentatively reached by Penney's and the responsible citizens of the Champaign Negro community relative to the recent picketing which protested against

alleged discriminatory hiring practices by the store.

The picketing has been going on since the store opened April 6.

The group of interested citizens, which formed the picketers, claimed that several Negroes were turned down for clerical and sales jobs at the department store on the basis of their race. However, three Negroes were hired as stock men and janitor.

At first the picketers were all Negroes, but since the second day they have included some University students and professors.

The group took action against Penney's because they felt it would be easier to integrate a brand new store than to try and integrate an established store where segregation has been in existence for many years.

April 25, 1961

Topic: The J.C. Penney Co. Affair

Whereas the picketing of the Champaign J.C. Penney store in the city of Champaign Illinois has continued for approximately three weeks,

And whereas the picketing problem is in need of a speedy settlement for the benefit of race relations in the said city, and for the continued better business of the J.C. Penney store, to wit Mutual benefit,

The proposed settlement is made:

1. J.C. Penney Co. manager will within ten (10) days notify Councilman Stratton of the name of a Negro person to be hired in a sales capacity at the said store.
2. The Negro sales person will begin working in a sales capacity by May 8, 1961.
3. The pickets will be withdrawn immediately.
4. There will be an end immediately of the Negro boycott of the store.
5. This agreement will be held in escrow by Councilman Stratton and its contents will not be released unless either party breaks faith with the above sections.

C. B. Meyer, Mgr.