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OFFICE FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Elmer W. Henderson

FROM: Joy Schultz *[Signature]*

SUBJECT: Conference with Mr. Lesh and Mr. Potter, Personnel Manager and General Manager, respectively, of Campbell Soup Co.

DATE: October 27, 1943

As you know I went out to Campbell Soup on October 22 in order to get acquainted and to learn what their experience has been since they began hiring Negro women the first of last week. Mr. Lesh said that as of that moment they had 86 colored women in their production plant and about eleven more in their canning plant. He seemed pleased with their selection thus far; apparently they have been attempting to hire only a sprinkling of young girls, preferring to fill as many of the jobs as possible with girls and women over twenty. He said further that to date there had been no protests from the white workers and no difficulty whatsoever, and he anticipated none. Each applicant had been seen by three people--the interviewer, the employment manager, and Mr. Lesh, and each of them could reject an applicant, but no one could be hired without Mr. Lesh's final O.K. The latter said that after each day's group was hired, examined, finger-printed, and uniformed, he talked to them for ten or fifteen minutes, explaining that they were pioneering, that almost inevitably they would have some disagreeable experiences at first, and exhorting them to take such experiences in their stride, since they would be only of a temporary nature. Apparently, one girl wept a bit at the prospect of such "pioneering," but the rest of them, says Mr. Lesh, "marched out with their chins set."

According to Mr. Potter, when the Camden plant of Campbell Soup began hiring Negroes, it was done on a segregated basis. However, the Chicago management, after much "meditation and prayer" decided to have no part of the segregated work pattern--for which they were severely criticized by the Camden officials. Mr. Potter said further that recently one of the top officials of the Campbell Soup Company visited the Chicago plant and put his stamp of approval on the Chicago plan for the employment of colored women, stating that there should be no segregation or discriminatory action of any kind.

At the time of my visit, Mr. Lesh was wanting to hire 300 more colored women as soon as possible. As you know, he was also wanting a colored woman for personnel work, and he was interested in Mrs. Evans, whom you suggested that I mention to him.