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State of New Jersey
Department of Education
Division Against Discrimination

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*Employment Practices
in
Selected
Retail
Stores*

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State of New Jersey
Department of Education
Division Against Discrimination

R E T A I L S T O R E S U R V E Y

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F O R E W O R D

Over the past eleven years the State Division Against Discrimination has conducted numerous surveys to ascertain management's policy and practices with regard to the employment of minority group workers. These surveys constitute a part of the educational phase of administering New Jersey's Law Against Discrimination.

The Commissioner is empowered by law to: "Issue such publications and such results of investigations and research tending to promote good will and to minimize or eliminate discrimination because of race, creed, color, national origin or ancestry, as the (Civil Rights) Commission shall direct," (18:25-8j)

In 1948 the Division made a survey of Essex County retail stores. At that time it was found that some of the larger department stores, a few chain stores and some five and ten cent stores were employing Negro personnel in clerical, cashier, and selling positions--not in great numbers, nor in all of the larger establishments, but a beginning was being made. As a result of this survey, the Division was able to assist new employers in initiating fair employment practices in a number of instances. Conferences were held with guidance counsellors in Essex County communities to point up changes in hiring policies observed among Essex County retailers.

As a part of surveys in other counties, Division staff members have obtained data on employment policies in some retail stores, but this information did not cover all the larger shopping areas. Last year this representative made a survey of retail stores covering sixty-four establishments in Newark, East Orange, Montclair, Bloomfield, Paterson, Passaic, Elizabeth, Plainfield, Trenton, Camden and Atlantic City.

John P. Milligan
Assistant Commissioner of Education

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES IN SELECTED RETAIL STORES

FIRST STEPS

A review of steps taken to improve policies in retail hiring may show how some of the first changes came about. In 1945, the Urban League, as a part of its vocational opportunity program, enlisted the cooperation of other organizations to form interracial councils with a view to advancing employment of Negro salespersons in local department stores. These councils held conferences with personnel managers of leading retail establishments in a number of cities. Such groups were encouraged by advances shown in the hiring and placement policies at Lord & Taylor's and Macy's in New York, Filene's in Boston, and Bamberger's in Newark.

A report on one community demonstrates some of the earlier difficulties encountered by these organizations. One interracial council arranged to meet with representatives of the larger retail stores in town. Its members were surprised to find that the store representatives were hesitant about taking immediate steps to an open policy. The position taken was as follows:

- 1) They believed in the principles of fair employment practices.
- 2) They felt that they were making substantial headway in widening employment opportunities for Negroes. They pointed out that they were then employing Negroes in a greater range of jobs than they had two years before.
- 3) They did NOT believe that the time was ripe for the employment of Negro salespersons because:
 - a. The public was not ready to accept them.
 - b. Present department store salespeople would probably resent working with Negroes in this capacity.

However, the results of this conference were:

- 1) The store representatives agreed to issue a statement to the effect that they believed in fair employment practices.
- 2) They agreed to the appointment of a committee made up of personnel directors in the stores which would meet with the committee of the council for the purpose of drafting a detailed method of procedure leading toward the employment of Negro salespersons.

The council set out to test the validity of the two expressed bases of fear. First, they took a poll of customers entering and leaving the stores. The poll showed 85% of the buying public voicing no objections to being waited upon by qualified Negro clerks. Personal letters from a half dozen of the city's prominent women's club leaders were sent to the store managements, not only backing up these findings, but pledging their own and their organization's willingness to participate in whatever campaigns of public education should be necessary to bring about the institution of unbiased hiring practices.

Next the council conducted a similar poll among members of the employe forces in the stores. Despite the possible additional competition for jobs implied in the question, 75% of the employees expressed their willingness to see qualified Negroes placed in selling jobs.

The executive committee of the union which held the contract for some of these workers pledged an open door policy to union membership for Negroes so employed. The local union president pledged this support in writing.

In 1946, the Essex County Council in Human Relations called a meeting of department store executives to explore the best means of initiating fair employment policies to conform to New Jersey's recently passed FEP laws. The Urban League and the League of Women Voters made tests of public and employee reaction similar to the tests made in other cities, so that data became available for the guidance of Essex County retail executives.

No overnight changes came about, but within a few years, the buying public became aware that advances were being made in retail store hiring policies. The Division sent field representatives to visit new retail employers and assisted them in carrying out fair hiring practices.

Last year, in visiting retail stores in the state, the field representative found that in only six of the communities visited are Negroes employed in the more desirable retail positions. This finding was also true in communities where general employment in industry is open to all qualified persons, regardless of race, creed, color or nationality.

EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

TYPES OF RETAIL SHOPS SURVEYED

Twenty-nine of the sixty-four establishments covered in this survey may be classed as department stores, all but three of which carry wearing apparel and accessories. Only ten of the larger stores include furniture and household items. Of the seventeen specialty shops, ten are confined to women's wearing apparel. A spot check of eighteen five and ten cent stores was made in nine counties. Thirty-nine are member stores of chain corporations. Twenty-five are unaffiliated. Eighteen have union contracts; forty-six are non-union. Table I gives a picture of the extent of services rendered and union contracts effective.

TABLE I

Number of Stores Visited, Types of Service Rendered, and Union Contracts in Effect

	Stores	Include Apparel	Exclude Apparel	Apparel Only	Include Furniture
Department Stores	29	26	3	-	10
Specialty Shops	17	17	-	17 (10 Women's Only)	-
Five & Ten Stores	18	18	-	-	4
Chain Corporation Stores	39	-	Union Contract	18	-
Unaffiliated	25	-	Non-Union	46	-

Many stores are seasonal and at various times of the year, but source of recruitment. Sixteen shops secured employees through New Jersey Employment Service. Very few call on private employment agencies, except for executive positions.

While many stores prefer to hire high school graduates, none require this standard, except for certain clerical, stenographic and accounting jobs. Supervisory positions are generally filled through promotion.

Personnel training, beyond initial instruction in making change, filling out sales slips and keeping simple records, has been discontinued with sales staffs in all but two department stores. Department supervisors or buyers instruct their salespersons in whatever special promotion may be required. A number of personnel heads deplore this de-emphasis of training in the retail field. They believe this trend has lowered the

EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

Some 14,160 persons are engaged in a variety of jobs in the stores visited. Of this number, 10,611 are women employees, and 3,549 are men. They work as porters, watchmen, matrons, elevator operators, wrappers, stock and delivery clerks, alteration workers, cashiers, clerks, typists, stenographers, accountants, bookkeepers, department supervisors, merchandise, display, credit, complaint and personnel department employees, salespersons, buyers and executive personnel. Table II gives a quick summary of how many of the sixty-four stores employ varying numbers of workers.

TABLE II

Frequency of Stores Employing Certain Numerical Categories of Workers

<u>Stores</u>	<u>Employees</u>
24	6 - 100
22	100 - 200
10	200 - 500
5	500 - 1000
3	1000 - 4000

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF NEW EMPLOYEES

Many stores use newspaper ads at various times of the year, but rely on "drop-ins" or referrals by other employees as their principal source of recruitment. Sixteen shops secure employees through New Jersey Employment Service. Very few call on private employment agencies, except for executive positions.

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quality of service and tends to make retailing less attractive to young persons in choosing a career.

The diminished status in this white collar field, together with lower salaries than many factory jobs now offer, has also reduced the desirability of retailing as a career to minority group workers.

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS AND PRACTICES

Sales personnel comprises a high percentage of employees in the retail field. Part-time employees are found in greater numbers in this capacity. Many stores advertise for part-time selling jobs favorable to married women who can work while their children are at school. Some stores hire high school students during holiday seasons and through the summer. A few stores employ students on Saturdays throughout the year.

Ten of the department stores visited have no delivery services. Six use United Parcel Delivery. Sixteen specialty shops and fourteen five and ten cent stores do not deliver purchases. Six department stores do not employ stock clerks, and twelve do not use cashiers. These two functions are performed by sales personnel or others whose duties include wrapping. Two large shops employ a minimum selling force to serve in departments not adaptable to self-service.

With the exception of Essex County, comparisons with employment policies in earlier years could not be made, save through reports given to the field representative by personnel heads, many of whom had no knowledge of such policy before their own advent. Of the twenty-nine shops from which data could be obtained, it was learned that twenty-six employed Italian-Americans and Jews in jobs above maintenance levels prior to 1939, but only five of this number employed Negroes in such jobs at that time. Eight establishments whose businesses opened between 1939 and 1945 employed Italian-Americans and Jews in jobs above maintenance, but only three of them employed Negroes in like capacities. Twenty-two shops have employed Negroes in jobs above maintenance since 1945.

It was possible to learn only approximately the number of Negro workers, particularly those in stock and selling jobs, because racial designations do not appear on employment records. Many stock and sales employees work on a part-time basis, and, therefore, a visual check of the establishments did not result in uniform verification of the estimated or given numbers.

WORK ASSIGNMENTS

Employees in the retail field belong to many ethnic groups and work in most job categories. Italian-Americans and Jews are employed in a majority of the larger establishments, principally in jobs above maintenance level, up to and including supervisory and executive positions. Negro workers are employed in maintenance jobs in thirty-eight stores, but hold sales jobs in only fifteen stores, and supervisory positions in but five. Two stores employ Negro women who are buyers. Both of these women are department heads as well.

It was found that, with few exceptions, the employment of Negro personnel in jobs above maintenance is confined to six of the communities visited. Over half of the stores reported they have never had applications from Negroes for clerical or selling positions. When asked if these applicants would be considered for such jobs, personnel heads expressed varying degrees of concern as to customer reaction, resistance to the idea from other employees, and public disapproval. The field representative recounted the experiences of other communities where such policies had met with complete acceptance by customers, employees and the public. Table III, below, summarizes the types of work assignments of minority group members in the stores visited.

TABLE III

FREQUENCY OF WORK ASSIGNMENTS OF MINORITY GROUP MEMBERS
IN 64 RETAIL STORES

<u>Work Assignments</u>	<u>Negroes</u>	<u>Italian-Americans</u>	<u>Jews</u>
* Maintenance	38	29	9
** Delivery	11	13	5
*** Stock	20	22	28
Cashier	10	24	22
Sales	15	36	38
Office	9	32	37
Supervisory	5	27	37

* Included in this category are such jobs as elevator operators, matrons, porters, watchmen, janitors.

** Four stores use United Parcel delivery services. Twelve do not employ Negroes, Italian-Americans or Jews in this capacity.

*** Twenty-six stores have no regular personnel assigned exclusively to stock. Ten have stock personnel, but do not employ Negroes, Italian-Americans or Jews in this job category.

NEGROES IN THE WORK FORCE

Forty-two retail establishments employ Negro workers in some capacity. Thirty-eight of the forty-two employ Negro men and women workers in maintenance jobs as listed in Table III. Of the fifteen stores affording delivery services, exclusive of United Parcel services, eleven employ Negro men.

Thirty-four stores have stock personnel. Twenty of this number employ Negro workers, chiefly women. Twenty-eight have cashiers, and ten of these stores employ Negro women in this capacity. Negro personnel are members of the sales forces in the fifteen of the sixty-four stores surveyed. Negro clerks and typists are employed in nine stores. Five stores have Negro workers in supervisory jobs. Two stores employ Negro women as buyers.

INTERGROUP RELATIONS AMONG EMPLOYEES

Reports given by employers who hired workers of different races, religions and national origins indicate that these differences are never a source of conflict. General relations were rated as excellent in all instances. Work relations among employees were reported to be friendly and cooperative by twenty-seven employers. One employer reported that work relations were impersonal. In no instance were there reports of conflict or non-cooperation.

EMPLOYERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD MINORITIES

The following statements made by employers reflect a cross section of attitudes:

"We would be willing to assist in a distributive education program to encourage students to take up retailing as a career. We stress good human relations in our training program."

"Several Negro girls were employed during holiday seasons. Customer reaction was excellent. At present three older Negro women work in part-time sales jobs."

"Have reservations about how Negro salespersons would be accepted by our customers. None have ever applied."

"We have had excellent experience with Negro employees. Had several selling during Christmas and Easter Holidays."

"We would gladly employ Negro salespersons. Have never had applications."

"We never had applications from Negroes except for porters and delivery men. We never considered hiring Negro salespersons."

"We would gladly hire Negro saleswomen if they applied. The cashier jobs pay more."

APPLICATION FORMS

The representative asked for copies of application forms. Twenty-seven of the sixty-four stores visited used some form of application blank at the initial employment interview. Eleven of these stores used a form which served as a combined application and post-employment record. Thirty-one reported they used no application forms whatever. Application forms were not made available to the representative from six stores, in one instance for the reason that the blanks were numbered. The five other personnel heads were reluctant to release their application forms without authorization from superiors.

Of the forms made available, none carried illegal inquiries concerning race, religion, nationality, place of birth, citizenship and naturalization details. Only one store had an inquiry regarding draft status. The personnel head was aware of the violation and had discontinued seeking this information. It was agreed this item would be deleted before presenting the form to any future applicants. A number of personnel heads reported they had voluntarily revised their application forms to comply with the law when they learned details through their state personnel organization.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Visitations to sixty-four retail stores seem to indicate that there has been less advance in the employment of Negro personnel in this field than in industry, as shown by the industrial surveys conducted by the Division. In communities where Negroes are employed in a greater variety of jobs above the semi-skilled level, and where a high percentage have had continuous employment in general industry over the last ten years, retail stores in these same communities show very slight change from their 1945 employment patterns and policies, if these sixty-four stores are representative.

Two communities with active human relations organizations gave indication that concern with hiring policy in retail stores had been helpful in advancing the employment of Negroes in selling and clerical jobs in their respective communities.

Jews and Italian-Americans where employed, are working in most job capacities. Negroes are not employed as widely as members of other races in jobs above maintenance levels, and smaller percentages are engaged in selling and clerical positions in retail stores.

We cannot assume that Negroes, generally, are not attracted to the retail field. Perhaps a current trend toward part-time employment in the selling area, and low remuneration, together with limited opportunities for advancement may account in part for the high percentage of reports from retail stores that Negroes never apply for selling jobs. Fear of discrimination might also influence Negroes not to apply.

A further observable trend in retailing today is the growth of community shopping centers where branches of department stores are established or where items usually found in department stores can be bought in smaller self-service stores. Limited parking facilities and traffic inconveniences also pose problems for large stores in congested cities. Discontinuance of delivery by some stores has prompted some shoppers to patronize their local centers on a cash and carry basis. The spread-out of operations tends to eliminate many of the traditional jobs such as stock, delivery, display and credit personnel, and to reduce the number of persons engaged in across-the-counter selling.

DIVISION WILL COOPERATE

The services of the Division Against Discrimination are always available to employers for consultation and assistance with problems in the area of human relations. The Division has offices located at:

1100 Raymond Boulevard	Newark
162 West State Street	Trenton

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