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Human Relations in Chicago, 1961

This special issue of Human Relations News reports on human relations in Chicago during 1961. It contains excerpts from the speeches made by Ely M. Aaron, chairman of the Commission, and Edward Marciniak, executive director, at the Commission's Sixteenth Annual Awards Luncheon on December 8.

Mr. Aaron's Report

Equality of opportunity and equality of treatment under law cannot be secured on a legal basis alone. For their fulfillment they must have the recognition and support of the majority of all the people in the community.

Today on the world scene it is recognized that racial discrimination is morally wrong in that it is a waste of human life and human effort, and is economically unsound as a waste of human potential. To bring up all human beings to their greatest possible development is the hope and aim of all right thinking people in the world. The practice of this sort of discrimination is to impede and even destroy such development, and therefore is as foolish as it is unsound. Yet we know in this country and in our city, these practices are present and are continued, and although we can and do invoke the rule of law and the weight of public opinion, they will never be completely eradicated until the greater part of the people in this country and this city accept the basis of equality of treatment as applied to themselves. The very simplicity of such an act of acceptance is most difficult for most people, but more and more people the country over and in this city as well, are accepting it with all its implications as part of their daily lives.

To the accomplishment of this task this Commission is dedicated. We are not alone, however. In the past year we have received the increased aid of individuals and community organizations, and more specifically the services of some 500 citizen volunteers on committees of the Commission.

The work of the Commission is very often not publicized because its efforts to solve problems as they occur from day to day is usually by oral persuasion

and education. It is a rare occasion when resort has to be made to court action. The Commission also attempts to head off matters which threaten to become serious problems and which might otherwise result in tragic tension situations which in the language of the Ordinance "would deeply affect the welfare and peace of the community."

In this year of 1961 the Chicago Police Department has rightfully received the recognition and the approbation of the entire community in the handling of certain problems of racial tensions. . . . However, I feel you should know the spade work of this Commission in this regard. In the early part of this year the staff and members of the Commission met a number of times with Superintendent Wilson and members of his staff for the purpose of setting up various programs throughout the city for meeting the contingency of racial tensions, should they arise as they have been known to do in the summer months in the past.

The Commission also suggested using the services of two of our most knowledgeable citizens — Mr. Maynard Wishner, chairman of the Chicago Chapter of the American Jewish Committee, and Mr. Nissen Gross, civil rights director of the Anti-Defamation League, in teaching human relations programs to the personnel of the Chicago Police Department.

I also wish to mention one of the activities of the Mayor's Committee on New Residents which is associated with the Commission, and staffed by the Commission's personnel. Beginning in February, 1960, following the suicide of William Rodriguez, a citizens committee called together by the Committee on New Residents labored on the changes to be made in credit procedures and legislation which finally resulted in the passing of remedial credit legislation by the Illinois Legislature. This could only have been accomplished with the aid of members of this committee, numerous subcommittees, and also the aid of the press, radio, and TV in depicting the conditions existing in this field.

I also wish to thank Mayor Daley for his continued interest and backing of the Commission. Whenever we have gone to him we have always received sympathetic interest, quick understanding and complete cooperation.

Chicago Commission's Work in Last 12 Months

Mr. Marciniak's Report

The last twelve months have been some of the busiest in the Commission's eighteen year history. You might ask "How come?" These are the reasons why:

1. The city's nonwhites now make up 24 per cent of the population.

2. Minorities are increasingly aware of their rights and responsibilities — typified by freedom riders in the South and by the debut of new African nations upon the world's stage. This influence is felt in Chicago.

3. Chicago's rapidly growing Negro middle class, most of whom are now second and third generation residents, is determined to get equal treatment under the law.

4. The community as a whole is more willing than ever to take constructive steps to protect everyone's rights regardless of race, religion, or national origin.

On this last point, ample evidence exists from a quick review of the last twelve months.

After eight unsuccessful attempts going back to 1945, the Illinois Legislature finally passed a fair employment practices law.

Under leadership provided by the Mayor's Committee on New Residents and various civic groups, such as the Illinois Committee for Fair Credit Practices, the Illinois Legislature adopted badly needed credit reforms to aid citizens victimized by unfair selling and credit methods. In the future, fewer newcomers will be held back by credit entanglements as they climb the economic ladder toward a living wage and a good home.

Noteworthy, among the improved opportunities for advancement made possible by the Chicago Civil Service Commission and the Chicago Police Department, are the 29 Negro policemen who were upgraded to the rank of sergeant and four to the rank of lieutenant. Others are on the civil service list and scheduled for promotion.

Human relations is now recognized as a metropolitan problem not just a Chicago one. In the last six months alone, the Commission aided six suburbs — in human relations training for village police, preparing for the first move-in of a Negro family, resolving racial tension surrounding a high school, establishing a human relations commission, adding Negro doctors to suburban hospital staffs, and other matters.

Nearly two thousand Cuban refugees have found hospitality and employment in the city since 1960. More are expected to come this spring.

In April, the Chicago City Council called upon the Illinois General Assembly to enact a state-wide fair housing practices law. In passing the resolution the council said:

"The injustice, immorality and the resulting effects of housing discrimination, based upon race, religion or place of origin, are contrary to the basic principles of a democratic government and inconsistent with the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Illinois; . . ."

In hospital staff appointments for Negro physicians the Commission made more progress in the last fifteen months than in the previous five years combined.

Changing neighborhoods got some protection from speculators when the Criminal Court gave jail sentences to two panic peddlers for obtaining money and signatures under false pretenses.

Three Chicago newspapers, the Daily News, Sun-Times, and Tribune eliminated racial specifications from "help wanted" advertising.

Hospital Staff Appointments

We dare not underestimate the mercurial character of human relations in the city and in the nation. Opportunities for progress are numerous. Many people are ready to take one, two, or even three steps to open the doors of opportunity to nonwhites. Our job at the Commission is to locate such people and to pinpoint the problem for them so that they can move to resolve it.

This is what the Commission had in mind when Mayor Daley in September, 1960, appointed a special committee of outstanding civic leaders to multiply hospital staff appointments for qualified Negro physicians. Since that date this committee of busy men has made more than 200 personal contacts with doctors, hospital administrators, board members, deans of medical schools, and others. Its activity generated enough work so that the Commission staff was able to make 600 more contacts on their own to assist the Committee.

In the past fifteen months thirteen hospitals (Roosevelt Memorial, Bethany, St. Joseph, Lutheran Deaconess, St. Anthony, Bethesda, Illinois Masonic, Presbyterian-St. Luke's, Woodlawn, Columbus, Augustana, St. George, St. Mary of Nazareth) have added Negro physicians to their staffs for the first time, raising the total of private hospitals with integrated staffs to 25. Not counting Provident and Louise Burg Hospitals, 28 Negro doctors now hold 38 hospital appointments. The four Negro obstetricians on the staff of Lewis Memorial Hospital, which is now closed, got appointments at other hospitals.

What next? In the next fifteen months the Committee expects even better results. A meeting is planned for Negro medical students, interns, and residents in the metropolitan area to exchange information about possible hospital appointments. The committee is looking into the connection between inequality of medical care and the hospital bed shortage on the South Side; into the reasons why there are so few Negro applicants at Chicago medical schools; and into related questions.

While a hospital appointment for a Negro physician is one key to better medical care for nonwhites, the Commission does not endorse the view that Negro doctors must have Negro patients and vice versa. Most Negro doctors do have Negro patients. Some Negro doctors have many white patients. And hundreds of white doctors now treat Negro patients.

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Two other examples can be cited where the Commission helped match a problem with the people able to solve it. At Rainbow Beach, where the right of citizens to use public property was challenged, we had co-operation from the clergy of all faiths, the South Shore Commission, the Chicago Commission on Youth Welfare, the Illinois Youth Commission, the NAACP, and youth workers from other voluntary agencies. The city's determination to get respect for the law — symbolized by alert police action and assisted by the Commission's experience in such matters — prevailed.

When trouble broke out in southwest Lawndale, we found radio and TV stations and Chicago dailies eager to help in every way possible to halt rumors, prevent panic, and restore law and order. With the co-operation of the Church Federation of Greater Chicago, the Chicago Board of Rabbis, and the Catholic Interracial Council, the Commission brought together for the first time religious leaders from north and south of Ogden Avenue. Under the aegis of the Police Department, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the Commission, city officials and other community leaders from North and South Lawndale have been meeting face to face to discuss mutual problems.

Government Agencies Cooperate

There is a mountain of evidence that government agencies stand ready to use their authority to secure equal protection of the law for all citizens. For example, Commission initiative prompted the following action:

At our request, and with the cooperation of the Chicago Board of Health, the Illinois Department of Public Health agreed to remove racial designations from birth certificates which are often required for employment applications, school admission forms, etc. From now on, racial data on birth records will remain in the files.

The Illinois Department of Registration and Education agreed to license only those professional or vocational schools which accept applicants without regard to race, religion, or nationality. Before the year is out, we expect the Private Business School State Board and the Superintendent of Public Instruction to approve only those business schools that demonstrate an open door policy.

After conferring with executives of neighborhood organizations on ways to curb "panic peddling," the Commission obtained from the Department of Registration and Education an opinion that real estate brokers and salesmen who try to scare home owners into selling their homes in changing neighborhoods face suspension or revocation of their license.

Because of inquiries on our part, the Veterans Administration is now reviewing the procedures by which it provides burial care for Negro and white veterans.

After a second complaint against a south side restaurant, charging it with refusal to serve nonwhites, the Corporation Counsel of Chicago filed suit against the restaurant under our public accommodations law. Generally, however, complaints of racial discrimination in

restaurants, motels, etc., are settled by conference and a readiness to comply with the law.

On four occasions this year, at the Commission's request, the Corporation Counsel called hospital administrators into his office to discuss their practices with regard to nonwhite patients. In each case we arrived at an agreement whereby the hospital affirmed a clear-cut policy of giving equal care to nonwhite patients.

New Era in Employment

Vast changes are taking place in the local and national employment picture. We are on the doorstep of a new era of employment based upon merit. Employment opportunities for Negroes and other minority groups are increasing rapidly. Almost daily we see the impact upon employment practices of the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. Even though the Illinois Fair Employment Practices Commission has not yet gone into operation, it has already affected the job policy of many companies. Influential businessmen and union officials are now exerting leadership to widen job opportunities for Negroes, Jews, Catholics, Italians, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans.

It is not enough to persuade employers and unions to adopt merit employment as a policy. We must also widen the occupational horizons of Negro youth.

As employment doors open to Negroes, they must be prepared to walk through those doors, qualified for the job available. Today some jobs are not filled, but could be, if Negro college teachers, stenographers, nurses, engineers, and doctors were available. Last year Chicago's five medical schools had 2,100 students, only 14 of whom were Negro. Why are there so few applicants at a time when scholarship money and internships are plentiful? Our medical schools want more good students — white or nonwhite.

Somehow, all of us — government, industry, schools, private organizations — must find the best and fastest methods for getting accurate and up-to-date employment information to these young people, and particularly to their parents. If we fail to reach them, the employment picture for Negroes will be slow to improve despite all our efforts to ban racial discrimination.

This brings us to the high percentage of high school drop-outs, particularly among Negro and white families who have come here from the South since World War II. We know that today's drop-outs are tomorrow's unemployed. Governor Kerner's Committee on Unemployment recently completed a survey of the state's job seekers and found in the Chicago metropolitan area 73 per cent of unemployed Negroes had not completed high school compared to 63 per cent for whites. The same study indicated that 65 per cent of the Negro job seekers were unskilled (40%) or semi-skilled (25%). In our changing economy, job opportunities for the unskilled and semi-skilled are becoming fewer while skilled jobs are in greater supply.

Newcomers to the city who are short on job skills and education must be given every opportunity for new job

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training and adult education. Our neighborhood information center in Woodlawn, and the two new ones in Uptown and Lawndale, try to steer newcomers into skilled job training and adult education. Broadening the occupation and educational outlook of our newcomers, parents and children, is a major goal of the Mayor's Committee on New Residents for 1962.

Continuing Commission targets for 1962 will be those few but important trades that still have no Negro apprentices. It has been said that it is easier for a Negro to get a Ph.D and become a college professor than to qualify as an apprentice or a journeyman in one of these trades. Such a situation is intolerable.

Housing Patterns Improve

Restrictive practices in housing rest upon the opinion — held by many, but not all within the housing industry — that property depreciation inevitably occurs in mixed neighborhoods. The soundness of this opinion is being seriously and successfully challenged.

In increasing numbers white property owners are ready to accept Negroes as neighbors, provided that the entrance of a Negro family or families in a previous all-white neighborhood does not bring "inundation." While these whites fear the overcrowding, poor property upkeep, and violations of zoning and building regulations, which blight good neighborhoods, they also realize that race is not the real cause of residential deterioration.

Testifying to the truth of the above statements are solid, well-respected community organizations whose primary aim is to stabilize their neighborhoods by keeping property up and keeping overcrowding down, all the while remaining color blind. As one Chicago community leader recently put it: "Our purpose is not to keep anybody out, but to keep people in."

Furthermore, Chicago's own residential patterns are changing. Historically, public opinion in Chicago has been able to conceive of only two types of neighborhoods: either "all white" or "all Negro." But now Chicagoans can see a residential pattern which affords a third alternative: Negroes and whites living as neigh-

bors. These are some examples: The successful experience in rental housing in Lake Meadows, Prairie Shores, and Hyde Park; the ready sale of nearly 250 town houses in Hyde Park to both whites and nonwhites; and the announcement that the Marina City and North LaSalle Street developments will be open to all without regard to race, religion or national origin.

Impressed by Chicago's experience with freedom of residence in urban renewal areas, the federal government has indicated a willingness to finance a study to serve as a guide for other cities in the United States.

What are the challenges that lie before us in 1962 as we seek a metropolitan-wide community in which every family has a decent home without racial discrimination and segregation?

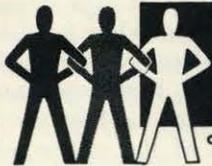
We cannot ignore the real estate industry. We must work with it, instead of constantly working it over. We must locate leaders who are willing to remove artificial barriers of race and religion which prohibit the free movement of families within the city, from the city into the suburbs, and from the suburbs back into the city.

To this end the Commission has prepared a seven-page agenda for discussion, entitled "Housing in Chicago for Non-Whites." In the next three months we expect more than a hundred real estate brokers, builders, and lenders to meet in small groups to discuss the issues raised by this Commission report. We want to give them every opportunity to accept the challenge handed them by the retiring president of the Chicago Real Estate Board, Arthur F. Mohl, when he said earlier this year:

"Were I given the support of the thinking 'big men' of our business, I would recommend an invitation to the churches of Chicago to join us in an educational selling campaign and a citizen's program of orderly and voluntary integration. Do I have this support? Will this challenge be undertaken?"

As we await a Presidential executive order ending double standards in the use of federal money for housing and as we anticipate state fair housing practices legislation, we must recognize that there is no substitute for leadership in human relations by architects, appraisers, builders, brokers, contractors, lenders, and developers.

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HUMAN RELATIONS NEWS

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