

11-7-82

Dorothy Eure gave to me

A Background

The Omaha De Porres Club is a civic organization dedicated to the work of combating the evil of racism as it manifests itself in racial segregation and racial discrimination. (Enclosed find copy of De Porres Club Creed)

The present activity of the Club is a campaign to open employment to Negroes at Reed's Ice Cream Company whose plant and main stand is located at 3106 N. 24 St.

Picketing of the establishment began several weeks ago. Before beginning the picketing, the group checked with its lawyers to establish what it could legally do. They called the police station to report and explain their plans to picket.

When the picketing began, a police official was parked nearby and observed the picketing for some time. The manager of Reeds told the pickets he had called the police to take care of the pickets. A cruiser with Negro officers drove past, observed the police official sitting in his car and passed on.

Groups of four or five continued the picketing on various evenings for several weeks. On one occasion a Negro service man in uniform, just returned from the Far East, joined in the picketing. One of Reed's officials called the local Navy Base and reported a sailor was "disturbing the peace" in front of their business.

A Navy official arrived, talked to the service man, said it was plain there was no disturbance of the peace, said white and color worked, fought and died together in the Navy and left.

Reeds continued to call the police on many occasions although there was not any disturbance and the pickets behaved in a perfectly orderly manner carrying two signs. One sign read, "Help End Racial Discrimination," the other, "Your Cooperation Can End Racial Discrimination." They also passed out handbills. (Find copy enclosed)

On several occasions, people who had no connection whatsoever with the De Porres Club or the picketing would take a handbill and give it to someone on Reed's

property or in other ways behaved in a manner to cause Reed's to call the police, On each occasion the Negro officers would arrive and each time they would find things orderly and according to law.

CHRONICAL OF EVENTS

Monday night, July 27 - A group of around 30 Negroes gathered in the vicinity of Reeds. They were peacefully watching the four pickets. Two white officers arrived, explained the entrance must not be blocked and the sidewalk left clear for people to walk. Everyone agreed and the officers left without the slightest incident. The two Negro officers arrived and had a couple youths leave who were known by them for quick tempers. The picketing continued most peacefully until the establishment closed at midnight,

Tuesday night, July 28 - Another group of Negroes gathered in the vicinity as the pickets walked. These people had no connection with the De Porres Club but were watching the picketing. All was peaceful and in accordance with the instructions of the police the night before.

Around 10:30 PM a cruiser came around the corner at a high speed, crossed over to the wrong side of 24th Street and stopped in front of Reeds.

Officer Rice #171 jumped from the car and said very loudly, "Clear off this Sidewalk."

Denny Holland, President of the De Porres Club started over to him with the intention of discussing the matter. Holland had one of the two picket signs present. Rice asked Holland who he was and was told he was President of the De Porres Club and in charge of the picketing.

Rice then pointed to the street and in a loud voice ordered Holland to "Get off the sidewalk." Holland answered he was within his rights picketing on the sidewalk and asked Rice his name and number.

Rice walked away from the group and ordered Holland loudly, "Come here."

Feeling within the group gathered, audibly mounted,

A Lieutenant arrived and explained to Holland that the group were within their rights but he cautioned they be careful to leave a passage on the sidewalk and not block the doorway. Holland assured him they had and the group was calm and quiet again as the Lieutenant left.

A few seconds later Traffic Car #20 stopped in the middle of the street next to Officer Rice's cruiser. This tended to block traffic and a much larger group of Negroes was gathering. Rice talked to the other officers for sometime; all three watched the group as they talked. The pickets had returned to picketing. The bystanders (by this time, crowd) were watching the officers in the middle of the street. Everyone in the group got the impression the officers attitude was most unfriendly to the pickets.

Traffic Car #20 slowly drove off after awhile. As it passed some boys who were standing in front of the drug store next door to Reede, one of the boys said, "Omaha in a funny town" (or as the officers later insisted, he said, "Omaha's funny town").

The cruiser stopped, backed up to the boys. Officer John Gostelle #325 jumped out, grabbed the boy and said, "You're under arrest." When the youth, Karl Watson asked, "What for, I didn't do anything wrong," Gostelle pushed him into the back seat of the cruiser and said, "I'll tell you when I get you in here."

Karl had been on his way home from the movie and stopped to see what the cruisers were stopped for. La is a student at Central High and lives at home with his mother.

Holland walked to the cruiser and asked Gostelle his name. Gostelle then came up and said, "This is the one who got my name." Gostelle's partner (whose name we understand to be Petack) said, "Holland's a wise guy who works for the Omaha Star."

Just try to get ny badge number, Holland." No drove off.

Holland in not aware of ever asolng Petack before.

Karl reported that on the way to the station Petack said, "If I didn't have this badge en I'd get you outslde this car.

The officers told Lt. Jennings they had picked Karl up in front of Reeds where he had "gotten smart" with them as they drove past. Fetack said, "We're traffic officers and we den't have to take that off anyone." Lt. Jennings told Karl he could go after he had heard the respective stories and suggested to Karl that he stay away from Reeds.

Petack had said Holland wouldn't knew what Karl said--"he's hard of hearing, when the officers disaproved with Karl and Holland as to whether he had said "Omaha is a funny town" or "Omaha's funniest." Holland had then walked out of the room.

When told Holland had gotten the names and numbers of the officers involved, Lt. Jannings told the officers they did not have to give this information adding, "Let him come dorn here and get it.

Karl and the group who had followed the cruiser left. Holland returned with the intention of finding out if the arrest would go on a record against Karl. He asked Lt. Jannings if Karl had been placed under arrest. He called Costello and said, "Holland, if you're looking for trouble, we'll sure give it to you." He then asked Costello if Karl had been arrested: Costello said yes. Lt. Jannings told Costello to ge get Karl and "bock him for vagrancy." He added, "Holland wants to make trouble.

Karl was by that time a half block zway from the poliee station. He was returnd and locked in the bull pen. Sis bail was set at \$50.00, Before he was booked, the arresting officers wers not asked what Karl was arrested for; he was not asked if he had a job, where he lived or anything to establish if he was or was not a vagrant. After Karl's ball was posted, the group returned to Reeds where the three pickets had been left.

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A Lieutenant arrived and explained to Holland that the group were within their rights but he cautioned they be careful to leave a passage on the sidewalk and not block the doorway. Holland assured him they had and the group was calm and quiet again as the Lieutenant left.

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Traffic Car 120 slowly drove off after awhile. As it passed some boys who were standing in front of the drug store next door to Roeds, one of the boys said, "Omaha is a funny town" (or as the officers later insisted, he said, "Omaha's funniest.")

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A crowd of about three hundred had gathered although Reeds had closed. There were five cruiser cars present. The De Porres Club pickets urged the group to go home and they dispersed.

Karl's case was immediately dismissed the next morning after testimony was heard.

Wednesday night. July 19 - and several nights thereafter Negro officers returned, frequently sitting across the street for long periods; all was quiet,

Monday night. August 3 - Two white officers parked in Reeds drive and one officer went in and get ice cream cones. He stood outside his cruiser eating it. According to one of the lady pickets, he made unfriendly remarks to her.

Tuesday night. August 4 - About 10:00 PM, two white officers parked their cruiser in front of Reeds (according to some of the pickets, they were the same officers mentioned above from the night before). One of the officers (reportedly named Larson) got out of the cruiser and with night stick in hand, walked though the picket line into Reeds where he purchased two cones; he returned to the cruiser and the officers ate the cones - he stood outside the cruiser to eat his. When a lady picket stopped momentarily, he ordered her to keep moving. When she came back past, he asked her where she lived. She told him and continued walking. These officers continued driving past most of the evening.

CONCLUSION:

- 1) There was no trouble until police officers got excited and created the trouble.
- 2) Reeds persisted in making false reports about "pickets with bricks. These reports were investigated intelligently by most officers and found to be false.

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3) Some officers did not forget their personal prejudices when they saw a group of Negroes peacefully but dramatically and assuredly attempting to win their God-given rights.

SUGGESTIONS

It seems clear that further training in race relations is needed by some members of the police department.