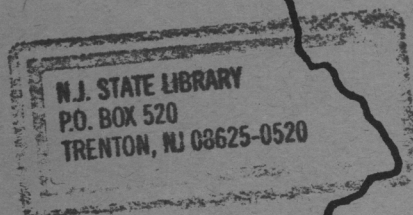


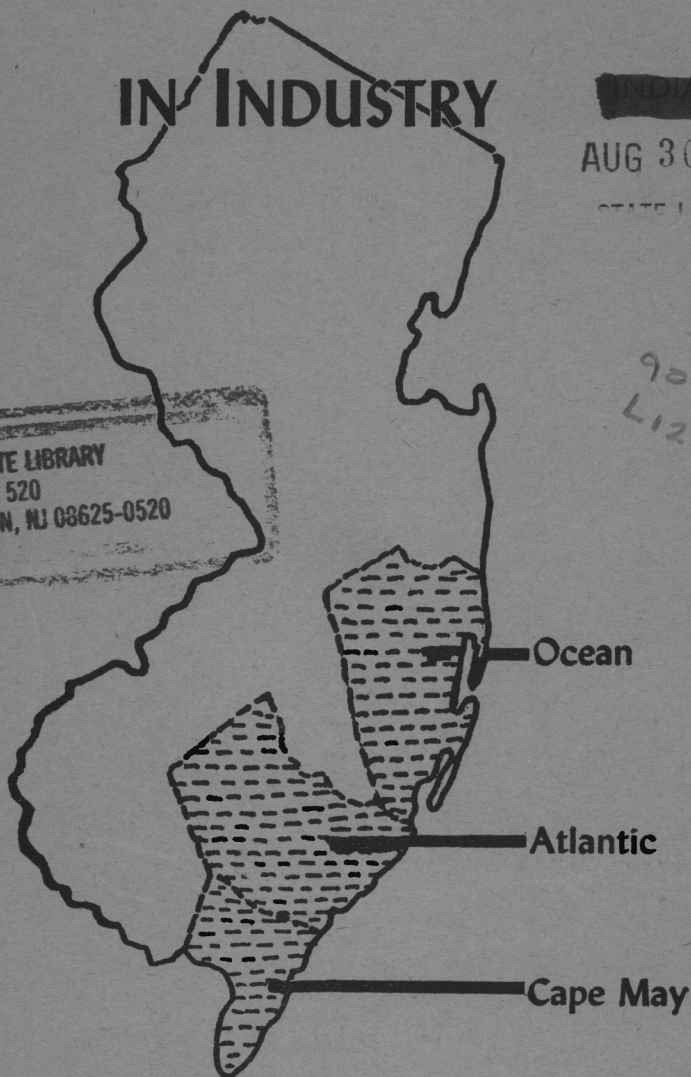
# MINORITY GROUP WORKERS IN INDUSTRY

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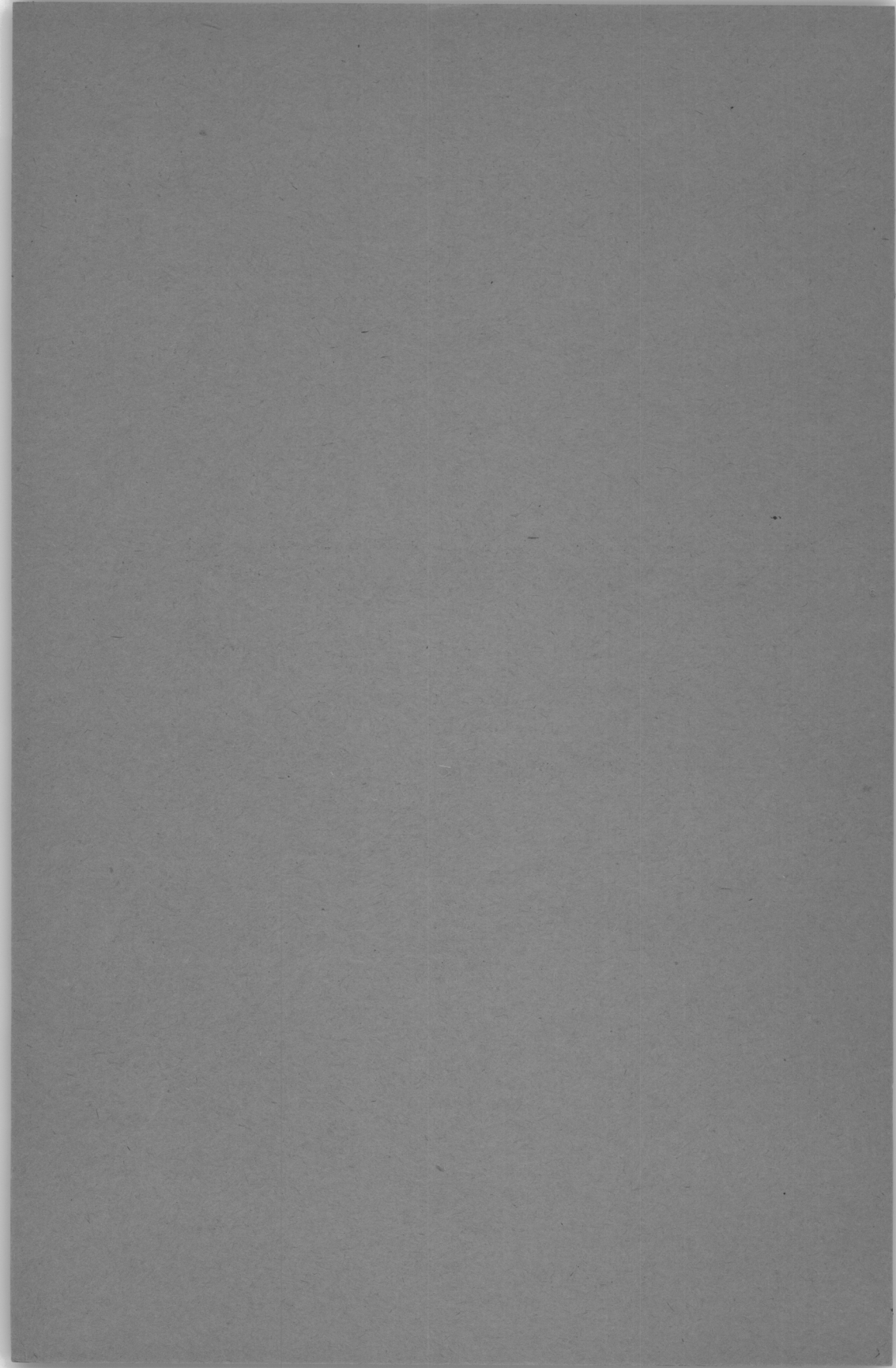
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L123 1956

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October 1956

STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
Department of Education  
Division Against Discrimination

by Stewart M. Meyers



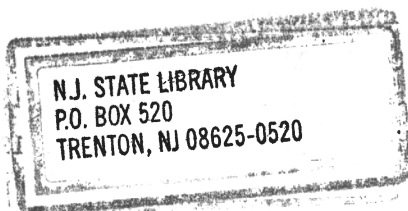
## Foreword

Fair employment, according to New Jersey law, is declared to be a civil right. To insure that right, the State Legislature enacted a law against discrimination and charged its administration to the Division Against Discrimination in the Department of Education. Resolution of complaints by aggrieved individuals is a primary responsibility. Another obligation under the law is to conduct "investigations and research tending to promote good will and to minimize or eliminate discrimination because of race, creed, color, national origin or ancestry . . ."

Sixteen employment surveys covering fifteen counties have enabled the Division to gain valuable information concerning minority group workers in industry. This body of knowledge which includes face-to-face discussions with employers has enabled the Division to carry out its functions with greater efficiency and understanding.

This report on the minority group workers in industries of Ocean, Atlantic and Cape May counties constitutes the seventeenth in the series of surveys.

The Division wishes to thank all of the participating employers who cooperated to make this project possible.



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## Introduction

This is a report on Negro, Jewish and Puerto Rican workers in the manufacturing industries of Ocean, Atlantic and Cape May Counties in New Jersey. It is based on interviews with employers of the area conducted by a field representative of Division Against Discrimination during the winter of 1955-56.

Geographically, from north to south, these counties are located in the southeast part of New Jersey. Bounded on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, they offer some of the finest beaches in the world to millions of vacationers annually. Prominent are the commercial enterprises, particularly the hotels which cater to the tourist business. Fishing, canning, farming, poultry raising and egg production are major industries. However, there are some 300 manufacturing companies in the area. A selected number of these companies were visited. The survey was designed to give the Division the opportunity to introduce itself, to publicize and acquaint industry with the Law against Discrimination, to gain an insight into general employment policies and practices of the area, and to learn about the role played by the minority group worker in industry. This report will describe and analyze the findings of the survey.

The United States Census of 1950 reports a total population of 226,192 in Ocean, Atlantic and Cape May Counties.\* The same source reports a Negro population totaling 23,937 in the three counties. A reliable bureau<sup>1</sup> estimates the Jewish population of the area to be approximately 17,000. It is doubtful if more than 2,000 Puerto Ricans are permanent residents.<sup>2</sup> In addition, it is significant to note that almost 17,000 of the Negroes live in one community—Atlantic City. This is important to remember in terms of the large area that was surveyed.

Approximately 12,000 Negroes, 7,000 Jews and 1,000 Puerto Ricans are in the labor force of the area. The Division realized that many of them are employed by the major industries in the area.

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\*Henceforth in the report, except in special instances, all discussion will be about the three counties combined. Because Atlantic County is much larger and has much more industry than the other two, it would be impractical to report about each county individually.

<sup>1</sup> Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith, New Jersey Region.

<sup>2</sup> Estimated by Division representatives with a knowledge of the area.

But to maintain a continuity with 16 previous, similar surveys the Division has undertaken in New Jersey, this project, too, was concerned only with the manufacturing industry.

### Scope and Method of Study

Staff members of the Division, with the assistance of the State Department of Labor and the *New Jersey Industrial Directory*, 1954-55, prepared a list of 178 firms in a variety of industries. Letters were sent to those companies announcing the intended project, and requesting their cooperation with a Division representative who would pay a visit to interview them.

It was decided that firms should have at least 12 employees to be eligible subjects for the purpose of this study. The Division assigned field representative Stewart M. Meyers to make the visits. While in the field, he located another 49 companies which were not on the original list. Altogether he made 227 calls in 32 communities. However, he found that 86 were ineligible subjects. They employed too few persons, their operation was not of an industrial nature, or they were no longer in business. Another 2 firms would not supply enough information about themselves to record. This leaves a total of 139 firms as subjects of this report.

Frequently, during the course of discussions with employers, the representative was either invited or requested permission to make a tour of the plant. The tours were usually conducted for the purpose of observing, first-hand, something of particular interest, and served to supplement the discussions.

For purposes of study, Division officials decided to concentrate on the Negro, Jewish and Puerto Rican worker. However, the reader will find the greatest emphasis placed upon the Negro. This is due to the fact that more Negroes were found to be employed in more plants than were members of the other 2 groups, and information relating to Negroes was found to be more readily available.

Table I below, an analysis of the 139 firms participating in the study, reveals that they are distributed among 13 types of industries. The reader will notice that more than 1/3 of the firms visited were in the apparel and needle products industry. This was according to plan. The Division felt that in order to obtain the most repre-

sentative employment picture, the number of firms visited in each industry should be proportionate with their number to the total.

TABLE I

*NUMBER AND TYPES OF FIRMS VISITED IN THE SURVEY*

<i>Type of Industry</i>	<i>Number of Firms</i>
Apparel and Needle Products .....	51
Food and Kindred Products .....	20
Laundries and Cleaners .....	12
Stone, Glass and Ceramics .....	7
Printing and Publishing .....	6
Lumber and Wood Products .....	6
Machinery (except electrical) .....	6
Dairy and Dairy Products .....	6
Shipbuilding Industry .....	4
Chemical Industry .....	4
Fabricated Metal Products .....	4
Textile Mill Products .....	2
Miscellaneous Small Goods .....	11
<hr/>	
TOTAL .....	139

### Employment Statistics

The 139 firms covered in the survey employed 8,807 persons. Of this total, 1,296 were Negroes, 314 were Jews, and 151 were Puerto Ricans.

Table II, following, reveals that Negroes and Puerto Ricans comprised a larger proportion of the work force than their ratio to the population, and Jewish representation in the work force was less than half their proportion. The table enumerates the total population and the proportion of the minorities, the total number of employees and the proportion of minority group workers.

TABLE II  
PROPORTION OF MINORITY GROUP WORKERS  
TO TOTAL POPULATION AND WORK FORCE

	<i>Population</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Work Force</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Total .....	226,192	100%	8,807	100%
Negroes .....	23,937	10.6%	1,296	12.7%
Jews .....	17,000	7.5%	314	3.6%
	(estimated)			
Puerto Ricans ...	2,000	.9%	151	1.7%
	(estimated)			

A significant finding was that 77% of the Puerto Rican workers and 63% of the Jews were males, yet only 39% of the Negroes were males. This can be attributed to the fact that more Negro females were found to be working in the 51 plants of the apparel and needle products industry, than there were Negro males in all 139 plants covered in the survey. Table III discloses the numbers of males and females employed, and the respective minority group workers.

TABLE III  
TOTAL AND MINORITY MALES AND FEMALES EMPLOYED

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Negroes</i>	<i>Jews</i>	<i>Puerto Ricans</i>
Males .....	4,155	503	200	117
Females .....	4,652	793	114	34

Negroes were found to be employed in 91 plants, Jews in 65, and Puerto Ricans in 24 of the 139 plants covered in the survey. Table IV, in a breakdown by sex, reveals the number of plants employing males and females of each minority group.

TABLE IV  
NUMBER OF PLANTS WITH MINORITY GROUP WORKERS,  
MALES AND FEMALES

	<i>Total Number Plants where employed</i>	<i>Plants With Males</i>	<i>Plants With Females</i>
Negroes .....	91	74	54
Jews .....	65	51	39
Puerto Ricans .....	24	19	13

A glance back to Table IV informs us that Negroes worked in 91, Jews in 65, and Puerto Ricans in 24 of the 139 plants covered in this study. Therefore, 48 companies had no Negroes, 74 had no Jewish employees, and 115 companies had no Puerto Ricans employed. With respect to the plants where these workers were not found, the representative inquired whether they had ever been employed. Table V discloses the findings.

TABLE V  
NUMBER OF FIRMS HAVING EXPERIENCE WITH MINORITY WORKERS

	<i>Firms Without Workers</i>	<i>Firms Previously Employing</i>	<i>Total Firms Presently and/or Previously Employing</i>
Negroes . . . .	91	15	106
Jews . . . . .	65	24	89
Puerto Ricans	24	16	40

Table VI shows the number of employees in each industry, by sex, and the numbers of the minority group workers employed in each industry, by sex. It reveals that most Negro females were found to be employed in the apparel and needle products and in the laundries and cleaners industries. It also reveals that the printing and publishing, chemical, and shipbuilding industries employed fewer Negroes, both males and females, than any other industry. It also discloses that Puerto Ricans appear to have their best employment in the apparel and needle products and food and kindred products industries.

Table VII varies from Table VI in that it shows the number of plants in each industry which employed males and females of the minority groups. It supports the findings of Table VI in revealing that Negroes and Puerto Ricans were employed in more plants of the apparel and and needle products industry than any other, and that they worked nowhere in the shipbuilding industry.

**TABLE VI**  
**TOTAL NUMBER AND MINORITIES EMPLOYED,**  
**BY INDUSTRY AND SEX**

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Total</i>		<i>Negroes</i>		<i>Jews</i>		<i>Puerto Ricans</i>	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Apparel & Needle Products	818	3,094	71	532	83	87	22	18
Food & Kindred Products	724	495	93	33	20	4	68	13
Laundries & Cleaners	179	289	69	169	10	1	1	0
Stone, Glass & Ceramics	388	290	43	13	1	1	4	0
Printing & Publishing	107	31	4	0	6	1	0	0
Lumber and Wood Products	268	28	62	0	17	3	11	0
Machinery (except electrical)	311	9	21	0	5	1	0	0
Dairy & Dairy Products	236	20	19	0	21	2	0	0
Shipbuilding Industry	185	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chemical Industry	541	35	5	0	27	2	0	0
Fabricated Metal Products	133	4	23	0	0	0	0	0
Textile Mill Products	29	17	4	8	3	0	1	1
Miscellaneous Small Goods	236	336	89	38	7	12	10	2

**TABLE VII**  
**NUMBER OF FIRMS EMPLOYING MINORITIES,**  
**BY INDUSTRY AND SEX**

<i>Industry</i>	<i>No. of Plants</i>	<i>No. of Plants Employing</i>					
		<i>Negroes</i>		<i>Jews</i>		<i>Puerto Ricans</i>	
		<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Apparel & Needle Products	51	22	31	20	26	6	8
Food & Kindred Products	20	16	6	5	1	5	3
Laundries & Cleaners	12	9	10	4	1	1	0
Stone, Glass & Ceramics	7	4	2	1	1	1	0
Printing & Publishing	6	2	0	3	1	0	0
Lumber & Wood Products	6	4	0	3	2	4	0
Machinery (except electrical)	6	2	0	3	1	0	0
Dairy & Dairy Products	6	5	0	5	2	0	0
Shipbuilding Industry	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chemical Industry	4	1	0	2	1	0	0
Fabricated Metal Products	4	2	0	0	0	0	0
Textile Mill Products	2	1	1	2	0	1	1
Miscellaneous Small Goods	11	6	4	3	3	1	1

## Seasonal Employment Trends and Lack of Workers

Depending on the season, the area covered in this survey has a widely fluctuating employment picture. Generally, the summer months mean more opportunities. For instance, in the summer the hotel industry of Atlantic City is a great source of employment for

Negroes, and farming in the rural areas offers many opportunities to Puerto Ricans. In an attempt to learn whether employment in manufacturing was affected by seasons, the representative inquired about job openings and lack of workers at each plant visited. Significant findings were that 31 of the 139 plants had present openings (all visits were made in the winter), 88 plants anticipated having openings in the summer, and employers felt there was a shortage of skilled workers in the area.

Fifty-two firms reported having no particular trouble in securing help, at any time of the year. Sixty employers reported difficulties in acquiring skilled help only. Nineteen companies stated they felt a shortage only in the summer. Fourteen employers complained of a shortage of workers at all times. Some firms in the apparel and needle products industry spoke of the shortage of skilled workers being so serious, that "employee stealing" among firms was common practice.

## Recruitment of Employees

Although most firms relied on two or three sources at the same time to fill their needs, New Jersey Employment Service and newspaper help-wanted advertising were found to be the most popular means by which employers sought to recruit new employees. Table VIII revealed the number of companies utilizing each of the various sources of recruitment.

TABLE VIII

### SOURCES OF RECRUITMENT OF NEW EMPLOYEES

<i>Source of Recruitment</i>	<i>No. of Firms Utilizing</i>
New Jersey Employment Service .....	86
Newspaper Advertising .....	78
Employee Referrals .....	35
Unrecruited Applicants .....	33
Union .....	21
Display Sign Outside of Plant .....	10
Private Employment Agencies .....	17
Radio Advertising .....	4

Still, the use of all of the above sources didn't satisfy the needs of everyone. Some companies explained that they were receiving ap-

plicants, but not the right kind. Mostly, the representative heard this statement from those who complained of the shortage of skilled, experienced help. They would say that no amount of recruiting could bring them something that was not available. One employer claimed that he found the shortage of employees to be so acute he had even resorted personally to stopping people on the street to ask if they or anyone they knew were looking for a job.

## **Job Assignments and Opportunities**

To be acceptable for employment does not preclude the possibility of encountering discrimination. To have upgrading opportunities, to be eligible for any position in the company is still another matter. Only two firms expressed prohibitions against Negroes, none against Jews, and four against Puerto Ricans. But quite a few employers revealed an unwillingness to have Negroes and Puerto Ricans in positions requiring contact with the public. Invariably, their reason was fear of public reaction. Typically, one employer explained, "... our customers wouldn't go for the idea, we would surely lose business." Unions, too, were mentioned as being deterrents to minorities holding certain skilled and technical jobs. The explanation being that union membership was a prerequisite to holding certain jobs, that the employer got all of his help from the union, and no minorities were union members. Compared with Negroes and Puerto Ricans, Jews had virtually no trouble. They were found to be quite acceptable, as employees, everywhere.

The representative found that Jews were employed in the largest variety of jobs, and Puerto Ricans in the least. Interestingly, the representative would find Negroes employed but ineligible for certain jobs in one plant, and working at the exact jobs in similar plants near by. He found this to be true on a few occasions. Invariably, the explanation was that present employees in the job category had threatened to quit, rather than work with Negroes.

Table IX illustrates the types of jobs held by the minority group workers, and is indicative of the general character of their assignments. It discloses that Puerto Ricans held average and poor jobs; Negroes held mostly average and poor jobs; some good ones, and were employed in the offices of 7 companies; for the most part, Jews held average and good jobs, and office positions.

TABLE IX  
JOB ASSIGNMENTS OF MINORITIES

Level of Assignment	Negroes	No. of Plants	
		Jews	Puerto Ricans
Menial .....	38	4	9
Average .....	70	43	19
Good .....	19	20	1
Office .....	7	18	0

Some of the actual jobs that Negroes and Puerto Ricans were found to hold are listed below:

Negroes		Puerto Ricans
Button Hole Makers	Plant Superintendent	Equipment Main- tenance Man
Clerk-Typists	Porters	Finishers
Draftsman	Pressers	Floor Help
Drivers	Route Salesman	Hatters
Finishers	Secretaries	Inspectors
Floor Help	Sewing Machine Operators	Laborers
Hand Sewers	Upholsterer	Sewing Machine Operators
Laborers	Watchman	Shipping Clerk
Linotyper		Welder
Plant Engineer		

### Company Training Programs

Company Training Programs, whereby workers may have the opportunity to learn and be promoted to more responsible and better-paying jobs, offer hope for advancement to employees.

The representative found that the minorities, where they were employed, participated in the programs of 42 out of the 51 companies offering such training. One company was utilizing the advantages of the G.I. on-the-job-training program; they had a Negro apprentice typographer. Mostly, however, the programs were informal, a simple "break in" procedure.

Laborer to driver, floor help to operator, production worker to foreman were typical advancements. Listed below are a few examples of positions the representative found Negroes and Puerto Ricans presently holding, having advanced from unskilled classifications.

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*Negroes*  
 Operators  
 Drivers  
 Photoengraver  
 Route Sales  
 Sprayers  
 Fork Lift Drivers  
 Polishers

*Puerto Ricans*  
 Welder  
 Inspector  
 Polishers  
 Operators

## Labor Unions

Seventy of the 139 firms covered in this survey had working agreements with labor unions. Minorities worked in 57, and were union members in 50 of those plants. They held union office, mostly Shop Steward, in the unions of 8 plants.

The representative did hear from a few employers that they had no minority group workers because the unions from which they recruited help had no such members. In those cases, the companies had no minority workers, whatsoever. However, in fairness to unions, it should be stated that in each of the 7 plants where minorities worked but were not members, the unions did not represent the employees in the category of jobs held by the minority. For instance, in one plant the union represented only drivers.

Table X discloses the number of plants with unions, and with minority group workers, respectively.

TABLE X  
 PLANTS WITH UNIONS AND MINORITY GROUP WORKERS

	<i>No. of Plants</i>	<i>Plants With Minority Workers</i>	<i>Plants Without Minority Workers</i>
With Unions . . . . .	70	57	13
Without Unions . . . .	69	52	17

## Employers' Attitudes Toward Minorities

For the most part, the representative found that employers considered minorities to be good workers, that they performed their duties to the satisfaction of the employers. However, occasionally he did hear expressions to the effect that certain workers were "slow to learn", "lazy", "irresponsible." Table XI is a statistical compilation of employers' evaluations of minorities as workers.

TABLE XI  
EMPLOYERS EVALUATIONS OF MINORITY GROUP  
MEMBERS AS WORKERS

<i>Employers' Impressions</i>	<i>Plants With Negroes</i>	<i>Plants With Jews</i>	<i>Plants With Puerto Ricans</i>
Satisfactory Performance . . . . .	65	65	21
Usually Satisfactory . . . . .	22	0	0
Below Average . . . . .	4	0	3

A fair measure of employers' attitudes may be found below in a few excerpts of their conversations with the representative:

"Puerto Ricans are good and bad. They are all cheap labor. Negroes are much more desirable as employees."

"Negroes are good workers, but unreliable. Puerto Ricans have a better attendance record, but aren't as good workers as Negroes."

"Puerto Ricans seem to be willing workers, although language differences make it difficult for them to learn."

"We had a Negro girl in the office who was very competent. However, our Negro drivers have been both bad and good."

"We find our Negroes and Puerto Ricans to be equal to all our workers. They are good, steady employees."

"We can't afford to pay much. We have found that Negroes are better than white employees who would work for the same wages."

"I like to have Negro pressers, but they aren't intelligent enough to be checkers."

"I cannot judge by groups. There are good and bad in all."

"Due to language barriers, our Puerto Ricans are slow to learn, but when trained they are good."

"At one time we were skeptical about hiring Puerto Ricans; they were supposed to steal. I can report that we haven't found this to be true, and we are perfectly delighted with our welder. Incidentally, he was originally hired as a laborer."

"I cannot see where race has anything to do with ability. Whether a person is a good or bad worker, can no more be attributed to the color of his skin than to the color of his hair."

## **Intergroup Relations Among Employees**

Differences of race and religion appeared to hold little significance among employees. Very few incidents were reported to the representative. One employer did relate how a Puerto Rican operator was made to feel so uncomfortable by her co-workers that she left after one week. Another reported that he had fired a white and Negro girl for fighting. Two companies having Negro employees, admitted that they could not hire Negro females for certain jobs which white females wanted only for themselves. Three employers said that they had to talk their white workers into accepting Negroes. But for the most part, inter-employee relations were found to be good. Of course, it should be remembered that many of the firms have been employing minorities for years.

With fifty-two companies, having minority group workers, giving Christmas parties to employees, the representative heard of only 2 exceptions to the minorities attending. One firm held separate parties for its white and Negro workers, and the other company claimed that all employees were invited. While the great majority of the parties were informal and held at the plants, a few consisted of dinners at local inns and restaurants. In the latter instances, not one case was reported of refusal of service to the minorities.

## **Employers' Familiarity and Attitudes Toward The Law**

The representative found that 37 employers were familiar with the Law Against Discrimination (they knew it was a New Jersey Law prohibiting discrimination in employment). Forty-three employers were vaguely familiar (they claimed to have heard or read about it, but were not sure of its contents or that it affected them). Fifty-nine employers were not familiar with the Law (they had no knowledge of the Law; they had never heard of it).

Interestingly, one employer became familiar with the Law when the New Jersey Employment Service refused to accept his discriminatory job order. Then the local newspaper refused to accept his discriminatory help-wanted advertisement.

Statements on the part of 77 employers suggested their friendly disposition toward the Law. Twenty-two appeared to view it objectively, and 40 employers appeared either to be indifferent or to

hold an antagonistic point of view. Generally, friendlier statements were made by the employers who were more familiar with the Law. Following are some of the statements of employers reflecting various attitudes toward the Law:

"There is a need for it, and it doesn't force you to hire someone who is incompetent."

"I'm not familiar with the Law, but it seems like a wonderful idea."

"It goes too far. No discrimination in employment is fair, but public accommodations are another matter. I know because I was in the hotel business."

"Like traffic laws, the need for this Law exists."

"The people who most benefit by the Law need to be educated, too."

"I'm not in favor of this Law; forcing me to hire Negroes would bring on social and rest-room problems."

"My opinion is that as long as the Law is administered objectively it is acceptable."

"The idea is great. The Law deserves all of the publicity it can get."

### **Application Forms**

At each firm visited in the survey, the representative asked whether the company utilized application forms as part of their hiring procedures. He found that hiring was accomplished in an informal manner by most companies. Only 32 firms made use of application forms.

The representative collected blank applications from the 32 firms. Upon review, Division officials found the forms of 16 companies to be in compliance with the Law. That is, they asked no questions of a discriminatory nature, such as race, religion, nationality of the applicant. Division officials also found that 16 companies used forms on which one or more items were in conflict with the Law. An analysis of the types of violations and the number of times each appeared is given in Table XII.

TABLE XII  
*VIOLATIONS ON APPLICATION FORMS*

<i>Nature of Violations</i>	<i>No. of Appearances</i>
Military Status .....	11
Place of Birth .....	5
Names of Parents and Relatives .....	5
Nationality .....	4
Citizenship .....	3
Race .....	2
Color .....	2
Naturalization Details .....	1
Birth Record .....	1
Photograph .....	1

### Summary

This survey of 139 manufacturing companies in 32 communities of Atlantic, Ocean and Cape May counties was conducted for the two-fold purpose of giving the Division the opportunity to introduce itself to industry of the area, to acquaint employers with the Law Against Discrimination; and to make a study of employment practices as they affected Negro, Jewish and Puerto Rican employees. The 139 firms were distributed among 13 types of industries.

Out of 8,807 employees in all plants, 1,296 Negroes worked in 91 plants, 314 Jews worked in 65 plants, and 151 Puerto Ricans were employed in 24 plants. Altogether, minority workers of one group or the other were employed in 109 different plants. Negroes appeared to find their best opportunities for employment, particularly in skilled occupations, in the apparel and needle products industry.

Being resort counties, the summer months offered additional opportunities for seasonal employment. Employers reported that this affected them only in unskilled classifications. Skilled workers were reported to be in short supply at all times of the year.

Quite a few employers indicated an unwillingness to have Negroes and Puerto Ricans in positions requiring contact with the public. Jewish workers were found to have virtually no difficulties in securing jobs in any category.

Hiring was found to be on an informal basis. Only 32 companies made use of application forms. While 16 forms contained one or more questions relating to race, color, nationality or military status, none asked questions about religion.

About 43% of the employers visited had no knowledge of the law; 30% were vaguely aware of it; and 27% were familiar with the Law Against Discrimination. Employment policies and attitudes regarding minorities were generally a reflection of the employer's degree of knowledge of the Law.

The services of the Division Against Discrimination are always available to all employers, not only for consultation, but for help in utilizing community resources. If employers feel that they have any problems in the area of human relations, they should not hesitate to call the Division Against Discrimination, located at 1100 Raymond Boulevard, Newark, and 162 West State Street, Trenton.

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