

State of New Jersey  
Department of Education  
Division Against Discrimination  
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REPORT

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A Conference on New Jersey's Stake in Civil Rights, sponsored by the Governor and the State Commission on Civil Rights was held on Thursday, February 10, 1955, at the Hotel Hildebrecht in Trenton.

The conference was attended by members of the following municipal commissions on Civil Rights: East Orange, Jersey City, Kearny, Montclair, Mt. Holly, Newark, Passaic, Paterson, Paulsboro, Perth Amboy, Trenton, and West New York. Members of human relations councils and good neighbor groups came from Elizabeth, Irvington and Trenton. Other organizations represented were: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, Catholic Daughters of America, Department of Labor of Puerto Rico, Jersey City Housing Authority, National Council of Jewish Women, New Jersey State Library Association, State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, State Congress of Industrial Organizations, State Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, State Department of Education, and staff members of the State Division Against Discrimination.

Robert W. Van Houten, Chairman, State Commission on Civil Rights, presided at the afternoon session. He introduced Maurice B. Fagan, Executive Director of the Fellowship Commission of Philadelphia, who spoke on "The Challenge to Community Leaders". Mr. Fagan spoke not only of vast external challenges with which the community leaders must cope but of the great internal challenges, the self-examinations which they must undergo if progress is to be made in the field of human relations. The "lack of understanding" of the basic causes of human conflict is a major shortcoming of community leaders. Executives and staff members of public and private human relations agencies are not exempt from this criticism. Too often, these same executives and staff members are selected by "hunch" rather than by more analytical checking of formal and informal qualifications. He listed the five basic causes of human conflict as: 1. Psychological/emotional maladjustment--manifest in lack of confidence in one's self, insecurity, feeling of not being able to compete. 2. Economic ignorance--tendency to rely on "leaders" or "organizations" to compensate for own inadequacies in this area. 3. Peer group pressures--lead to fear of non-conformity, to acceptance of the status quo, desire for respectability, so-called; one's personal convictions may be most proper but will be surrendered to the "group" concept, which may be less proper. 4. Over-simplification/over-stereotyping--products of laziness, unwillingness to search for the more difficult truths; superficial approach to job and problems of life. 5. Inability to separate propaganda from fact--illustrated by stress on nice, respectable "projects" and how they will look in the annual report rather than integrity of the work to be done by the agency.

Mr. Fagan listed several current and chief areas of human conflict and discrimination which must be tackled with determination: 1. "Upgrading" is now the major problem in the employment picture relative to discrimination. Token employment policies should be re-examined. 2. Private Housing. Perhaps need for legislation to break down racial and ethnic patterns; housing for minority groups presages an era of shiny new ghettos perpetuating the "involuntary" pattern of segregated schools, stores, etc. Public and semi-public housing has too little influence on total patterns of housing and neighborhoods; integration in private housing and neighborhoods is the goal. 3. Public Education. He challenged the

sincerity of school administrators and community leaders re: segregation issue, decried the "lip-service" being given to desegregation while more and more the device of "school-of-you-choice" is being resorted to. 4. Teacher Training Institutions. He noted they are doing nothing in the field of human relations education; urged human relations training as basic to the curriculum of all teacher training institutions. 5. Public Accommodations. Italian and Negro present most rapidly growing middle-class America, yet Negroes of means and status face discrimination in doctor, dentist, barbering services, etc. All too often, the Negro patients must slip in to the dentist's office and chair "after hours", when they will not be seen by "regular" clients. 6. Political Opportunity. This rapidly expanding Negro middle-class gets only token recognition in political circles, chiefly for the votes it can get for white politicians. 7. Finance, Credits, Mortgages. Negroes either can't get loans or must pay exorbitant rates for loans. Illustrated by "recapture" rates in housing and installment buying, (type most resorted to by minority groups denied usual means of purchase) rates mount to 20%-30% after all charges are toted. 8. Press. Newspapers still tend to highlight Negro crime and violence; identify Negro culprit, never Italian, Irish, Scotch, etc. Real estate advertisements contain racial identifications and requirements. 9. Public Servants. Called for pre-employment and pre-training screening of all policemen, firemen, teachers, welfare workers, and similar civil servants as to human relations attitudes. 10. Flight to the Suburbs. This represents refuge from integration. Large cities becoming repository of Negroes and white Catholics poses serious problem as to relationship between Church and State. School systems and municipal offices will go to white Catholics. He called for more, not less, "inter-faith" activities by public and private human relations agencies. Decried traditional "hands off" timidity in this area; called for frank recognition that lack of understanding between major religions is a major problem to be faced up to by "realistic" rather than "symbolic" leadership efforts. Reported by Carl W. Glatt, Division Against Discrimination.

A session of highlight reports from the municipal commissions and human relations councils was led by Maurice J. O'Sullivan, Chairman of the Jersey City Civil Rights Commission.

The conference then broke up into five discussion groups, covering Programming, Public Relations, Working with Changing Populations, Working with Educational Agencies, Working with Municipal Agencies.

1. PROGRAMMING. Leader: Sidney Kellner, Area Director, American Jewish Committee  
Reporter: Emmett E. Spurlock, Division Against Discrimination
  - I. Program arrangements should encompass the whole area. (a) determine goals (b) different points of view (c) create new ideas to combat discrimination.
  - II. The Division Against Discrimination should initiate a state-wide program on human relations with the specific objective of making people aware of the importance of better understanding because of world tensions.
  - III. Pool ideas with other commissions.
  - IV. Establish a closer working relationship between the Division and local commissions.
  - V. Use a positive approach in human relations rather than the negative approach; e.g., give examples of people living together without friction.

VI. Local Commissions in organizing programs should: (a) find the problem (b) take steps to solve (c) seek aid from the Division Against Discrimination.

VII. Group discussions should be made longer. Not enough time is spent in discussion groups.

2. PUBLIC RELATIONS. Leader: Carnie P. Bragg, Chairman, Passaic Commission on Group Relations  
Reporter: Stewart M. Meyers, Division Against Discrimination

The question, "Should publicity be played up or down?", was raised.

Commissions should use common sense, discretion and good judgment in releases to the press.

The Paterson Commission considers public relations one of its best and most effective tools. Good cooperation with the press is most desirable.

Public relations includes publicity, but also means keeping undesirable news out of the press.

Some things want to be publicized and other things don't. That is why good press relationship is important.

Attempt to make releases newsworthy and interesting. Jersey City accentuates the positive--displayed posters in fire houses, police stations, schools, taverns, buses. Kearny distributed book covers, posters. Brotherhood Week will be a combined affair with the Salvation Army and the YMCA. Paterson concentrates on education. Gets everything good into the papers. Newark is inactive at present time. New Commission will be appointed soon. Passaic has a 12 week course in human relations at present time. Posters are displayed in the buses.

3. WORKING WITH CHANGING POPULATIONS.

Leader: Brant Coopersmith, Regional Director, Anti-defamation League of B'nai B'rith

Reporter: Isham B. Jones, Division Against Discrimination

The group agreed that it was necessary for human relations groups, agencies, etc. to propose legislation that would deny licenses to realtors and brokers who participate in discriminatory sales of housing and in the general conduct of their housing business.

The biggest problems with changing populations are: (a) language handicap (b) lack of communication (c) competition for rental housing.

Things to do: (1) establish language classes (2) commissions must contact the leaders of the newcomers in the community (3) discuss with them problems as the newcomer sees them. Let the newcomer interpret his group to the community and the community interpret itself to the newcomer.

4. WORKING WITH EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES.

Leader: Dr. Frank B. Stover, Assistant Commissioner of Education

Reporter: Mrs. Margaret M. Vail, Catholic Daughters of America

Schools should make better use of resource material. Human Relations agencies should make available their materials and speakers. Class presentations are more effective than auditorium programs. Teachers should discuss legislation on human rights, study Constitution, plan trips to institutions, and to other parts of the community, as part of their social studies. Pressures on schools are manifold and varied.

Teacher orientation program might be introduced in all school systems. How many have such a program?

There are 190,000 aliens in New Jersey. Some are children.

Exchange of entertainment between schools for knowledge of cultures and for orienting grammar schools for junior high.

Pressure for better-adjusted early reading materials for schools must be from national organizations.

Book covers, marks, posters, etc. given to children, put into public places and in transportation vehicles were effective and remembered.

5. WORKING WITH MUNICIPAL AGENCIES.

Leader: Hon. Grace M. Freeman, Chairman, East Orange Civil Rights Comm.

Reporter: William W. Barnes, Division Against Discrimination

Members of the commissions discussed their various activities. These activities were explored, and the methods and techniques which brought about successful programs were exchanged. The methods of organization, appointment of officers and their terms were discussed.

Members of individual commissions explained the manner in which they obtained the cooperation of local officials in dealing with both general and particular problems. These commissions have carried on activities involving local school commissions, police and fire officials, clergymen and other interested and related groups.

The need for full time staff (professional people) was touched on.

In regard to commissions functioning to overcome and solve an emergency situation, it was pointed out that the emergency condition indicated a failure in the over-all function of the commission.

It was felt that a commission's prime responsibility was to operate in a manner which would negate the possibility of tension flare-ups.

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Dr. Frederick M. Raubinger, State Commissioner of Education, gave a word of greeting at the dinner session of the Conference. Boys' Chorus of Trenton Central High School, under the direction of Harry Mulder sang several beautiful selections after the dinner.

Governor Robert B. Meyner said in his address, "Tremendous progress has been made in the extension of civil rights in the last two decades and, though much remains to be accomplished, I think I can say without exaggeration or vain-glory that New Jersey is in the forefront of American states in its devotion to constitutional principles and in an atmosphere of tolerance and brotherhood, especially so far as minority groups are concerned.

In New Jersey, perhaps more than in many other places, civil rights for all of our people is of the greatest importance. We are a port-of-entry state. One out of every six adults here was born in a foreign country. We are a cosmopolitan state. We receive new population from abroad and from every section of the United States as it is drawn to the great industrial and economic development in the New York-Philadelphia metropolitan area. One of the principal characteristics of New Jersey residents is their manifold differences in origins and backgrounds, and we may expect that these differences will be increased as our state continues to develop and attract new population.

It is axiomatic that denial of civil rights to persons because of race, creed or color is exceedingly harmful to our relationship with other nations. We Americans must never forget that two-thirds of the population on the face of this earth is made up of non-whites. It is vital, therefore, that we realize the importance of conducting our affairs in this state and in this nation so that proper regard is given for the rights of all.

Our Fair Employment Practices Law, adopted in 1945, sets up the Division Against Discrimination to handle complaints of aggrieved persons without cost to them. Later, amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Laws were passed which provide opportunity for redress from discrimination in the field of public accommodation.

In 1950, the law was further amended to include discrimination against those eligible for military service. The 1954 session of the Legislature adopted legislation which gave jurisdiction over all types of public-aided housing to the Division Against Discrimination. Thus, the history of the past decade is evidence that New Jersey citizens have been increasingly aware of the effects of discrimination in every field and have taken appropriate steps to combat it.

The Anti-Discrimination Law creates in the Department of Education, a Division Against Discrimination. The policy-making body of this Division is the Commissioner of Education and a State Commission on Civil Rights made up of seven members who serve without recompense. The members of the State Civil Rights Commission, who have sponsored this Conference together with me, have helped to develop policies to make our laws effective.

It is notable that, as the law is written, the role of education is of tremendous importance. The educational program called for in the law aims to eliminate prejudice and discrimination and to promote good will throughout our State. The placing of the Division in the Department of Education shows that it was the intent of the Legislature to have the Division use persuasive means to adjust specific complaints."

The Governor outlined procedural methods used in compliance and touched on the educational program. He concluded his address on a note of hope for further accomplishments.

March 28, 1955