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At Shoplifting Prevention Clinic D.C. 12-3-70

Officer Outlines Troubles

LA MESA — Negroes of both sexes who pass bad checks or shoplift are the most troublesome suspects to apprehend when a crime is committed, a La Mesa police officer told a group of more than 100 city businessmen and their employes today.

Officer Robert Oliver, who works in the bad check and forgery unit of the police department, advised the all-white audience to be wary of Negro shoppers.

In the case of shoplifting suspects, Oliver said, store employes or managers should let them leave the store or business before they are confronted.

"If they're Negro," he remarked, "call the police because you're going to have trouble."

Oliver, one of several speakers at a shoplifting prevention clinic sponsored by La Mesa Chamber of Commerce in the Bronze Room, prefaced his remarks with the statement that, "Some of my best friends are Negroes." He noted that there were no Negroes in the audience.

Oliver, commenting on recent cases in the city where Negroes were suspected of using stolen credit cards in department stores, said it is difficult to identify them.

"If you have to identify them, you may as well forget it, they all look alike."

The audience laughed at the remark. Laughter also followed a statement of a representative of the May Co. in Mission Valley who inferred that most Negro crime suspects are fleet-footed. He cited the case of one black man who, he claimed, had to be chased several blocks after stealing items from a store.

Oliver shared the podium with Bill Wooten of the Southland Corp., the franchiser of 7-11 food markets, and Henry Barnes of the Mission Valley offices of BankAmericard.

Subjects ranged from how to prevent against shoplifting, the passing of bad checks, use of stolen or lost credit cards to a description by Oliver on how Negro women use various ruses to filch valuables from behind store counters.

Barnes told the audience that the BankAmericard office in San Diego gets more than 100 reports of lost or stolen credit cards a day from its offices in Pasadena. He said the company has more than three million credit card holders throughout the state and more than 30 million nationwide.

When a card is reported stolen or lost, Barnes said, the customer's account is immediately closed and warning notices, called "hot cards," are sent out to all merchants. The Master Charge company, he said, sends out weekly warning lists or "hot lists."

"If you spot a lost or stolen card," he advised, "the best thing you can do is to let us know about it promptly."

Barnes said his company pays a $25 reward to any store employe who reports a stolen card. An additional $25 is rewarded if information supplied by the employe leads to an arrest, Barnes said.

He told of one instance where a store clerk made an extra $75 a week by reporting such cases.

Wooten said the best way to prevent shoplifting is to give customers a hearty smile when they enter a store or business.

Oliver said that because of the large numbers of reported cases of bad check passing, police will not accept a case that involves less than $50.

Speaking on another topic, he said a normal procedure used by Negro women to steal is to walk into a store in twos or threes, with one or two of the women holding small babies.

While two of the women keep the sales clerk busy, he said, the other goes behind the sales counter and takes whatever is available.

John Jacobs

BL have heard nothing from L. M. police being looked into
Statement made to L. M. city council = no response Two p.m.
those citizens should come to BL to correct the ~~situation~~ - not blacks going to them
May be should be something to right the wrong - absence of J. this the bl circle
have to decide what to do about it.

Black org. represented today

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