[MS-0087.006.008.004]

RESPONSE TO MAYOR HELLAND'S STATEMENT

The statement issued Friday, December 11, by City of La Mesa officials in reply to criticism of racist remarks made by a city police officer is a positive statement. It points out that we have a lot of 'home work' to do if we are to establish our community life on a truly human basis.

We of the majority white community still have a large amount of prejudice, misconception, and myth with which we must deal very honestly if there is to be liberty and justice for all.

The moves by the City of La Mesa,

1. To be active in the formation of the San Diego County Human Relations Commission,
2. To assist and cooperate with the Heartland Human Relations Association, and
3. To increase and expand the Human Relations Training Program for all city employees

are to be commended and encouraged.

The "New White Consciousness" Seminar to be sponsored by the La Mesa Chamber of Commerce with the cooperation of United Project Understanding needs whole-hearted support and community wide participation.

We personally pledge our support as ministers of the four Heartland churches cooperating in United Project Understanding.

Charles M. Brown, United Church of Christ of La Mesa
N. Robert Kisler, First United Methodist Church of La Mesa
O. Maxwell Graham, First United Methodist Church of La Mesa
Clifford Manning, Fletcher Hills Presbyterian Church
Leon Raines, Fletcher Hills Presbyterian Church
Calvin Duncan, Fletcher Hills Presbyterian Church
Ernest Fowler, Lemon Grove United Church of Christ

STATEMENT OF MAYOR HELLAND 12-11-70

Apparently, some confusion still exists with regard to our position on shoplifting, and in order to clarify that, I would like to reiterate our policy. I believe it was, and is, best enunciated by the statement of Chief Glenn E. Adams of the La Mesa Police Department, which was published by the San Diego Union Publishing Company earlier this month on four occasions, and that statement is as follows:

"Don't be fooled by appearances - All types and ages of people shoplift. They are the rich, the poor, the beggar, the professional thief, the teenager, the kleptomaniac, the drug addict, the housewife, employees themselves. In short, there is no set type that can be identified as a shoplifter merely by looking at him. Management and employees must be constantly alert. Cooperative methods between retailers, law enforcement and the courts must be applied in order to effectively cut losses to a minimum."

This is the policy of the City of La Mesa, and shall continue to be the policy of the City of La Mesa.

As I also indicated at the last City Council meeting, the investigation into the alleged statements attributed to Officer Robert Oliver at a recent clinic conducted by the La Mesa Chamber of Commerce for merchants regarding shoplifting has been completed. The investigation indicated the officer intended to restrict his remarks to a specific black shoplifting group. This group has been operating in San Diego County. Unfortunately, the officer's choice of words reflected poor judgement.

We have a statement of Officer Robert Oliver, and he has asked that the statement be read word for word, with no changes, and we shall honor his request. I shall now read Officer Oliver's statement:

(Attached as Exhibit "A")

We deeply regret the incident.

Police Chief Glenn E. Adams has recommended to the City Manager, who in turn has

ratified the following disciplinary action:

1. Reprimand of Officer Robert Oliver.

2. Transfer of Officer Robert Oliver to other duties with the Department.

3. Three days suspension of Officer Robert Oliver.

This incident has caused many to ask whether or not the City of La Mesa is sensitive to minority problems. We recognize racism as a universal problem. In our efforts to address ourselves to this problem, the City has engaged in the following programs:

1. Neighborhood Youth Corps Program, administered by the San Diego Urban League, October, 1963 to June, 1967. This program was an economic and educational opportunity for teenagers who had either dropped out of school or had economic hardship problems. Positions created by the City of La Mesa included 5 Recreation Aides, 1 Engineering Aide, 6 General Maintenance Aides, and 1 Office Aide.

2. Minority employment. 1968 to present. The City is working with local volunteer citizen group known as "Dialogue to Action" and encouraged their effort to seek minority job applicants. In addition, mail job announcements for employment opportunities with the City of La Mesa have been sent to the following:

a. Citizens Interracial Council

b. San Diego Urban League

c. San Diego Multi-Service

d. The Voice and Viewpoint Newspaper

e. The San Diego Union-Tribune Newspaper

f. Dialogue to Action

3. Heartland Human Relations Association (citizen based volunteer group). 1969 to present. The City is providing free office space to the Association in a city owned building at 8780 La Mesa Boulevard and assisted them in acquiring telephone equipment necessary for them to carry out community relations.

4. Police Department Community Relations Office. Fiscal year 1968-69 City of La Mesa established in Police Department a community relations office

by budgeting an additional Sergeant and funds to carry out function. The office has attended 530 meetings to date, with approximate total attendance of 39,500.

5. San Diego Human Relations Commission Formation. In September, 1970, the City of La Mesa became the first suburban city in San Diego County to support formation of a countywide human relations agency and commission by joint powers agreement with San Diego County.

In conclusion, the City of La Mesa will increase and expand its Human Relations Training Program for all employees. Further, we intend to amplify and expand our relationship with Heartland Human Relations Association, and we intend to work toward better understanding among all of our citizens.

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY · 1897 ·

EXHIBIT "A"

STATEMENT OF OFFICER R. H. OLIVER 12-11-70

During a recent lecture sponsored by teh La Mesa Chamber of Commerce certain statements were attributed to me which, in essence, cited Negroes as having a propensity for theft, resisting arrest and evasion of identification because they all look alike.

Except for a few, I believe a survey of those present at the lecture would disclose my remarks were as follows:

1. My statements toward Negroes were directed toward two specific shoplifting groups working this area.
2. When I cited acts of violence I was again speaking of these two specific groups.
3. When referring to the identification of members of these groups I was attempting to point out a specific instance where identification was impossible because the witness had not noticed any specific identifying characteristics, and I advised the audience to look for specific identifying characteristics.

The statements made herein were by no means meant to convey the impression that I am accused of portraying. In truth and fact I was directing my statements toward two particular groups that have been operating in our city and other cities of our County.

Regardless of what I intended to state, it is apparent that I failed to convey to some in the audience what I had truly meant to say. Because of my failure to communicate my point I have apparently caused members of the Negro race to be embarrassed, irate, and to feel condemned for the acts of a few. For this misconception I feel personally responsible and remorseful.

At this time I wish to express to the Negro race as a whole my personal regrets, and to apologize for any damage my statements may have caused. I further wish to say that I at no time meant to condemn the Negro race, and neither do I condone those who do.