

Document A

COUNCIL HEARS PLAINT OF CITY COLORED FOLK

Signs in Restaurants Humiliating Is Gist of Resolution Presented

Appearing on behalf of the colored citizenry of Bend, voicing exception to the posting by restaurant keepers of signs stating that "colored trade is not wanted by that particular establishment". Senator Jay H. Upton appeared before the council last night, asking that body to take some steps to remedy the matter.

Senator Upton told the council that the action of the colored people was not to force themselves where they were apparently not wanted but merely to free themselves from the humiliation of thus being publicly rebuffed. They intimated that in event of any of them entering a restaurant where their trade was not desired, a mere statement of the fact by the proprietor would attain the desired result.

The colored people inform me, said Mr. Upton, that they feel such signs are unnecessary, that they have their own places to eat, and in no wise wish to intrude upon the various restaurants who do not want them. They say numerous colored people pass through the city and look askance at them after reading the signs.

In presenting a prepared resolution to the council, Senator Upton stated he merely wished to have the council request the restaurant owners to withdraw their signs, with a view toward eliminating the public humiliation which, he said, the colored people had informed them they felt.

City Attorney Benson announced there was no law to compel the restaurant people to take down the signs, to which Senator Upton replied it was not his desire to make any such issue of the matter and thought the trouble might be eliminated by agreement of the colored people not to enter those restaurants where the signs were displayed and those proprietors just take down their signs.

In view of the fact that there is no law covering the matter, the council at first believed such an undertaking was an issue with which it should have no part. After the matter was presented fully by Senator Upton, however, the council accepted the resolution promising to ask the restaurant owners to remove the signs.

The resolution follows:

The City Council believes that it is inimical to the best interests of this City for certain places of business to post in conspicuous places, signs and placards giving general notice that colored people will not be served.

Such notices are humiliating to a large number of colored citizens who are honest, law abiding, God fearing and loyal to Our Flag and Country. These notices have a tendency to arouse against colored people, the antipathy of many foreigners, who have not been in this country long enough to learn our institutions and history.

The blood of both white and black has been shed on many battle fields of the Civil war, the Spanish war and the World war. The same uniform, the same loyalty, the same sacrifices are a common heritage of this Country irrespective of color.

Therefore Be It Resolved by the Common Council of Bend that we request all places of business to remove all such signs and if any eating house or other business establishment does not desire to cater to colored people, we request them to notify such persons privately of their wishes instead of placarding their places of business with offensive signs.

Close Reading Questions

1. The “Plaint of City Colored Folk” is not blatantly challenging racism - they are not asking that public institutions and businesses be kept from discriminating against Black folks, only that they not be allowed to do it openly. What does this suggest about the experiences of people of color living in Oregon?
2. How do Senator Upton’s arguments perpetuate discrimination while also being progressive?

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