

Lunch Counter Pressure Cracks South

27 Southern Cities, Counties Drop Lunch Counter Barriers

ATLANTA, Ga. — Lunch counters in 27 Southern cities and counties have been opened to all customers in recent months, according to the records of the Southern Regional Council here. This total represents an increase of 18 since June 6, when the Council last reported on desegregation of eating facilities.

The 27 places are Miami, Fla.; Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Concord, Durham, Elizabeth City, Greensboro, High Point, Salisbury, and Winston-Salem, N. C.; Frankfort, Ky.; Knoxville and Nashville, Tenn.; Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Galveston, and San Antonio, Tex.; Alexandria, Arlington County, Fairfax County, Falls Church, Fredericksburg, Hampton, Norfolk, Portsmouth and Williamsburg, Va.

Desegregation has also taken place in at least four drug stores in a predominantly Negro section of Richmond; in one drug store near the Virginia State College campus in Petersburg, Va.; and in one store in Houston, Tex.

NO INCIDENTS

No incident has been reported in any of the places where desegregation has occurred, and no store has reported a loss in business from white patrons.

Similar changes have occurred in such non-South cities as Xenia, Ohio; Las Vegas, Nev.; Baltimore, Md.; Kansas City, Kans.; and Oklahoma City, Okla. Each of these cities has experienced some additional desegregation of eating facilities since the student movement began on February 1, 1960.

Reacting to student pressure and "selective buying" campaigns by Negro communities, merchants in the 27 cities have desegregated facilities usually with a minimum of publicity. Negroes have generally cooperated by first patronizing the newly opened facilities singly or in small groups.

INTERRACIAL COMMITTEE

As in earlier cases, much of

the recent desegregation was facilitated by interracial committees working with merchants, city officials, and representatives of the Negro Community.

One notable instance of desegregation during the period was that of Greensboro, N.C. where the current wave of sit-ins began in February of this year. North Carolina also led the way in the total number of cities opening lunch-counter facilities.

Virginia, however, follows closely with eight localities. Most of these desegregated at about the same time — late in June — with the largest number in Northern Virginia. In Arlington, the first desegregation by a well-known chain of restaurants occurred. Five branches of the Hot Shoppes, a chain of medium-priced eating places, desegregated following the move by drug and variety stores.

SPORADIC SIT-INS

Sporadic sit-ins have continued in other localities which have failed to desegregate, as a skeleton crew of students manned the campaign during the summer.

In Atlanta, several attempted sit-ins resulted August 3 in suits filed in Federal District Court seeking an injunction against cafeterias in the State Capitol, the Atlanta City Hall, and the Fulton County Courthouse.

The following points seem to the Southern Regional Council noteworthy:

1. The lunch-counter desegregation reported took place within only six months after the beginning of the student protest movement. This shows that, given effective leadership, Southern communities can eliminate racial discrimination speedily, without long periods of litigation, uncertainty, and accumulating tension.

2. The changes to date have resulted in no incidents or disorder, and none of the merchants affected has reported any loss of business as a conse-

quence. On the contrary, in the cities surveyed by SRC, many merchants have expressed relief that the step has been taken, and pleasure in its success.

3. These 27 cities provide impressive evidence that the fears inhibiting lunch-counter desegregation elsewhere are largely illusory. Where public officials, business men, and other community leaders unite behind the change, there is every reason to predict orderly and successful desegregation.

4. The majority of these changes have occurred since the student bodies of the Negro colleges dispersed for the summer recess. Contrary to the expectations of many, student protests and "selective buying" campaigns have continued, with demonstrated effectiveness. This is convincing testimony to the seriousness and persistence of the protest movement,

among both students and adults in the Negro community. It also suggests that protest activity will be renewed on a much larger scale when the students return to the college campuses in the fall.

Encouraged by the success of their efforts thus far, Negro Southerners can be expected to increase their economic and moral pressures for equal treatment by business and government. As the Southern Regional Council has said many times before, the amount of good will and fair-mindedness among white Southerners has almost always been underestimated by our leadership. So too have been the good sense and good manners of Negroes seeking equal rights. The successful experience of these 27 Southern cities has, once more, given proof of these hopeful factors. Wise leadership will not ignore it.