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THE NEW PORTLAND OBSERVER

Volume XIII, Number 44
August 17, 1983
25¢ Per Copy

USPS 959-680-855

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Hock Shop stirs controversy

GRASSROOTS NEWS, N.W. — A second-hand store located on Union Avenue, called The Hock Shop, is currently creating a triangle of concern from community members who either want more enforcement or the business ousted from the community or those who feel that The Hock Shop provides a service to the area.

One side is made up of residents and homeowners who feel the very presence of The Hock Shop in the neighborhood is fostering crime. The other perspective is that of some policemen who support talk of a petition to oust the shop from the area, while other officers want The Hock Shop and other second hand dealers to fill out I.D. slips on all people and all goods sold in second-hand stores. The final members of this triangle of concern are other community residents who believe the proprietor and his business are providing a service by selling goods they could otherwise not afford.

The Hock Shop is the creation of Echols D. Ford who opened the shop in May. He says he has twenty-two years of experience in this community, either selling insurance or as prior owner of Hot-n-Tot Tavern, located on North Albina and Lombard.

Ford says, "I opened on Union Ave. because there wasn't a second-hand store in the area. I guess I had the guts and nerve to do it first."

He believes his business is between a rock and a hard place with the community believing he is a fencing operation for the police and the police believing every item he buys is "hot."

"I am not the police. I'm caught between both sides. One day I had an off-duty policeman come in and flash his badge and ask how I got

duty like this."

The Hock Shop's tenure in the community has not been without criticism. J. Jay (not his real name) said he has observed Ford's treatment of Black and white customers and has noticed a difference. "What I don't like about The Hock Shop is the way he treats the brothers and sisters. He doesn't give them the same respect as he does the white customers. Just the other day I saw him buzz in a white family like they were long lost friends. Black people that came to the door, he would want to know if they are buying or selling. He even goes through the trouble of telling them he can't watch all of them at one time."

Ford responds, "What few whites that we get, come in to shop. Any shopper can come in without waiting — both Black and white."

If customers want to sell items, they must wait until Ford "buzzes" them in with an electronic lock.

"If I let two people in at the same time they might steal from me. It is as simple as that. I have observed them and there is nothing I can do about it because I'm here by myself."

I also would get ganged up on by three or four people quoting me different prices. If I deal with one person at a time, I can handle it." Ford says he has also observed people who would pick up some item from the back of the store and try to sell it back to him.

Another criticism Jay has about The Hock Shop is that Ford will buy broken merchandise and sell it as is. "He has collected a lot of junk. You can go in there and try out three or four stereos before you find one where both channels work."

Ford responds by saying, "We buy nothing intentionally that doesn't work. There has never



It ain't heavy, it's my tuba. Peter Pritchett, age 14, of the Jazzmin Community Marching Band, draws quite a bit of attention as he cycles to and from band practice. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)



MAN OF CONTROVERSY — Echols D. Ford, owner of The Hock Shop on N.E. Union Ave. Does the second-hand shop foster crime, or provide a service to the neighborhood? (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

been a person trading out of here who couldn't bring it back or trade it for something else."

Jay also has a problem with the way Ford operates his business. "He doesn't run it as a business. He doesn't take the time to check I.D. and he buys from anyone. There should be a limit on who you buy from."

Ford rebuffs this notion and adds, "We are not a pawn shop. We are not state run. We are under the city ordinance and I comply. There is no law that says a person has to be a certain age to buy from. I buy very few things from kids. I don't buy bicycles without parental consent. We

try to keep young kids out of here because I can't handle them."

Detective Roger Busch from the pawn shop detail of the Police Bureau says, "The fact that he is not a pawn shop and calls himself a hock shop has been brought to the attention of the State. They have been out to talk to him about the name he is using. However, he does follow the second-hand ordinance and our position is that if he follows the ordinance and conforms to the rules established by the City, we have no objection to his business."

Det. Busch says it is normal procedure for a second-hand store to (Continued on Page 10, Column 1)

Sportswear strike continues

by Robert Lothian

Sixty-eight garment workers at Columbia Sportswear in St. Johns have been waging a spirited strike since July 25 against management demands for 17-31% wage reductions and other takebacks.

"We're trying to get across to the employer that we can't afford to strike, and we can't afford to take a wage cut," said Pat Williams, business agent for Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Local 128.

Management is asking workers to take wage cuts of from 10¢ to \$1.25/hr. They are also demanding elimination of the incentive guarantee bonus system and of the 3% bonus for perfect attendance.

According to union local president Julia Hicks, Columbia Sportswear's owner, Gertrude Boyle, "has fought us from day one." The union was voted in a year ago, she said, but employees are still fighting for a contract because of Boyle's refusal to budge. "She wants to eliminate all past practices," said Hicks, including the traditional company-sponsored Halloween party and Thanksgiving turkey.

Management contends that workers must concede to wage reductions if the company is to remain competitive, but the union contends that company demands could drive workers onto the welfare rolls. Women make up 98% of the work force, and many are self-supporting heads of households who must pay as much as \$50/week for child care, according to the union.

"Wages in the clothing industry are based on the incentive to produce," said Williams. "It's a very low-paid industry."

Hicks said that before the strike, it was possible for sewing machine operators to make a guaranteed base rate of \$5.25/hr., and incentive pay for production over and above the quota could push wages up to \$8.00/hr. The plant average was \$6.25/hr., she said, but if management succeeds, she said, workers will have to put out at the same rate for only \$4.50/hr.

"That's incredible," said Hicks. "If you knew what it's like to try and sit down and make that wage, you'd know how hard it is trying to make a living at this kind of work."

Even under normal conditions, operating a sewing machine is "very hard work," she said. "You've got to deal with the pressures of putting out so much and trying to make some money at the same time, and then you've got to deal with the pressures of the machine breaking down." Hicks said she sometimes had to wait 45 minutes with no work and loss of incentive pay because there was no mechanic to fix her machine.

"And you just don't get raises," she said, adding that the only time she can remember management offering raises was to bribe some workers during the early stages of negotiations.

Indicative of management's unfair labor practices at Columbia (Continued on Page 3, Column 1)



ON STRIKE — Workers at Columbia Sportswear who oppose wage reductions, elimination of work incentives, and other takebacks include (L-R) Lucille Elwood, Marlana Rose, Red Byers, and Todd Hicks. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Blacks prepare for voter registration

A voter registration drive in progress in eleven southern states, the "Southern Crusade," hopes to register 1.5 to 2 million new Black voters. Those states now have 4.6 million Blacks and 13.8 million whites who are not registered.

The main goal of the operation is to put Ronald Reagan out of office, but adding millions of Black voters would have broad repercussions in local and state elections where Blacks still hold only 1 percent of the elective offices.

If Black voter participation increased by 25 percent, campaign organizers say, Reagan could lose eight southern states he won in 1980, even if he lost none of his white support.

In Mississippi, an estimated 40,000 new voters have been registered since May. Voter registration is also going forward in other areas of the country. The NAACP, which plans to register 2 million voters in 1983, launched its "Overground Railroad" from Kentucky to Detroit. In New York, registrars hope to reach the 900,000 unregistered Blacks who could have denied victory to Reagan in that state. (There are more than five times more unregistered Black adults than Reagan's 1980 vote margin.)

Black voter participation has already increased. During the 1982 elections, 43 percent of the registered Blacks voted, only 7 percent less than the white turnout.

The victory of Harold Washington in Chicago showed Blacks that

voting, especially in coalition with other progressive groups, can bring political power.

Closely tied to the voter registration drives is Jesse Jackson's potential campaign for the Democratic Party nomination for the presidency. Black leaders are still divided about the advisability of such a campaign, but the predictions are that Jackson will run and recent history has shown that the best way to interest Blacks in voting is to have Blacks on the ballot.

The "Coalition for 1984 Election Strategy" met in Washington early in 1983 and again in Atlanta to decide whether to field a candidate, but turned to writing a "people's platform" and to voter registration. In June, the group endorsed the option of fielding a Black candidate, but did not choose the person. Among the opposition were Coretta Scott King, Joseph Lowery of SCLC, Andrew Young, Benjamin Hooks, and most of the Congressional Black Caucus. They fear a Black candidate will take votes from a liberal white candidate and help elect a conservative.

Among Jackson's supporters are Mayor Richard Hatcher, Bishop H.H. Brookins, and Mayor Maron Barry of Washington, D.C. If he runs, his real support will come from the grassroots voters. And if the voter registration campaign succeeds, it will be due to Jackson's leadership, time and energy he is devoting to that cause.