

FROM THE NEGRO CITIZENS OF MADISON COUNTY

TO SHERIFF JACK CAUTHEN:

Judging from your letter in the January 16th issue of the Madison County Herald, you have been misinformed concerning our Selective Buying Campaign. We, the Negro citizens of Madison County, are not attempting to cause "unrest and friction" in the Canton community. We are attempting, rather, to put an end to the constant unrest and friction masked by fear from which we have all suffered over the past. We are determined to do so in a peaceful and law-abiding manner. We are not responsible for rumors and threats of violence. We, too, believe that all citizens of Madison County should live "peaceably and unmolested". This, in fact, is the very reason we have launched our campaign. The Negro citizens of Madison County have never been able to live peaceably and unmolested - the law in Madison County protects the white man...it has not protected the Negro. We expect you, therefore, to keep your pledge to extend the protection of the laws to all of us, black and white, in the future.

TO MAYOR MATTHEWS AND CHIEF THOMPSON:

It is true that citizens have a right to buy where they want to buy. It is also true that citizens have a right to refuse to buy where they are not respected. Any Negro who trades at a store where his black brothers and sisters are not respected is less than a man. The "peaceful and harmonious" conditions which you describe do not exist in the Canton Negro community. We live in fear of the police force which is supposed to protect us. If we break the law, arrest us and carry us to jail - do not point your guns to our noses, do not beat us in the head, do not curse us. If we have not broken the law, treat us with the courtesy due a law-abiding citizen. We do not intend to break the law in the course of our campaign, and we do not expect to be intimidated or harassed, either by the police or lawless citizens.

TO THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:

Seven out of every ten people in Madison County are Negroes. We know that it is our money that keeps the businesses of Madison County going. If it were not for our trade, many of you would go out of business. You owe us a debt of gratitude. It is not too much to ask for decent treatment in your places of business. The Selective Buying Campaign expresses the deep-seated resentment of your Negro customers at being insulted, ignored, and slapped around. We especially resent the way our Negro women have been treated in your stores. It seems to us that the purpose of the Chamber of Commerce is to promote business, industry and agriculture in Canton and Madison County for the benefit of whites only. We feel that it is time the businessmen of Canton began to have consideration for the people who put food on their tables.