

DO YOU THINK NEGROES SHOULD OWN THEIR OWN STORES AND BUSINESSES?

Whitefolks sell us everything we use and need. Whitefolks set the prices and we have to pay them - even if they are very high. Whitefolks don't give us too many bargains. Whitefolks hire the workers and fire the workers. They decide which jobs we were meant to do and which jobs we cannot have.

Today, there are no Negro cashiers in the city of Opelousas. The people who own stores, like Foodtown, think we cannot push the buttons on a cash register but think we can push a broom very well. If we don't buy at Foodtown, but buy at other stores owned by whites, aren't we giving our money to the same people, anyway?

We should own our own supermarket in Opelousas. In order to start a business we would need some starting funds or "capital". But whitefolks own all of the banks and control all of the money. So we will have to raise money by ourselves from ourselves. We might can get some loans and aid from the Federal Government by using the Economic Opportunities Act and the Anti-Poverty program.

If we all have a little money to start this supermarket business, then we should put our little bits of money together and have a whole lot of money to begin with. We could own this store as a co-op. A co-op is like a business BUT EVERYONE WHO USES IT ALSO OWNS A PART OF IT. So if we sell shares in the co-op to a whole bunch of people then we will be sure of a "guaranteed" number of customers. If you owned a store would you go and buy at the next man's store? Of course not! So if we sold shares for a small price, say ten (\$10) dollars and signed up 500 people, we would have \$5,000, enough to start a store and show the Federal Government we deserve and can pay back a loan. Other co-ops like Southern Consumers Co-op in Lafayette which has been working successfully for a long time can help us get started. Our small co-op could also become a part of Southern Consumers if we all wanted to join.

If the store makes a profit at the end of a year or two, we can pay a "dividend" to the shareholders. Most co-ops pay members a dividend bases on how much they used and bought at the store - this is called a patronage refund. This way THE MORE YOU BUY AT THE CO-OP, THE MORE YOU SAVE, THE FASTER THE CO-OP CAN GROW.

Everyone who owns a share in the co-op has one vote (one man, one vote) to decide how the store will be run. All the shareholders will choose a Board of Directors who run the store and pick a manager and clerks to work in the store. So we will also be making new jobs for our people in this co-op. We can also sell things made by our people in the co-op store, like canned preserves.

There are some problems we must solve and some hard questions we must answer before we can set up a co-op store:

Are there enough people in Opelousas who would join the Co-op?
How will we sign up these members?

How will we finance the store? What role will Southern Consumers play?

Where will we be able to buy the things we want to sell in the store -
and can we get them at a cheap enough price to make the co-op pay off?
What kind of competition will we face from the other stores in Opelousas?

Where will we locate the store?

What will we name the co-op store?

Who and When will we write up a charter for the co-op store?