

Kress Co.

To Follow

Custom

NEW YORK, May 17 (AP)—Paul A. Troast, chairman of the board of S. H. Kress and Co., operator of 260 variety stores in the South, said today that Kress stores would follow the segregation or integration customs of the communities and cities in which they are located.

The Kress board of directors, meeting at 114 Fifth Ave., was picketed, as many of its Southern branch stores have been. The integration issue was brought up at the meeting by several speakers, one holding a single recently-bought share.

The single shareowner was James Peck, editor of Corelators, a publication put out by CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), which had a half-dozen pickets in front of the building.

Brother Sister Pickets

Among them were Barbara Brexton, 22-year-old Negro coed at Florida A. and M. University, and her brother, John, 20, a mechanic, who spent 48 days in a Tallahassee, Fla., jail after defying segregation regulations.

"We should not use our position as a nationwide company to force a change on any individual city or town," Troast told the 400 stockholders present at the meeting.

He noted that integrated lunch counters are working in Kress stores in Galveston, Austin, San Antonio and Nashville with the cooperation of local citizenry.

"It is unrealistic to expect that variety stores by themselves should be the only stores in a community to integrate," Troast said, adding that "a minimum requirement should be that substantially all merchants selling both food and other merchandise cooperate."

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He said Kress stores would integrate in any community where the movement was accepted by white residents, and stated that "we feel that each of our stores should follow the custom of the local community in which it operates."

Rosamund Clark of New York City, holder of 25 Kress shares and a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, called for an integrated policy in all Kress stores planned for the future.

Peck said he plans to attend the annual meeting of the F. W. Woolworth Co. in Watertown, N. Y., Wednesday on a similar mission.