

# Break With Custom

Another break with tradition occurred yesterday when Woolworth and Kress stores in Greensboro opened their lunch counters to Negroes.

Greensboro, where the sit-in or sit-down demonstrations began last February 1 and spread to other Southern cities, is another North Carolina community to integrate its variety store lunch counters. Winston-Salem was the first to take the step, several weeks ago, and Charlotte was second, earlier this month. High Point acted similarly this week.

This development will severely test the measure of this community's good will between the races. Both whites and Negroes share the responsibility to make the transition as orderly and trouble-free as possible. It would be much less than honest to think or say that adjustment to and acceptance of the change will be easy. Customs which have prevailed for generations cannot be changed without great impact upon those involved, and in this instance the entire community is involved. How the community reacts to the impact of change depends upon individual and collective attitudes.

Greensboro has been spared the violence which occurred in other cities of the South where lunch counter demonstrations have been staged. This does not mean that there have not been tense moments. There have been, but they were dealt with promptly to head off serious trouble. It is to the credit of the citizens of Greensboro and their leadership that the situation has been controlled by the exercise of restraint and intelligence.

The opening of the lunch counters to Negroes was a voluntary departure from company policy by management. It was decided upon after a number of conferences between store officials and members of an organization of Negro business and professional men. The Mayor's Advisory Committee on Community Relations, which failed in the spring to answer the sit-in problem, served in a counseling capacity during the latest negotiations.

Store officials have discharged their duty as they saw it. They should have the community's understanding and cooperation in the application of the new lunch counter policy. The economic factor is of primary importance so far as the stores are concerned. Negro leaders who participated in the negotiations leading to this new policy are expected to do their part toward making the transition as uneventful as possible. They should have the help and support of their people in discharging that obligation.

We would remind the Negro citizens of Greensboro that privileges carry with them commensurate responsibilities. They should remember that this break with custom is a concession motivated by moral considerations rather than one compelled by legal authority. Those benefited by such a concession have a moral obligation to exercise their new privilege in a manner that will not aggravate the difficulties inherent in the changed order. And if the Negroes of Greensboro are wise and realistic they will be patient and reasonable in their attitude toward other relations between the races.

Greensboro has had a happy experience with its inter-racial affairs. The lunch counter decision is further proof of the community's ability and desire to meet the problems involving the whites and Negroes. It is up to the people of Greensboro, the members of both races, to see that the spirit of good will continues to prevail.