

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER LOUIS ROSENZWEIG

before

SENATE SUB-COMMITTEE ON UNEMPLOYMENT

McGregor Memorial Center

November 12, 1959

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To date over 900 claims have been filed with the Commission. Ninety-four per cent of these claims have alleged racial discrimination. With few exceptions, the claimants have been Negroes. While the Fair Employment Practices Commission is concerned with employment discrimination due to race, religion, and nationality (the areas of its jurisdiction), it is well known that the largest disadvantaged group in Michigan is the Negro and it is the Negro against whom discrimination in employment is practiced to the greatest extent. Therefore, it is to the unemployment concerns of this group that I address myself.

In times of peak employment, racial discrimination in Michigan is a problem of serious proportions. When there is vast unemployment, the magnitude of job discrimination is immeasurable. Strangely enough, the statistics of this Commission's claims experience do not clearly reflect the correlation between the total unemployment picture and the Negro as an unemployed worker. In 1956, the Commission's first full year of operation, 183 claims were filed. In 1957, 262 claims were filed. In 1958, 232 claims were filed. In 1959, to date, 259 claims have been filed. Throughout the Commission's four years of operation over 90% of the claims have been filed by Negroes alleging racial discrimination. This percentage has remained fairly constant despite the fluctuations in employment during the past four years. This is not to say, however, that there are not other indicia of the old bromide, "The last to be hired and the first to be fired". In visits to plants in metropolitan areas where hiring is going on one cannot help but notice the disproportionate numbers of Negro applicants waiting at the plant gates. The