'No Racial Tension Here,' Says Mayor; Hails JFK Program

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"I'm glad to say there is no racial tension here."

So stated Mayor Robert G. Day, who returned this week after attending the U. S. mayor's convention in Honolulu and hearing President Kennedy call for a five-point program to promote and protect the civil rights of minority groups.

"WE NOT only endorsed the five-point program, designed to reduce racial tension in cities, but added a sixth which sets forth the correlation of responsibility and duty with equality of opportunity," Day said.

"In my opinion, the answer to the whole thing is that each individual, regardless of race, color, or creed, should treat all other persons as individuals and not as classes."

Day, who denied a recent charge by the United Usher Board of Peoria that efforts by various groups to bring housing problems to his attention were ignored, pointed out that four of the five points stressed by President Kennedy have been in practice here for some time.

Day said he could recall only one housing incident here, that of the integration of Harrison Homes, which he referred to the Peoria Human Relations Committee.

"As a result of the efforts of that commission, working with the Peoria Housing Authority, Harrison Homes were integrated," he said.

DAY TERMED the current local practice of whites and Negroes visiting in each other's homes as excellent.

"It's a good program, and I think it will do more to promote better relations than anything else," he said.

Regarding President Kennedy's five-point program, the first being that municipalities should establish a bi-racial human relations committee, Day said:

"We have had such a committee here in Peoria for many years. It has been an effective instrument in solving some racial problems and has done much over the years to prevent prejudices and discrimination. It is one of the best commissions in the state."

The commission was unable to act last Monday due to lack of a quorum. When asked if he thought the membership should be reduced from the present 21 so as to have a better chance of a quorum, Day replied:

"It should be large and should be made up of representatives of all areas of the city including business and economic interests, religious groups etc."

"PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S second proposal was that local ordinances and practices be in accord with the Constitution which prohibits segregation in schools, restaurants or places of public or private amusement.

"We have state and local ordinances which so provide and this type of discrimination is not common in Peoria."

Day said the City of Peoria has never, to his knowledge, practiced discrimination in local government employment. This was the third point brought out by Kennedy.

The President's fourth proposal calls for the enactment of equal opportunity ordinances. Here is what Day had to say on the matter:

"Since Illinois is not a home rule state so far as municipal law is concerned, the cities and local governments must look to the State Legislature for leadership in the enactment of laws setting forth the respective rights and duties of the individuals as a means of enforcing equal opportunities by law.

"Several bills of this nature are pending before the Legislature and recently the Peoria City Council recently adopted a resolution recommending the passage of one of these bills which pertains to minority housing.

THE PRESIDENT'S last proposal was that cities should undertake a special campaign to lessen unemployment among the unskilled of both races by reducing school dropouts.

"We here in Peoria have for some time been aware of the serious problems caused by school dropouts," Day said. "We have a representative on the governor's board which deals with this problem and during the past year several meetings were held between representatives of government, industry, labor and local educators in an effort to find a solution to this problem."

Day said substandard housing conditions are usually caused by ...rnings and this in turn ... v lack of educa-
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