

And on the day that the rioting occurred, we had signed a lease with a music house on the corner.

And the officers of Penney's and National Shirt are anxious to rebuild immediately.

I attended meetings that were before the District Council, where the representation of the business interests, you may recall—

Mr. WHITENER. You mean on the Council?

Mr. ROTH. I mean before the Council. Those meetings I attended; there was no organization representation at all, and the reports that came out, newspaper articles, which had the reports which would seem to be pretty much a summary of everything that was said, emphasizing of course the general idea which does not state that there will be any polarization, but it does favor, or reflects to some extent, the idea that they should build blocks.

I am not giving my opinion on this matter at all, whether they should be black or white. I am stymied, I will say, probably, at this point. It has been such—not knowing what advice I should give to the lessees who want to rebuild or are anxious to go back in there. One of them has been in that area for 27 years. When it was built, it was an entire white area, except for the past few years, maybe the past decade, it has become Negro.

The lessees have been there during this and before this, and are eager to go back. It is difficult for me to know exactly what I should tell them. It is as simple as that.

I do not want to comment on all of these other things. I would like to state that I am in a confused posture, not knowing exactly what to do.

Mr. Winn has been asking whether people are going to rebuild. That is with reference to that and other questions. I cannot speak for anyone but myself. And the answer is, I do not know. I imagine that many of the people are in exactly the same position. We have no idea what the policy is going to be.

This is not an area slated for urban programs. The press has gone into that on the rebuilding, and there is nothing other than the building about white ownership. And I assume what was referred to is the physical ownership of the building.

These people have employed Negroes over a period of years.

Mr. WINN. Do you think that many of the businessmen are afraid to appear at some of these public hearings because they are liable to be threatened?

Mr. ROTH. I have been.

Mr. WINN. I want to commend all of the business people who have appeared here today.

Mr. ROTH. I think, while I have not been associated that closely in the business, I did manage these properties, and I do not really feel that I should speak for the business community, other than these. The thing that amazed me was that there was no one from the Board, say, the Chamber of Commerce, from the Washington Board of Trade, or the Realtors Association—there were only individuals with separate losses, who presented their cases very well—not enough to offset or to give a balanced picture.