

Pasco Racist, Says Fletcher Son



PAUL FLETCHER

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Pasco is an openly racist community and its blacks will have to organize and "build something" before it will change.

This was the word yesterday from Paul Fletcher, son of former city councilman Art Fletcher at a rally in east Pasco.

Fletcher is now assistant secretary of Labor in the Nixon administration.

A racially mixed crowd of about 200 attended the Kurtzman Park rally and then marched to the city's downtown business district to dramatize the black boycott of Pasco merchants.

Some of the marchers were civil rights activists from out of town. Several carloads came from the Seattle area.

The 300-500 marchers from outside the region foreseen by Wallace Webster did not make it however, for the total crowd

was only about 200. Webster is director of the Benton-Franklin County Community Action Committee.

Downtown stores were decorated with signs saying "everyone's welcome in Pasco."

"I think you know what they really mean by that," said Fletcher.

The crowd laughed. "It means anyone with money is welcome, and the people here (East Pasco) don't have it.

Anyone can see that," Fletcher said.

Pasco schools, said Fletcher, are not educating black children and without education progress is impossible.

Lashing out at both the white community for oppression and at blacks for taking it, Fletcher said "it's not cool anymore to throw rocks and then lay back blowing weed and talking about black power.

"You've got to get together. Get your money together. Get

yourself something worth dying for."

There will be reprisals from whites, who will attempt to stifle any move toward effective organization of the black community, Fletcher predicted. He said Robert Orange had been arrested because he had been "moving in the community, working to get people together."

The March 6 arrest of Orange on a warrant charging third-degree assault led to current racial tensions in Pasco.

It would be a waste of time to try to find a completely honest person to lead the black community, Fletcher said, because "there isn't an honest man in the United States. You're a fool if you think there is."

Returning to education, Fletcher said the black power movement can get nowhere unless basic reading and mathematical skills are mastered. "Unless your children are getting educated, you're working for nothing."

Violence must have a clear purpose, he said. The time to "take up the gun" will come when the black movement has something to gain. An uprising now would only "leave you with destruction."

Following Fletcher's talk, the crowd marched in two columns to East Lewis Street, through the underpass, up West Lewis to North Fourth Avenue, turned north for a block and then east on West Clark Street to City Hall.

The group paused to sing outside City Hall and then retraced its path to Kurtzman Park. No incidents were reported.



A racially mixed crowd of about 200 marched rally at Kurtzman Park in East Pasco downtown business section to dramatize boycott of Pasco stores. The boycott

was called in support of demands made to the city government. The march went without incident.