

4/9/48



My dear Mr. Secretary:

On February 2, 1948, in a special message to the Congress, I said that "I have instructed the Secretary of Defense to take steps to have the remaining instances of discrimination in the armed services eliminated as rapidly as possible. The personnel policies and practices of all the services in this regard will be made consistent."

It has since been brought to my attention by some of the states that the Department of the Army has made an exception to its current policy in the case of one state, which has adopted a constitutional provision against segregation in its National Guard. Other states, naturally, wonder whether they may not do by executive or legislative action what one state has been permitted to do by constitutional amendment.

It appears to me that the matter of personnel policies in the various National Guard units could well be a subject for state determination. This determination should be under Department of the Army guidance, as provided for in the National Defense Act, but with full latitude for those states which wish to equalize opportunity to serve in the National Guard without distinctions based on race or color.

I wish you would take up this matter with the Secretaries of the Armed Services, with a view toward equalizing the opportunity to serve in all components of the Armed Services, and with a view toward making the policies of the various services consistent with one another.

Very sincerely yours,

The Honorable James Forrestal,
Secretary of Defense,
Washington, D. C.