

February 7, 1950



MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

Charles Fahy and the Secretary of the Army have had a friendly and encouraging talk on the Fahy Committee's remaining recommendation - the substitution of an achievement quota for the present racial quota.

The attached graph illustrates the real problem of bringing about equality of treatment and opportunity in the Army; that is, the great difference between Negro and white soldiers in education and resulting mental achievement. The steps the Army has already taken will help to equalize opportunity, without interfering with efficiency or morale. But for these steps to have a significant effect, it is necessary to have men in the Army who can take the best advantage of them. A proposal is now being circulated to the members of the Fahy Committee, and will shortly be presented to Secretary Gray, which will improve the quality of the Army by raising the level of its Negro recruits.

It will also remove the racial quota, which has been subject to heavy criticism, and which has restricted the enlistment of high-grade Negroes without preventing the enlistment of low-grade men.

The substance of the Committee proposal is:

1. To require all recruits, both white and Negro, to score at least 90 on the GCT test.
2. To take steps making it difficult for soldiers, both white and Negro, now in the Army, to re-enlist if they are perennial low-score men, or are otherwise inapt. The Army already has this proposal under consideration.
3. Simultaneously with these two steps, to eliminate the present racial quota of one Negro for every nine whites.

This proposal seems fair and sensible; and is gradual in that Negro units would gradually disappear, but would not be abolished overnight.

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The question has been raised as to what proportion of the Army would be Negro under this procedure. Only time will tell. Estimates vary greatly. My own guess is that there will be substantially less Negroes in the Army, but they will more nearly approach the whites in capability, so that the personnel management problem will be much simpler and more satisfactory to everyone.

Judging by World War II figures, only 16.6% of all Negro men of military age will score 90 or better on the GCT test. Hence, with a cut-off score of 90, this percentage (16.6%) would be the maximum of Negroes enlisting in the Army, if every Negro of military age entered the service, and none selected Navy or Air Force. The true number, of course, would be much smaller than this, since some men are disqualified by health, others are gainfully occupied; still others are students, and of those who volunteer, some elect Navy or Air Force. The number might even approach the percentage of Negroes over GCT 90, which is only 2.8% of all men scoring 90 or better.

These are the approximate ranges, I should think, to the percentage of Negroes in the Army under the Fahy proposal. The actual percentage would tend toward one or the other of these possibilities, depending on how many low-score men the Army permits to re-enlist.

If the proportion of Negroes becomes unwieldy, or is so small as to be unfair, the procedures can easily be revised by adjusting the GCT score minimum up or down from 90. Properly combined with procedures for preventing the re-enlistment of inapt men, both Negro and white, the substitution of an achievement quota would have the effect of correcting an imbalance in the Army, under which any true equality of opportunity is impossible. The Navy and Air Force have already discovered this fact, have substituted a GCT quota for a racial quota, and are very pleased with the results.

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