

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 11, 1948.



The exact wording of the paragraph in the President's Civil Rights Message on the Armed Forces is as follows:

Start
. . . 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. . .

In the discussion this afternoon, we should be working generally for equality of opportunity in the Armed Forces both in the regular and reserve components and for consistency among the three services.

Navy has an excellent non-segregation policy with a gradual implementation which is generally regarded by Negroes as satisfactory. Air Forces is starting out with the Army's policy of limited segregation, represented by the Gillem Board Report. Army's rather limited policy, however, has quite good implementation; better than Navy's. The ideal solution would be a general defense establishment policy similar to Navy's with Army-type implementation.

I would suggest that we ask the Secretaries present this afternoon to:

(a) create a defense establishment board similar to the Gillem Board, charged with the development of a uniform racial policy in the Services consistent with the President's two goals of equal opportunity and non-discrimination.

(b) organize an inter-service committee similar to the old War Department Committee on Troop Policy operating under McCloy, which would be responsible for the development of procedures under the coordinated policy.

(c) develop procedures by the procurement agencies in the defense establishment which would require contractors to have non-discriminatory hiring practices.

For the immediate future, I would suggest:

① (a) that the states be permitted to develop their own manpower policies for the National Guard.

② (b) approval of pending ROTC petitions for Negro land-grant colleges.

(c) strengthening of the non-discrimination language in both UMT and Selective Service legislation now pending. Non-discrimination should be mandatory both in training and in service.

Gray Board (next week)

We may or may not want to bring up the question of the Panama Canal Zone, which is under the Department of the Army.

It was mentioned in the President's Message and we have had a petition since then. The paragraph in the Message is as follows:

. . . I have instructed the Secretary of the Army to investigate the status of civil rights in the Panama Canal Zone with a view to eliminating such discrimination as may exist there. If legislation is necessary, I shall make appropriate recommendations to the Congress . . .

