

TRUMAN MEETING  
WITH FAMILY COM

MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE FOUR SERVICE SECRETARIES

WITH THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON EQUALITY OF  
TREATMENT AND OPPORTUNITY IN THE ARMED SERVICES

12:15 P. M. - 12 January 1949 - Cabinet Room, White House

In Attendance:

Hon. Harry S. Truman, President  
Hon. James Forrestal, Secretary of Defense  
Hon. Kenneth C. Royall, Secretary of the Army  
Hon. John L. Sullivan, Secretary of the Navy  
Hon. W. Stuart Symington, Secretary of the Air Force  
Mr. Donald S. Dawson, Administrative Assistant to  
the President

The President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and  
Opportunity in the Armed Services:

✓ Mr. Charles H. Fahy, Chairman  
✓ Mr. Alphonsus J. Donahue, Member  
✓ Mr. Lester Granger, Member  
✓ Mr. Dwight R. G. Palmer, Member  
✓ Mr. John H. Sengstacks, Member  
✓ Mr. William E. Stevenson, Member

Member Absent:

✓ Mr. Charles Luckman



Office of the Secretary of Defense:

Mr. Thomas R. Reid, Chairman, Personnel Policy Board

Brigadier General C. T. Lanham, Director of Staff,

Personnel Policy Board

Mr. Worthington Thompson, Acting Executive Secretary,

Personnel Policy Board

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. . . The first meeting of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, was held at 12:15 p.m., 12 January 1949, in the Cabinet Room of the White House, with President Truman presiding . . .

PRESIDENT TRUMAN: Well, gentlemen, I issued an Executive Order, last spring, or fall -- I forget the date of it -- on the better treatment -- not "fair" treatment, but "equal" treatment in the Government Service for everybody, regardless of his race or creed or color, and it's slowly and gradually taking hold. And I have asked you gentlemen to serve on this Commission in an effort to expedite the thing in the Government Service so that you can actually carry out the spirit, as well as the letter, of the order. And I hope you will make a survey of the situation, not only in the Military Services, but in all the branches of the Federal Government, and then inform me of anything that's lacking, and make any suggestions that you deem necessary for the improvement of the situation.

I appreciate the fact that you're willing to serve on this Commission -- Committee, whatever you want to call it -- and I'm satisfied that with this sort of a setup we can get the thing working as it should work.

The Navy's made some progress; Army, of course, has



made great progress. I don't know about the Air Force.

SECRETARY FORRESTAL: The Air Force has come along -- what they have in mind, Mr. President, is a very progressive --

PRESIDENT TRUMAN: I want this rounded out a little bit. I want the Department of the Interior, the Commerce Department, the Treasury Department, interviewed on the subject why you are in existence, and let's make it a Government proposition, as well as an Armed Services. Of course, as Commander in Chief, I can issue orders to the Armed Services, and, if there is some legal approach in all the rest of the branches of the Government, we might as well make a complete program out of it while we are at it, and not limit it to just one branch of the Government. That's what I have in mind all the way down the line.

Not only that, I think that we've got to go further -- not at this time, but later -- and see that the state and local governments carry out the spirit of the laws which we hope to get on the books down here during this session of Congress.

If anybody's got any suggestions to make to me on the subject, I'd be glad to listen to them.

SECRETARY FORRESTAL: Charlie.

MR. FAHY: Mr. President, may I say, as the Chairman of the Committee, we appreciate this opportunity to meet with



you when we are really getting down to work, and Secretary Forrestal and Secretaries Royall, Sullivan, and Symington. We'll push along now and do the best we can. We are very grateful to you for this little meeting and encouragement to us and outline of what you expect. We will plug along and come back to you with the best results that we can and do the best we can.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN: That's what I look for and I want it done in such a way that it is not a publicity stunt. I want concrete results -- that's what I'm after -- not publicity on it. I want the job done and I want to get it done in a way so everybody will be happy to cooperate to get it done. Unless it is necessary to knock somebody's ears down, I don't want to have to do that, but, if it becomes necessary, it can be done. But that's about all I've got to tell you.

MR. GRANGER: May I ask you a question, Mr. President? Is there any thought in your mind as to the length of the life of this group?

PRESIDENT TRUMAN: Well, I had hoped that you would be ready to come back to me with some concrete proposition not later than the first of June, and then, if it is necessary to continue, why, we can go on from there, in order to give you plenty of time. I'd like to



have the outline of the situation before the Congress adjourns in case we need to ask for any legal amendments to the law because, in that hearing, at that time, we will endeavor to pass the Civil Rights Program as outlined in my message on the subject in the last Congress. I hope to get some concrete results of that in the Eighty-first Congress.

SECRETARY SYNINGTON: As long as you mentioned the Air Force, sir, I just want to report to you that our plan is to completely eliminate segregation in the Air Force. For example, we have a fine group of colored boys. Our plan is to take those boys, break up that fine group, and put them with the other units themselves and go right down the line all through these subdivisions one hundred per cent.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN: That's all right.

(To Mr. Dawson) Don, I think I notice one more "club" standing out there.

MR. DAWSON: They're here, all right!

. . . The photographers then entered and took photographs of the group . . .

PRESIDENT TRUMAN: It's been a pleasure, gentlemen. Thank you all very much.

. . . The meeting was then adjourned at 12:25 p. m. . .

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