

A PROGRESS REPORT

June 7, 1949.

Five months have passed since the members of The President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services met with the President on January 12th. In that time the Committee, as directed by the President in Executive Order 9811, has examined with some thoroughness into the "rules, procedures and practices" of the Armed Services in order to determine how those rules, procedures and practices might be changed to effect the President's policy of equal treatment and opportunity for all men in the nation's military arms.

In the course of its examination the Committee has conferred at length with the three services secretaries, assistant secretaries, general staff officers and specialists in their branches dealing with military practices. In addition the Committee and its Staff have visited several military installations. Finally the Committee has heard those individuals and national organizations that have a particular competence in the matters under the Committee's enquiry.

The Committee has felt from the beginning that the best way to achieve the President's objective was to solicit the confidence and enlist the help of the Armed Services in working out quietly with the Committee changes in personnel practices which would be viewed by all reasonable men as wise and beneficial.



The Committee wishes to record here its gratitude for the cooperation which the Services have so far given to its members and its staff. The Secretaries of the three arms have put themselves and their staffs completely at the disposal of the Committee, and often on short notice have appeared to answer the Committee's questions or to confer on troublesome technical points. Furthermore, the Committee has been granted ready access to all the documents which it required in its studies. It is difficult to see how the Committee could have had such a full understanding as it does of the policies and practices of the Services without the help which it has had from the Services themselves.

As a result of the Committee's method of working cooperatively and quietly within the Services, considerable progress has already been made toward the goal set by the President in his Executive Order. While the Committee was conferring with the Services, the Secretary of Defense issued a new policy statement, declaring that the National Military Establishment guaranteed to all men in the nation's armed forces equality of treatment and opportunity, and directing the three Secretaries to prepare a forward plan for realizing this policy in practice.

Shortly thereafter the Air Force announced, and the Secretary of Defense approved, a plan to abolish its Negro fighter wing at Lockbourne Field, Ohio and to reassign to white units most, but not all, of its Negro personnel. The replies of the Navy and Army to the request of the Secretary of Defense were returned for amplification.

While the Navy and Army were considering what further steps they could take to meet the policy of the President and the Secretary of Defense, this Committee submitted to the Personnel Policy Board in the



Office of the Secretary of Defense a list of recommendations as a guide to the Army and Navy in its determinations. The Committee is pleased to note that the Navy, in the second plan which it has submitted to the Secretary of Defense, proposed to take all the steps which the Committee recommended except one, and that exception is a proposal requiring joint acceptance by the three services.

In its second reply to the Secretary of Defense the Army did not propose going beyond the framework of its present policy and practice. However, the Committee is continuing its conferences with the Acting Secretary of the Army and General Staff officers, and it hopes that it will be possible to persuade the Army to recognize the justice of equal opportunity and the advantage of using its manpower with maximum efficiency.

Inasmuch as progress has been, and is being, made through study and conference with the three services, and since these studies and conferences are continuing, the Committee would prefer, if the President approves, not to make a formal interim report at this time, nor to submit final recommendations.

