27 August 1949

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FAIR TRADE

SUBJECT: Two Incidents Worth Noting

1. Mr. Thomas F. Sevar, Special Assistant to the Postmaster General, deals with matters pertaining to discrimination against Negroes in the Postoffice Department, and travelled extensively. He came to my home to tell me of an incident observed by him while he was route from Little Rock, Arkansas to Memphis, Tennessee, on Missouri Pacific Train 220, Thursday, August 25, 1949. Mr. Sevar was sitting in the main part of the diner when four enlisted men came in to be served. Two of the men were white, two Negro, and the steward informed them that they could have to occupy separate tables. The non-commissioned officer in charge insisted that they were together, but the steward insisted that he must place the Negroes in a special section reserved for them. It was at this point, according to Mr. Sevar, that one of the white men, who later learned some from Arkansas, spoke up and said: "We work together, we sleep together, and we're going to eat together."

One of the Negro boys said, "If we are not served together I will write to Mr. Nunn who will see that the President's Committee knows about this."

As a result of the stand taken all the men were seated in the main part of the diner and had their meal together.

2. In a report made on a visit to Camp Mende reference was made to the discussion with General Serves and others concerning the use of the swimming pool and the difficulty they anticipated if swimming was not kept racially separated. The policy of the post has been that Negroes will use the pool assigned to them.

Information has come to this office that recently a young woman living on the post, wife of a Negro sergeant, wanted to take her young son for a swim, but learned that the pool assigned to Negroes was temporarily closed for repairs. She made inquiry at the headquarters office as to why she could not use the pool, and was told that she could use the same pool that whites were using. Following this information she and her son went to the white swimming pool and enjoyed a swim together with no questions asked nor any unpleasant incident following as a result of the use of the pool.

Joe. H. Burns
Associate Executive Secretary