

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

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WASHINGTON, May 22 -- In a report delivered to the White House today, the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services stated its opinion that "the present programs of the three services are designed to accomplish the objective" of the President's Executive Order 9981, issued in July 1948.

That order declared it "to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin."

The Committee pointed out in its letter of transmittal that the services had adopted all the recommendations which it had proposed to achieve the President's policy. Therefore, the Committee explained, its report was not a plan for future action, but a description of programs already in operation and an account of the progress which is being made toward equal treatment and opportunity.

In an initial chapter summarizing this progress, the Committee stated that Negroes are presently serving in every naval general rating throughout the fleet; that these Negro ratings are integrated with white crew members; that chief, first-, second-, and third-class stewards now have the rate of petty officers; and that stewards, if qualified, can transfer to general service.

The new Air Force program, presented to the Committee a year ago and put into effect in June 1949, has opened up all Air Force jobs and schools to Negro airmen. In the first eight months under this program, the Committee reported, 75 per cent of the 25,000 Negroes in the Air Force had been transferred to integrated units. This integration program is continuing. The former all-Negro 332d Fighter Wing at Lockbourne Field, Ohio, has been disbanded, and its flying personnel is now serving in integrated squadrons -- some in Germany and Japan -- or taking further flight training in jets or bombers.



In January of this year the Army announced that henceforth Negro soldiers could qualify for all Army jobs and schools, and would no longer be limited to assignment in Negro and overhead (post housekeeping) units. This revised policy was adopted by the Army in response to the recommendations of the Committee, which had found a large number of jobs and Army School courses closed to Negroes.

Last month the Army also adopted the fourth and final Committee recommendation to abolish the quota system under which Negroes were limited to 10 per cent of Army strength.

In its report the Committee said former policies of the services restricting job opportunities for Negroes and limiting their assignment to Negro units had been formulated on the assumption that Negroes did not have the skills or education for more technical service occupations and that it was not feasible to assign Negroes and whites to the same unit.

The historical experience of the services, the Committee found, showed that these policies had deprived the services of the talents of many highly qualified Negroes whose individual skills could not find a place in segregated units. Moreover, the Committee stated, the Navy and Air Force had proved, under their new policies, that when Negroes were trained and assigned on the basis of individual capacity rather than race, more effective manpower utilization resulted. Neither the Navy nor the Air Force had experienced any difficulty from the assignment of whites and Negroes to the same ships and units.

In its conclusion the Committee declared that the new programs for equal treatment and opportunity were not only "right and just" but would "strengthen the nation."

The President designated as members of the Committee: Charles Fahy, former Solicitor General and now judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals in the District of Columbia, chairman; Alphonsus J. Donahue, president, Donahue Sales Corporation; Lester B. Granger, executive director, the National Urban League; Charles Luckman; Dwight R. G. Palmer, president, General Cable Corporation; John H. Sengstacke, publisher and editor, THE CHICAGO DEFENDER; William E. Stevenson, president, Oberlin College. Mr. Donahue died in the summer of 1949.

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